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EDITORIAL

Transformations of the State and Political Sociology

Felix Petersen[1] and Martin Seeliger[2]

Statehood and violence are inextricably linked (Weber 1919: 3-5). Whether it is the police beating demonstrators, border control authorities mistreating refugees, or the Russian military targeting Ukrainian civilians, in all cases public institutions perpetrate violence against individuals. Undoubtedly, these examples highlight the power imbalance between state and individual, a theme that has been extensively explored across the social sciences. Comparing different forms of state violence, wars are likely the social interactions with the most significant consequences for individuals. And the military state is arguably the most violent formation of the state. In Europe, it is fair to argue that this state had been in retreat since the end of the Cold War.

Ever since the Russian attack on Ukraine in February 2022, Europe has come closer to war. And although individuals from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, and other war-torn countries have been continuously arriving in Europe, the consequences of war are being experienced more directly due to the physical proximity to Ukraine. Three days after the invasion of Ukraine, the German Chancellor, Olaf Scholz, emphasized that Europe is preparing for war with his *Zeitenwende* speech and the promise of a 100 billion special fund for the German Bundeswehr.[3] Probably, these preparations will significantly change the state.

In Germany, the allocation of more resources to the military is an indicator of the resurgence of the military state. As the German public is now debating the

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3 A translation of the speech can be found here: https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-en/search/policy-statement-by-olaf-scholz-chancellor-of-the-federal-republic-of-germany-and-member-of-the-german-bundestag-27-february-2022-in-berlin-2008378.

reintroduction of conscription, it is likely that we will observe a significant reorientation of the state-citizen relationship in the near future.[4] The projected reemergence of the military state corroborates what Eric Hobsbawm posited in a 1996 essay, namely that roles and functions of the state are contingent upon the challenges faced by a society. In the absence of the development of new means to solve old problems, it is probable that functions of the state can be re-actualized in any domain whenever necessary (Hobsbawm 1996). And this trajectory underscores that with changing sets of problems and a constantly transforming state (Dewey 1927: 107), society might be also affected and is likely to transform.

With the increased likeliness of war, economic enterprises manufacturing rifles, ammunition, tanks, missiles, and other tools necessary to the fighting of wars are gaining momentum and market shares.[5] This indicates that transformations in the economy are taking place that might be accompanied by changes in the public's perception of these companies and their product. Or at least that is what those companies might aspire to achieve. The German arms manufacturer Rheinmetall, according to its self-description an "integrated international technology group," has for instance announced prior to the 2024 UEFA Champions League Final that it will become the new champion partner and sponsor of Borussia Dortmund, a German football club that is deeply rooted in local working-class culture.[6]

This case of sponsorship seems to be an object well-suited for critical theories of society. In his *One-Dimensional Man*, Herbert Marcuse (1991) inquired the power structures and ideologies of Western societies under the impression of the Cuban Missile Crisis. In order to explain the stability (or even rigidity) of social structures exposed to the constant threat of nuclear destruction, he referred to an interplay of two dynamics at work within these societies – technological rationality and the happy consciousness. While the structure of the economic system is determined by the application of technological means, which in turn leads to alienated labor conducted by the workers, the very same workers learn to adjust to these unpleasant circumstances by adapting fragments of a public ideology which is being conveyed via consumption and the cultural industry. Viewed from this perspective, raising a

4 See for instance the position promoted by the German Ministry of Defense (https://www.bmvg.de/de/aktuelles/minister-pistorius-stellt-neuen-wehrdienst-vor-5791920) and the decision of the main opposition party, CDU, to seek such a reintroduction of conscription by way of policy (https://www.cdu-parteitag.de/artikel/wehrpflicht-kommt-zurueck).

5 For data on military expenditure see the Database of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI): https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex.

6 See https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/kommentar-rheinmetall-sponsert-bvb-geld-schlaegt-moral-100.html.

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100 billion special fund against the doctrine of public austerity can be embedded into a stream of happy consciousness by winning over Borussia Dortmund as a brand ambassador for the military industrial complex. Drawing on Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony (Gramsci 2007), we could also argue that the armament company tries to capitalize on the glamor and glory of a football club and hopes to affect changes in public opinion. Even without the radiance of a football club, changes in public opinion can already be observed as a consequence of the Ukraine War: Between 2021 and 2022, approval ratings for the increase in defense spending and the number of personnel in the German Bundeswehr rose by 20 percent (Graf 2022: 4).

Why, apart from the editors' inclinations to write an editorial about Borussia Dortmund, the military state, and changing public opinions that confirm a reemergence of authoritarian ideas, are these very specific developments relevant? While much has been written as of recently on the social-ecological transformation and its consequences or the rise of authoritarianism and populist politics, other topics have been sidelined, certain institutions have lost the attention of researchers, and some might argue that once classical subjects of social research have receded into insignificance. Against this backdrop, the seemingly incoherent observations mentioned above indicate that in social science research, and political sociology takes a leading position here, a stronger focus must again be placed on the state, as the main instrument for enforcing political decisions (Weber 1921/22: 1042-1062), and on the consequences of state actions for individuals and societies. At the same time, the observations make apparent that social research focused on current problems should also systematically examine the links between political, economic and military institutions, organizations and elites (Mills 1958), in order to provide a realistic assessment of the structures of power in contemporary society. Drawing on these observations, we argue that critical political sociology should also place a stronger focus on the impact of public opinions and political publics and make thus accessible knowledge about manufacturing and maintenance of legitimacy. Such approaches could include perspectives from pragmatism, cultural studies or critical theory, which all deal with the relationship between social and political order and ideas/ideology.

While none of the articles published in this issue focus on the military state, defense contractors or the power elite, they speak to the broader tasks that we consider relevant for political sociology. And they bring state, power structures, elites, public opinion, and the research of these subjects to the fore.

In her article *Crisis as Opportunity: The Bank of England and the Rise of Monetarism in 1970s*, Inga Rademacher shows that crises create certain opportunity structures that can affect the form and institutional structure of the state and provide elites with the

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means necessary to achieve this. Abbey S. Willis, Deric Shannon, and Davita Silfen Glasberg also focus on a crisis moment, the pandemic. In their article *Theorizing State Power: The Multi-Sites of Power Approach, Race, and New York State's COVID-19 Treatment Guidelines*, they analyze how state actors aim to create legitimacy and social order under changing social conditions. Markus Kip and Silke van Dyk introduce the concept of double democratization based on the analysis of political processes centered around organizing public property in Barcelona. Their article *Double Democratization and the Politics of Property in Municipalist Barcelona* elaborates on the interaction of different dimensions of political decision-making, the intersection of different agents and interests in decision-making, and the difficulty to overcome habits and the power of vested interests. Taking a systematic approach to the state and political institutions, Christian Lahusen's article *Trust and Distrust in Political Institutions* complements scholarship in this field by exposing the relational dimension of institutional trust and distrust, which operate at the individual and collective levels and involve reciprocities and complementarities. In one way or another, though from different perspectives, all the contributions revolve around the motives and problems outlined above.

With this issue, we also introduce a number of new formats to the Journal of Political Sociology: the essay, the review article, and the obituary. In her essay *How to stay in academia without becoming cynical?,* Lisa Herzog discusses the state of academia and how researchers can change the academic system with projects that seek to address and potentially solve real problems. Michael Hoffman's review article *Branding in Crisis-Prone Capitalist Democracies* analyses the second structural transformation of the public sphere in light of the recent writings by Jürgen Habermas on the topic. Carmen Ludwig has formulated an obituary on the passing of our colleague Eddie Webster, who died at the age of 82 in March 2024. The final contribution to this issue is an interview, in which Hanna Kieschnick and Kseniia Cherniak discuss with Agnieszka Weinar, based on her book *European Citizenship and Identity Outside of the European Union* (Routledge 2020), the current state of the European Union with a particular emphasis on the role of the Central- and Eastern-European periphery.

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RESEARCH

Crisis as Opportunity: The Bank of England and the Rise of Monetarism in the 1970s

Inga Rademacher[1]

Abstract

Since the 1970s, many countries in the Western world implemented radical fiscal and monetary reforms emphasising monetary targets and fiscal restrictiveness. Political economy scholarship has focused on globalisation, international organisations, and ideas to explain the similarity of reform. However, these explanations underestimate how the crisis itself, and the opportunity structures it provided for individual state actors, shaped policy outcomes. Process-tracing applied to a historical case study of the UK (1970-1979) demonstrates that we can best explain the shift as a critical juncture in which a global crisis provided an opportunity structure for central banks to shape the macroeconomic policy agenda.

Keywords: macroeconomic reforms, central banks, strategies, global economic crisis, capital mobility

1. Introduction

Critical junctures are moments of transformative institutional change which emerge in episodes of political and economic turmoil (Capoccia/Kelemen 2007: 343). One wave of radical reform stands for transformations of this kind like no other. Starting in the 1970s, governments in many advanced market economies responded to a crisis of economic stagnation, inflation, and speculative attacks on domestic currencies with a radical reorganisation of fiscal and monetary institutions from full-employment goals to price stability. The emergence of this juncture is striking because of the similarities in the overall direction of reforms across countries, and because of a

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concomitant shift in policy authority from the fiscal to the monetary sphere. In the old regime, governments were the key actors determining the direction of macroeconomic policy as fiscal policy held primary responsibility in macroeconomic steering. In the new regime, macroeconomic policy became set *first* in the monetary and *secondarily* in the fiscal realm where budget rules increasingly constrained policy decisions (Blyth/Matthijs 2017; Scharpf 1991). What explains governments' decision to curtail their own economic steering capacity and surrender macroeconomic policy authority to central banks?

The turn from a full-employment regime to price stability entailed several economic and electoral risks for elected governments: First, the emphasis on austere fiscal and monetary solutions has likely contributed to constrained domestic growth and stymied domestic demand (Stockhammer 2016; Stockhammer et al. 2019). Second, it distributed wage and wealth incomes from the median to top incomes entailing electoral risks for governments. While expansive fiscal and monetary policies benefit industrial production and lower and median incomes, price stability and balanced budgets benefit financial returns and higher incomes (Albert/Gómez-Fernández 2021; Dietsch 2020). Finally, the shift of policy authority from a democratically accountable realm towards a technocratic policy arena (central banking) does imply increasing limits to the responsiveness of the state towards voter demands in macroeconomic matters (Eriksen 2021).

In the scholarly arena analyses have situated the origins of macroeconomic change in one of two largely separate spheres. The first set of explanations focuses on the role of global economic crisis. It examines how globalisation kicked off domestic economic crises (Barta /Johnston 2021; Mosley 2003), how international organisations shaped policy outcomes during crises (Ban 2016; Polillo/Guillén 2005), and how ideas diffused from the global to the domestic level during global economic turmoil (McNamara 1999; Risse 2004). The second set of explanations focuses on the role of central banks in shaping domestic macroeconomic policy frameworks (Franzese 2002; Iversen 2000). While the two literature strands each examine important factors which may drive macroeconomic change, their analyses have remained largely separate from one another and have, thereby, neglected how the *interaction* of global sphere and individual state actors contribute to macroeconomic change. This interaction seems particularly relevant in light of the considerably different perceptions and policy prescriptions of governments and central banks in response to economic crises (Bodea/Higashijima 2017).

This study examines how the interaction of a global economic crisis and domestic responses of central bankers contributed to radical institutional change in the

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macroeconomic sphere. Expanding on a *micro-strategy approach*, which I have elaborated on elsewhere (Rademacher 2021), I develop an account which links global crises with state-actor decisions. For this I join the institutionalist Critical Juncture (CJ) literature and Actor-Centred Institutionalism (ACI). CJ highlights that crises trigger radical institutional change due to political and economic turbulence which relaxes the usual structural (organisational, economic, cultural, and ideological) constraints on institutional change (Capoccia/Kelemen 2007: 343; Mahoney 2001). At the same time, I redirect the attention to state actor agency following ACI's understanding of state actors as self-interested agents which develop strategies based on institutional, structural, or ideational power resources (Mayntz/Scharpf 1995; Scharpf 2018). I stress that crises may not only disrupt existing institutional settings, but also generate opportunity structures for state actors to achieve pre-existing goals.

I conduct theory-testing process-tracing on a least-likely case: The UK between 1970 and 1979. At that time, the Bank of England was one of the least independent central banks in the world and this institutional dependence with limited capacity to shape policy outcomes in the macroeconomic sphere. The logic of applying process-tracing to a least-likely case is that if we find the expected mechanism here, it may exist in other cases as well (Beach/Pedersen 2013). The analysis is pursued in two steps. I first test the validity of alternative theoretical approaches through a congruence method which tests the correlation of the proposed independent and dependent variables in the literature. After the confidence in the validity of alternative approaches is diminished, I develop my own *micro-strategies mechanism* which links the crisis (x) and the policy outcome (Y). This mechanism is then tested through process-tracing and structured empirical tests.

The contribution of this article is two-fold. It develops a new central-bank *micro-strategies mechanism* which hypothesises that one way how economic crises may initiate similar policy change across countries is by triggering state actor self-interest to retain or expand control within the macroeconomic sphere. To achieve their goals, state actors may use the features of the crisis in strategic interaction with other state actors. Empirically, my findings contribute to the literature on fiscal and monetary policy which so far focused on global factors *or* the behaviour of individual state actors to explain similarities in policy change. This study integrates the two realms.

The argument proceeds as follows: The next section reviews the existing literature on radical change in the macroeconomic sphere. Section three introduces the *micro-strategies mechanism* based on theoretical conjectures about how an economic crisis and policy outcomes may be interlinked. I then introduce the methodology used to test the conjectures. In the empirical sections, I first test alternative theories

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before tracing the evolution of the price-stability regime in the UK. The final segment of this article draws conclusions of the broader relevance of state-actor strategies for our understanding of critical junctures and transfers the findings to current changes in the macroeconomic policy realm.

2. Explaining Critical Junctures in Macroeconomic Institutions

Critical junctures are moments of radical institutional change which place institutions on a new developmental path (Capoccia/Kelemen 2007: 343). A burgeoning literature has emerged since the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) interested in how crises trigger institutional breaks. This literature aligns topics that have traditionally been relevant in International Political Economy (IPE) – focusing on global economic factors like capital mobility – and Comparative Political Economy (CPE) – focusing on domestic institutions – to explore how global factors are intertwined with the domestic institutional sphere (Béland et al. 2020; Mandelkern 2016).

The 1970s juncture triggered a wave of reforms across advanced economies which replaced the post-war Keynesian regime with monetarism. On the one hand, goals and instruments shifted into new directions. Full-employment and expansive welfare spending was replaced with objectives of price stability, free markets, and competition (Bremer/McDaniel 2020; Notermans 2000). Instruments of discretionary macroeconomic management, fiscal expansion, and the printing press made way for deflationary fiscal policy, budgetary cuts, and a greater role of markets in the determination of interest rates (Carlin/Soskice 2009). On the other hand, the juncture shifted macroeconomic policy authority from the fiscal to the monetary sphere. The use of pegged exchange rates and capital controls in the post-war Bretton Woods system curtailed central bank power assigning finance ministers as key decision makers, this distribution of authority changed after the 1970s (Goodman/Pauly 1993).

Table 1 depicts growth rates of inflation and government spending in 16 OECD countries before and after the regime break.[2] All 16 countries experienced considerable expansion in the realm of government fiscal expenditure and inflation rates until the juncture, followed by a decline (or significantly reduced expansion) thereafter. This break in the data implies that the two macroeconomic regimes were characterised

2 I have chosen the break point for monetary policy in the year 1973 and the break point for fiscal policy in 1984 because efforts of regime change took place in the monetary realm first – around the breakdown of the Bretton Woods system – and fiscal reforms often followed with some delay due to government resistance (Fernández-Albertos 2015).

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by radically different policy orientations. The data also show differences in the changes between countries. The decline in government spending after the break, for instance, was much more pronounced in the Netherlands, Canada, Austria and Germany compared to the US, Japan and Spain. I will return to this concomitance of similarities and differences in section 3.

Table 1 Spending and inflation in 16 OECD countries

	Increase in government expenditure		Increase in inflation rate	
	1956-1984	*1984-2011*	*1956-1973*	*1973-2011*
UK	38.30%	-7.42%	29.57%	-65.50%
US	55.50%	10.92%	53.39%	-52.92%
Canada	69.35%	-13.21%	72.81%	-65.69%
Austria	53.86%	-5.85%	83.08%	-70.57%
Belgium	66.43%	-9.57%	48.26%	-67.86%
Netherlands	61.28%	-14.54%	92.74%	-75.64%
Germany	37.38%	-2.73%	52.27%	-73.20%
Japan	43.52%	22.95%	91.83%	-95.45%
Denmark	71.11%	2.02%	23.97%	-73.28%
Norway	62.50%	0.50%	47.58%	-59.14%
Sweden	53.86%	2.77%	17.74%	-55.99%
Spain	66.27%	37.77%	29.25%	-63.89%
France	58.14%	7.38%	68.71%	-71.15%
Italy	66.82%	0.15%	41.17%	-65.82%

Sources: own calculations; increase in government expenditure from the first to final year of the time period presented (IMF 2018); increase in inflation rate between first and last year depicted (OECD 2019).

Four literature strands explored radical change in macroeconomic regimes: the globalisation literature, the literature on international organisations, the literature on ideas and institutionalism. While these approaches provide important insights into how, respectively, the global sphere and individual state actors shape policy change, the links between those two spheres, and how those might contribute to producing macroeconomic change, have received less attention.

The first literature strand stresses that the juncture was a function of capital mobility which triggered economic turmoil in many advanced market economies enforcing a convergence of macroeconomic outcomes (Boix 2000; Rodrik 1997). The main argument follows on from Thomas Friedman's (2000) concept of the *golden straightjacket* which states that once capital markets were liberalised, governments became subject to three critical disciplining forces of financial markets. First, currency exchange rates and interest rates were increasingly set in international markets (Cerny 1997). Second, capital flows and investors increasingly responded to fiscal and monetary decisions (Brooks et al. 2015; Mosley 2000). Finally, credit rating agencies increasingly included fiscal and monetary policy indicators into ratings enforcing domestic policy change (Barta/Johnston 2021; Leblang/Mukherjee 2004). While globalisation clearly presented hurdles to the free choice of macroeconomic policy, this literature tells us little about how developments in the global economy became translated into policy considerations within the state. This is particularly important in light of the considerable differences in which governments and central banks perceive crises and their remedies (Fernández-Albertos 2015).

A second explanation focuses on the influence of international organisations. After capital mobility and stagflation made deficit economies more vulnerable to speculative attacks of global financial markets, many governments became dependent on loans from international organisations (Polillo/Guillén 2005). The IMF, for instance, supported inflation targets, budgetary institutions, and central bank independence in a range of deficit countries in exchange for credit lines (Goldstein 2001; Rodrik et al. 1999). There are two core arguments of how the IMF shaped macroeconomic outcomes. First, the Reagan presidency granted it coercive powers to monitor and impose economic discipline on debtor countries (Ban 2016). Second, the IMF provided a platform for professional networks of economists, policy makers, and financial market communities to disseminate ideas about restrictive policies (Chwieroth 2007; Madariaga 2020). These networks also shaped ideas in domestic central banks leading to restrictive policies (Johnson 2016). While this literature offers critical insights into the international dynamics of loan conditions, more could be said about how different state actors perceived the pressures of international organisations and responded to them in intrastate interactions.

Ideational scholars have highlighted the role state actors' *social learning* in response to global economic events. Some argue that state actors selected new policies along their individual crisis experiences and experimented with new policy tools until they found promising ones (Béland 2006; Dunlop 2009; Dunlop/Radaelli 2020). Others have stressed that the crisis may have generated new beliefs about economic policy making. In this view, currency crises instigated acts of emulation among countries

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that had not already successfully fended them off (McNamara 1999; Risse 2004). These approaches make significant contributions to our understanding of the interaction of global developments and domestic responses. However, the particular and conflictual relationship of the fiscal and the monetary realm in moments of crisis are not fully explored.

While institutionalists disentangle the role of different state actors in macroeconomic policies, the global crisis does not play a critical role in these approaches. Scholars in this tradition stress that one critical determinant for macroeconomic policy developments is central bank independence (CBI) which leads to low-inflation policies and non-accommodative fiscal solutions (Carlin 2013; Franzese 2002; Hall 1994; Iversen 1998, 2000). The pressure of CBI on policy outcomes is particularly pronounced for left-wing governments (Bodea and Higashijima 2017) and becomes more effective through multiple constitutional checks and balances as well as a free press (Binder 2021; Bodea/Hicks 2015; Keefer/Stasavage 2003). This literature also explicitly highlights that as preferences of governments and independent central banks differ interactions between the two spheres are often conflictual (Goodman 1991, 1992). While this literature has made an important contribution by highlighting the institutional differences in the macroeconomic sphere across countries, these differences cannot explain similar macroeconomic policy trends. Therefore, a dynamic factor, like a global crisis, must be interwoven with its tenets to explain critical junctures.

3. Critical Junctures and State Actors

This article develops a set of theoretical conjectures about central banks' influence on macroeconomic policy outcomes in moments of crisis. It draws on Critical Juncture approaches (CJ) which stress that crises cause the breakdown of existing institutions. This insight is combined with tenets about self-interested state actors from Actor-Centred Institutionalism (ACI) which allow me to flesh out how different state actors perceive the crisis and how they may use it to achieve policy goals.

Crises assume an essential role for path-breaking change in Critical Juncture approaches. In normal times, inertia, transition costs, and *lock-in effects* prevent radical institutional change (Pierson 2004; Scharpf 2000). A crisis may lead to the breakdown of institutions or trigger conflicts over basic rules in existing institutional configurations (Ikenberry 1989: 223-24). Often global developments, including changing macroeconomic dynamics or a shock to international norms, trigger radical institutional change in the domestic sphere (Cortell /Peterson 1999). The conjecture which can be derived for the British case is that the 1970s global economic crisis of capital mobility triggered the *central-bank micro-strategy mechanism* as rising levels

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inflation and exchange rate crises rendered existing monetary instruments increasingly ineffective (Walter/Wansleben 2019).[3]

Traditional CJ approaches stress that once the crisis has relaxed the structural constraints to change, state actor *choices* determine the direction of policy change (Mahoney 2001). However, if different state actors are involved in this process, conflict and strategy should be important as well. ACI views governments and central banks as purposive state actors endowed with individual and organisational self-interest which they pursue through *institutional, structural,* or *ideational* power resources (Mayntz/Scharpf 1995; Scharpf 2018: 22, 37). While state actors may not hold fully equal capacities to achieve institutional change (which explains the differences in outcomes in table 1),[4] two factors may explain the trend in similar policy changes across countries.

First, depending on their position within the state, individual state actors hold somewhat intrinsic preferences for the outcomes of political processes. Governments are interested in (re-)election and tend to support economic stimulation which benefits powerful societal groups (farmers, manufacturers, and workers). Central bankers, on the other hand, tend to be interested in price stability due to their close alignment with inflation-adverse financial interests. Moreover, central bankers aim at expanded control within the larger macroeconomic policy framework (Goodman 1991: 333, 1992: 15). From this insight the following conjecture can be deduced for the British case: Conflicts between the Bank of England and government officials were generally comparatively unlikely due to the nationalisation of the Bank after the war – which makes the UK a least likely case for the mechanism. It was the Chancellor of Exchequer rather than the Bank who determined monetary instruments (Wass 2008: 22). Compared with countries with independent central banks, where fiscal and monetary policy are set in two distinct administrative spheres, conflicts should be muted in the British case where the Bank was subordinated to government

3 While much of the Critical Juncture literature has customarily focused on different paths of institutional change adopting a branching tree metaphor (Collier/Collier 1991), it is also possible to focus on the shared elements of change across countries (Capoccia/Kelemen 2007: 360). This study relies on this concept because it uniquely highlights the relationship of a crisis and policy responses. However, it also amends the previous use of the concept by stressing that the crisis itself may change the opportunity structures for specific state actors to achieve policy goals.

4 Mayntz (Mayntz 1983, 1987) has argued that even if state actors have clearly defined interests, they may encounter a range of obstacles in implementing policy effectively. These obstacles may result in different policy outcomes. Table 1 shows that there are similar trends across countries, but also, especially for the policy field of spending, differences between countries. These differences may go back to implementation problems. This article focuses on the similarities but does not deny that some differences have prevailed between countries.

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(Marsh 1993). However, it is still possible that some level of conflict did arise with the onset of stagflation, as government officials and Bank officials may have developed opposing policy plans (Needham 2014).

Second, if conflicts emerged, then the nature of the crisis may have opened new avenues for central bankers to pursue their interests. As CJ scholars recently pointed out, crises may not only relax constraints to institutional breaks but may also offer opportunity structures for actors to strategically push for policy change (Burnham 2017; Keeler 1993). The literature proposed to split permissive from productive conditions of change: *Permissive conditions* are necessary but not sufficient for radical change and may include crises that open windows of opportunity. *Productive conditions* are specific activities of actors that lead to change. The two spheres may be more closely related than traditionally expected in the literature, e.g. actors may use the nature of the crisis to enforce change (Soifer 2012; Weyland 2004). Most economies in the 1970s suffered from a combination of stagflation as well as exchange rate volatility driven by increasingly mobile international capital. Both problems could in principle be addressed by the central bank getting a better grip on liquidity in the economy. Thus, central banks may have been in a superior position to offer solutions at this moment in time. Thus, while the Bank of England held few institutional resources to pursue its policy goals, it had access to structural resources (the nature of the crisis) and ideational resources (narratives of the crisis).

The first hypothesised strategy is *projecting a worsening of the crisis*. A crisis can leave a sense of urgency among state actors which may stoke fears that inaction will worsen present conditions (Keeler 1993: 441). Central bankers were particularly well positioned to point out economic emergencies in relation to the stagflation and exchange rate crisis. Through their expertise in monetary affairs and their close ties with the financial community monetary officials could make it sound costly to ignore developments in financial markets (Braun 2018; Goodman 1992: 7). This strategy should have been available to Bank officials. First, British monetary policy rested on qualitative lending controls since the post-war era which made officials dependent on the cooperation of commercial banks for monetary policy (Needham 2014: 14-15). This dependency may have become more salient during the crisis and Bank officials may have used it to convince the government of policy reforms. Moreover, the British economy experienced a series of exchange rate crises in the 1960s and 1970s which made macroeconomic policy dependent on international financial markets and creditors (Burk/Cairncross 1992).

Moreover, central bankers were in a superior position of *window creation*. In Kingdon's (1984) garbage can model of organisational choice' a policy window opens when

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three conditions interact: a *problem* is recognised, *viable solutions* are thought of and the latter are *politically feasible*. However, state actors may not only use a window of opportunity they may *create* one. They may use privileged access to economic information to highlight the right moments for change (Burnham 2017; Keeler 1993). Through their expertise in macroeconomic developments described above, central banks may have been in a superior position to analyse and present data suggesting the right moment for radical institutional change in midst of exchange rate crises. In the British case the Bank of England not only oversaw monetary policy, but also accommodated fiscal policy through manipulation of the gilt market, closely monitoring market responses to macroeconomic policies. Thus, monetary authorities were in a powerful position to suggest the direction and timing of change to stabilise markets.

Inertia, costs of transitions, and *lock-in effects* generally raise the hurdles for radical change (Pierson 2004; Scharpf 2000). Thus, one of the most important strategic abilities of state actors is to read the opportunity structures in a specific economic and political environment. Below I list the process of the *central-bank micro-strategies mechanism*:

- **Step 1**: Capital mobility triggers a crisis of limited steering capacity of monetary policy.
- **Step 2**: Step 1 triggers tensions between the government and the central bank and leads to the central bank determining its self-interest in the current crisis.
- **Step 3**: The central bank strategically uses the developments in the economy to achieve its goals through projecting a worsening of the crisis and creating a window of opportunity.
- **Step 4**: After the strategic interaction with the central bank, the government implements the instruments suggested by the central bank.

4. Methodology and Archival Material

To test the expectations developed in section 3, this article applies a method of theory-testing process-tracing (TTPT) (Beach and Pedersen 2013; Collier 2011). While most case-study methods aim at establishing correlation between variables, the analytical goal of process-tracing is to establish whether a causal mechanism connects x and Y – in this study whether central-bank micro-strategies connect an economic crisis (x) and macroeconomic reforms (Y) (Beach/Pedersen 2013: chapter 8).

Since the primary purpose of TTPT is to test the existence of a mechanism in an empirical case, cross-case inference is not possible unless the method is combined with a comparative-case study approach. This is why this article applies TTPT to

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a least-likely case – typically a case in which theoretical expectations are unlikely consistent with the outcome because it does not fully satisfy the theoretical assumptions and scope conditions (Eckstein 1975). A case of this kind can offer strong analytical leverage to increase our confidence in the existence of the causal mechanism in a wider population of cases due to what Levy (Levy 2008: 12) called the Sinatra inference – "if I can make it there, I can make it anywhere". I have laid out the probability of the mechanism in the British case in section 3 emphasising the limited chances of *conflict* between government and central bank and the limited *institutional power* of the Bank of England to enforce change.

I first test my own mechanism against alternative approaches using a congruence method. This method establishes whether the predicted outcome of alternative explanations matches the actual outcome if the hypothesised independent variable is present (George/Bennett 2005: chapter 8). I present a process-tracing table in Appendix A which lays out case-specific observable implications (OIs) for each alternative explanation and tests their validity.

In a second step, I test the mechanism of interest. Appendix B develops case-specific expectations, or observable implications (OIs) for each of the steps of the *central-bank micro-strategies* mechanism. For each expectation, I develop structured empirical tests which assign values of uniqueness and certainty to assess the relative test strength. OI 1 to 4 are assessed through *hoop, smoking-gun,* and *doubly decisive tests*. A hoop test establishes a necessary but not a sufficient criterion for the presence of the mechanism – it is most useful to eliminate alternative theories; a smoking-gun test provides a sufficient but not a necessary criterion for causal inference – it is mostly useful to confirm a theory; and a doubly decisive test confirms necessary and sufficient criteria for causal inference – it establishes high levels of explanatory power (Collier 2011: 826-827). While hoop tests can be found at the lower end of the spectrum of test strengths, smoking-gun tests and doubly-decisive tests assure strong causal relations. Therefore, if the combination of these three tests is affirmed, we can infer with reasonable degree of certainty that the mechanism was present in the case (Collier 2011).

The empirical basis of the article is comprised of 2,103 pages of archival documents from three different sources: The Bank of England Archive, The National Archives, and research reports. Since it is the goal of this study to find detailed insights into the interests and strategies of monetary officials, the collection of archival material focuses on interactions between Bank officials (Governor, Deputy Governor, Chief Cashier, Chief economist, Court and the Executive Directors) and government officials (represented by the Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and their

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immediate staff). The Bank of England Archive material entails notes on monetary policy and economic developments, communication among central bank officials and communication of central bankers with HM Treasury and government officials about fiscal and monetary policy (sources used from this archive are designated with the signature 'BOE' in the citations). The National Archives material contains transcripts of meetings of the Bank of England with Treasury, Chancellor and Prime Minister as well as notes written for communication within government. All documents were collected in a MaxQDA file and coded to test which independent variable got closest to explaining the critical juncture.

5. The Demise of British Demand Management (1970-1979)

In two critical reform periods in the 1970s, British policy makers converted the macroeconomic policy framework from Keynesian demand management to monetarist goals and instruments. First, the 1971 Competition and Credit Control (CCC) Programme deregulated the British banking system and radically reformed monetary policy by replacing the existing system of regulatory control with a cost-driven system with flexible interest rates (Hill 2013; Silverwood 2021). Then, in 1976, policy makers agreed to publish a monetary target (£M3) to control bank lending to the private and the public sector. By including public borrowing, this target did not only curtail credit expansion but also considerably constrained government spending (Capie 2010: 28). Both reforms were implemented against resistance in the Conservative Edward Heath (1970-1974) and the Labour government of Harold Wilson (1974-1979).

5.1 Testing the Role of Globalisation, International Organisations, and Ideas

This section tests the validity of existing theoretical explanations of the macroeconomic policy shift. Account evidence, sequence evidence and statements of policy makers are used to test whether the hypotheses in the literature can be confirmed or disconfirmed. I first assess the hypotheses of the globalisation literature, then international organisations, and finally, the role of ideas in the development of macroeconomic regime change. We can rule out a considerable impact of institutions (independent central banking) because the Bank of England was under public ownership since the 1946 Bank of England Act.

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Table 2 Existing explanations

Explanations	Hypotheses
Institutions	– independent central banks force governments to keep deficits low in exchange for low interest rates
Globalisation	– Capital market openness makes governments subject to financial market discipline – interest rate increases enforce policy change
International organisations	– Governments are dependent on loans from international organisations with conditionality
Ideas	– social learning of policy makers through the crisis; they implement new policies because economic conditions force them to do to rethink old paradigms

Own summary

The globalisation literature stresses that capital mobility made macroeconomic policy subject to financial market discipline. With rising interest rate volatility policy change was enforced externally (e.g. Barta/Johnston 2021). The documents do not confirm this hypothesis. If British officials were confronted with a *golden straightjacket* in the 1970s, they did not (yet) accept it. We can see this most evidently during the conservative Heath term. Heath had won the general election in 1970 on a campaign which promised to revitalise the competitive ethos in the British economy (Silverwood 2021: 97-98). Despite this orientation towards free-market ideals, Heath opposed flexible interest rates which the Bank of England viewed as necessary to remedy market instabilities. Instead, Heath planned to implement an economic stimulus package to fight rising levels of unemployment (TNA/T318/326, 18.08.1970; Wass 2008: 9). As one official put it: higher interest rates would "damage the impact of the package just presented" and present a blow to investment (TNA/T326/1062, 25.10.1970). When in 1974 Harold Wilson's Labour government was elected its response to the stagflation crisis was to reflate the economy by raising public borrowing from £2.6 billion to £6.3 billion (Burk/Cairncross 1992: 15, 18; TNA/CAB129/17932, 01.11.1974). Instead of supporting a published monetary target, promoted by Bank officials, Chancellor Denis Healey planned to use the dirigiste special deposits (the so-called "corset") to curb deposit liabilities of the banks (Needham 2014: 80-81; Wass 2008: 197). At a press conference the Chancellor argued that he did not believe a target would "give you support under the ball of your foot" and found that "there are literally four other countries in the world that do it only, America, Germany, Switzerland and Canada and many of them treat their targets with a very cavalier fashion and can afford to" (BOE/6A50/19, 23.07.1976). The hesitancy of government officials to embrace flexible

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interest rates and monetary targets disconfirms the hypothesis that the pressures in the market had forced governments into macroeconomic reforms.

The archival material also offers important insights on the role of international organisations (e.g. Ban 2016). International organisations were strongly prevalent in UK macroeconomic politics in the 1970s. Following the frequent currency crises of the 1960s, the UK received lines of credit from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), support from several European countries, the US and Canada and a swap facility from the Federal Reserve Bank of New York totalling $4,370 in 1966 alone (Bordo, Macdonald, and Oliver 2009:444). IMF missions laid out conditionality for credit lines which included short-term lending freezes, borrowing limits for the Exchequer and a ceiling on total Domestic Credit Expansion (DCE) (Goodhart 1986:82). However, it is unlikely that the influence of the IMF alone triggered radical macroeconomic change. First, the UK government held significantly greater sway over the negotiations of credit conditionality compared to other debtor countries. Due to sterling's position as second reserve currency, a radical loss in value would have jeopardised stability in the Bretton Woods system (Oliver/Pemberton 2006: 8). More importantly, critical to the IMF conditionality was the objective to raise export levels. In the realm of monetary targets the IMF therefore proposed the implementation of a target called Domestic Credit Expansion (DCE) which ensured that external deficits were kept low. External deficits were, however, not included in the £M3 target which was eventually implemented under Bank guidance (TNA/T233/3021, 1975). Moreover, in line with the goal to increase export levels the IMF often sided with the government on plans to devalue the pound. But devaluation was fiercely opposed by the Bank of England and did not become the main cornerstone of the policy response (TNA/PREM16/832, 1976).

Finally, the ideational literature has argued that policy makers learned from the exchange rate crises leading to the adoption of monetarist beliefs (Mandelkern and Shalev 2010; McNamara 1999). The archival material, however, contains little indication of an emergent *academic* monetarism within the Bank. The Bank staff, including senior Bank officials like Charles Goodhart, were not convinced of what they dubbed the *neo-quantity* theory. While a seminar on monetarism initiated by the IMF was turned into a standing Money Supply Group (MPG) where officials debated monetary targets and financial deregulation (TNA/T318/1062, 1970), central bankers remained wary of monetarist tenets. Bank officials explicitly stated that they did not aim for *Friedmanism* and a report published by the MPG in the fall of 1969 mentioned that the group had only found weak evidence of the core tenet of monetarism: that money supply drove incomes changes (Needham 2015: 94-95; TNA/T318/1062, 1970). They had not found any "degree of certainty as to the nature of the relationships between

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monetary changes and changes in the main component of national income and expenditure" (TNA/T318/1062, 1970). Instead, central bankers increasingly came to support targets for more pragmatic reasons: to place stronger emphasis on price stability, signal to the private sector on their intentions and shaping inflations expectations. These measures promised to get them closer to the goal of regaining control and shaping fiscal policy outcomes (Cobham 2003:16).

5.2 Tracing the Impact of Central Banker Micro-Strategies

We cannot understand the critical juncture without taking stock of how the global sphere triggered domestic policy decisions. In the British case, changing global conditions of capital mobility kicked off a crisis in the domestic macroeconomic sphere leading to macroeconomic change (OI1). The archival material clearly indicates that this crisis rendered monetary instruments, which had worked in the post-war era, increasingly ineffective. British monetary policy was heavily dependent on regulatory instruments including qualitative lending controls and credit ceilings. While these measures were effective in the post-war era when capital mobility was low, their efficacy waned in the 1960s with the rise of the Eurodollar markets. Traditionally, the Bank Rate was set through a clearing-bank cartel which offered non-competitive lending rates to different economic sectors.[5] While this rate was effective as long as credit was created mostly domestically, with the rise of the Euro-currency and the wholesale markets in the 1960s, an increasing share of lending took place outside of the cartel system considerably limiting Bank control over lending rates. To illustrate, between 1951 and 1966 the ratio of clearing bank deposits to wholesale deposits dropped from 9 to 1.6 percent (Needham 2014: 41). The second important instrument of the post-war credit control were liquidity ratios. In 1946, the clearing banks agreed to hold 8 percent of their deposit liabilities at the Bank and held a "prudent" percentage (28 percent in 1963) of total deposits in easily realisable assets with the Discount Houses (Needham 2014: 16). However, since the ratio was only held by deposit-taking banks their effectiveness faded with rising capital mobility (Capie 2010: 28-29). Finally, banks had to keep a share of gross advances at the Bank as special deposits which could be called in moments of credit expansion in the post-war regime. But the clearers grew increasingly resentful of the costs associated with these measures generating friction between Bank and the banks (Green 2016; Ross 2004).

5 The tariff was tied to the Bank Rate which determined the cost of funds for clearing banks. It ensured that priority sectors such as shipbuilding and exports received a guaranteed rate (Capie/Billings 2004: 86-87).

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The recurrent experience of currency crises made up an essential element of the story of how macroeconomic policy change evolved. Since 1944, the international monetary framework of the Bretton Woods system had functioned as a safeguard against destabilising floating exchange rates and capital flows (hot money movements) which had pushed many Western economies into crisis in the 1930s. However, speculative attacks soon returned because officials were unable to fully regulate capital flows. And currency crises – attacks on the exchange value of a currency by foreign exchange markets (Bordo/Schwartz 1996: 438) – returned as international financial capital responded to mismatches of domestic financial policies and the peg. Sterling was particularly vulnerable to these incidents and experienced frequent currency crises between the years 1964 and 1967 as balance of payments deficits stoked concerns that the pound could devalue. Therefore, demand management moved to the centre of policy concerns as it appeared to worsen inflation tendencies and external imbalances (Oliver/Pemberton 2006). While the IMF and central banks offered credit lines and swap networks between 1964 and 1967, the international community grew increasingly impatient with the British government in the late 1960s.

This crisis did not only trigger a breakdown of domestic institutions – as expected by traditional Critical Juncture approaches. It also fundamentally shaped the interests and the behaviour of central bankers vis-à-vis the government (OI2). To demonstrate this, we first have to examine the nature of the crisis. The Mundell-Fleming trilemma states that under fixed exchange rates and low capital mobility, attempts to stimulate economic activity may result in balance of payments deficits, while fixed rates and capital mobility impair policy makers' ability to stimulate economic activity entirely. In the early 1960s, when the Bretton Woods system was still intact and capital mobility limited, the British economy therefore generated massive balance of payments deficits (Capie 2010: 21-22). Over time, these deficits became further aggravated by the traditional overvaluation of the pound. Current account deficits put pressure on the balance of payments which had to be settled through foreign exchange reserves. When exchange reserves were depleted, exchange rate crises erupted (Baker 1999; Schenk 2002: 346-48; TNA/T318/326, 1970). These crisis tendencies were accelerated by high levels of sovereign debt and the Bank's mandate to buy gilts to keep the Exchequer's financing costs low (Capie 2018: 363).

Account evidence, comprised of statements by central bank officials, demonstrates that this specific nature of the crisis shaped central bankers' policy interests and incited conflict with the government. Not being in control over international capital flows, Bank officials viewed the fiscal realm as the prime point of attack to regain steering capacity. Governor Gordon Richardson frequently expressed his dismay

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about persistently large public sector deficits and suggested developing clearer definitions and goals for monetary policy with "a lead coming from the Bank as opposed to the Treasury". Chief Cashier John Fforde commented in a similar vein that restrictive fiscal solutions were critical in solving the inflation and exchange rate crisis (Dow 2013: 14, 49). In a policy note these arguments were presented to the government: the "effectiveness of [...] monetary techniques" required "restraining of the growth of public expenditure". Large net purchases of Government debt returned money back into circulation, but "restraining the growth of public expenditure" could "transform the monetary environment" (TNA/T318/326, 1970). The Bank's statements also clearly demonstrate its self-interest in retaining power within the macroeconomic framework, threatened by the crisis. Senior officials Charles Goodhart and John Fforde argued that a more competitive financial structure coupled with "control weapons" – reserve ratios, market operations and Bank rate – would make banks more "responsive to official monetary policy" (BOE/4A153/1, 30.3.1971). Moreover, Bank actors supported a "counterparts approach" which coordinated fiscal policy, debt management, and monetary policy with the goal to accomplish a restrictive monetary aggregate (TNA T318/326, 1970). Finally, the Bank argued that the price weapon required flexible interest rates and dismantled controls, measures which the government strongly opposed (TNA/T326/1062, 19.10.1970). Taken together, the Bank proposed a radical transformation of the macroeconomic framework to enhance its own steering capacity.

Traditionally, Critical Juncture approaches expect that in an episode of crisis state actors select new policies which change the path of institutional development. However, actors do not only *choose* new policy paths. They may also use the crisis context to pursue individual policy interests. The Bank's first strategy was to use the state's structural dependency on the banking sector to *project a worsening of the crisis* (OI3a). The role of crisis projections can best be observed during a conflict in late 1970 and early 1971. In this conflict, two different proposals to counter accelerating credit expansion and speculative attacks were debated: The government proposed to expand special deposits, while the Bank suggested to dismantle the clearing bank cartel, implement a uniform and competitive banking system with reasonable measure of monetary control and to use interest rates flexibly. Within this struggle, the Bank strategically highlighted material crisis conditions to portray special deposits as inferior tools for credit control. The first material condition stressed vis-à-vis government officials was the state's structural dependency on the banking sector. Bank officials stressed that special deposits curtailed the efficient allocation of resources in the banking sector with long-lasting consequences for the state's ability to influence credit creation:

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Almost without interruption since 1964 the authorities have sought to induce the banking system to lend less than commercial and banking considerations would have indicated, and to lend in a different pattern. The underlying and long-run disadvantages of intervening in the private sector to produce an effect of physical rationing are obvious (TNA/T326/1062, 19.10.1970).

Bank officials also worried that special deposits were crisis instruments that were never meant to stay in place for an extended period of time (BOE/4A153/1, 30.3.1971). A situation in which crisis controls became the norm could lead to a precarious capacity to respond to the next crisis because the Bank would have expended this ammunition (TNA/T326/1062, 25.10.1970). In meetings with the Chancellor, John Fforde made clear that these instruments were not only dangerous because they no longer effectively curbed the rise in bank advances but also because they restricted lending business in the banking sector on which officials were heavily dependent. A large call of special deposits would "have the most adverse effect on the relationship with the banks" and would "make it difficult to keep their cooperation" (TNA/T326/1062, 25.10.1970). The Governor, Sir Leslie O'Brien, suggested that it may be more advisable to "take steps to end the cartel" so that the banks would not be reluctant to put up their lending rates once credit creation had to be curbed again (TNA/T326/1062, 25.10.1970). The point of structural dependence was reiterated in a policy paper to the Chancellor which proposed to heighten competition: the government was dependent on the goodwill of the banks which were often asked to step in to "act in the national interest" and this may not happen in the future, if ceilings were retained (BOE/4A153/1, 30.3.1971).

Five years later, the Bank projected a future run on sterling to highlight the need to announce a monetary target (BOE/6A50/19, 21.07.1976). After more than ten years of recurrent currency turmoil and periodic reliance on international assistance, the locus of the crisis had shifted from the domestic banking sector to global finance and international creditors. To influence policy decisions, the Bank adjusted its strategy to this new reality in the economy. Following the oil crisis of 1973, British external payments deteriorated, and rising levels of inflation led to a selling of sterling (Harmon 1997: 143). The Bank vigorously protected the value of the pound buying sterling of $1.25 billion and $1.5 billion in the first two months of the year. When conditions worsened, the Prime Minister and the Chancellor developed plans to devalue the pound – this would also improve the competitive position of the British industry in the world economy, the government reasoned. But the Bank objected because invoicing in sterling entailed a critical advantage for British financial markets (Burk/Cairncross 1992: 12). Bank officials found that a monetary target and fiscal restrictiveness, policy outcomes long desired by central bankers,

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would soothe global financial responses. First, actors highlighted that officials were dependent on the IMF: "influential official opinion abroad" including the IMF and the contributors to the General Agreement to Borrow (GAB), an initiative led by the IMF to acquire new sources of international liquidity for the UK, found a "normative monetary target" greatly important. It was further elaborated that it had to be expected that this opinion would become reflected in market sentiment, especially in US markets. Actors found that confidence in the government's ability to contain inflation did "not seem at all assured" (BOE/6A50/19, 20.07.1976).

Aside from the general condition of market dependencies, central bankers also highlighted the negative externalities emerging from a mismatch between the new institutional infrastructure and capital mobility. By 1976, a monetary target had been implemented but the government refused to announce it. Leaving the target unannounced in a context of international speculative flows, the Bank argued, could spur a further acceleration of money supply and have "an adverse effect on confidence". A publicly-announced target would "allay the generalised fear of excessive monetary expansion", giving markets a clearer idea of policy commitments and greater confidence that necessary action would be taken to achieve the policy goals (BOE/6A50/19, 20.07.1976). It was also stressed that leaving the target unannounced directly affected the ability to finance government spending: "The adoption of the [unannounced] monetary target is likely to reinforce both the rapidity and amplitude of moments in market rates, so that gilt rates would be more volatile and might well rise higher this winter than would otherwise be the case" (BOE/6A50/19, 20.07.1976).

According to Kingdon (1984), policy windows emerge when a policy *problem* is identified for which *viable solutions* are available that are also *politically feasible*. However, agreement on these three factors does not always arise naturally. Instead, state actors with superior access to information may use it to *generate a policy window* (OI3b). This strategy can be observed in the behaviour of the Bank in both reform periods. Coupled with capital mobility, the Bretton Woods system of fixed exchange rates constrained the effectiveness of monetary policy. Only under two conditions could central bankers regain capacity to influence credit creation: a surplus in the current account and the release of parity through floating. These conditions did arise in different years in the 1970s and were used by central bankers to suggest a window for policy reform. In 1970, the year when the Bank was pushing for the implementation of the CCC, an unexpected surplus emerged in the current account easing the pressure on currency reserves and providing space to focus on domestic monetary developments (Capie 2018: 361). Bank officials argued that the surplus offered an unusual opportunity to resolve the crisis because it distributed new institutional capacity to the monetary realm. The surplus would re-establish macroeconomic

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control through the management of the gilt-edged market and control of bank credit *if* financial markets were deregulated and an interest-rate weapon was implemented (TNA/T318/326, 1970). Interest rates were falling, demand for loans was stagnant, and balance of payments were strong: These were the conditions under which a more flexible interest rate structure and more competitive banking would make a real difference: this was "perhaps the most propitious moment [for change] that is likely to present itself for some time" (BOE/4A153/1, 30.3.1971).

The second opportunity to highlight a policy window presented itself in 1976 when the Bank proposed an announced monetary target. Once the Bretton Woods system started to crumble and the dirty float became implemented in 1972, the Mundell-Fleming trilemma was resolved: flexible exchange rates restored monetary capacity. When forecasts predicted a brief slowdown of monetary expansion in a year characterised by strong inflationary pressures, the Bank saw an opportunity to shift the policy focus from international policy targets (exchange rates) to domestic targets (price stability) (Capie 2010: 21-22). The Bank presented these changes in the global economic and institutional sphere as a window to regain macroeconomic control *if* the government published the £M3 target and signalled to markets its dedication to further fiscal restraint. Central bankers wrote in a policy note that the "pause [of monetary expansion] will be more pronounced the more favourably the present [fiscal] package is received". However, this was only the case if public borrowing levels and the expected rise in bank lending stayed below their current level (BOE/6A50/19, 20.07.1976). The stability in monetary and fiscal indicators was critically dependent on how markets perceived the development of the budget. Under these conditions announcing a target was the most effective tool to signal commitment to fiscal restraint to the markets (BOE/6A50/19, 20.07.1976).

The CCC was implemented in September 1971 and included three policy elements desired by the Bank: a shift to a cost-based credit system, the dismantling of the banking cartel and flexible interest rates. Moreover, the £M3 target became announced for the first time in 1976, considerably restricting the government's monetary and fiscal room to move (Needham 2015: 109). The fact that government officials first strongly objected to the implementation of flexible interest rates and an announced target but later implemented these measures in midst of a worsening crisis and under the influence of central bank officials, suggests that the agency of the Bank contributed to the emergence of the price-stability regime (OI4). The validity of this causal chain of events is further undergirded by statements made by government officials. Government officials increasingly adopted the Bank's narratives of market dependency to explain the need for reform. Government officials increasingly agreed that effective monetary control was obstructed through the

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inability to control the lending of London clearing banks which were increasingly "drawing on foreign currency resources" (TNA/T259/663, 18.02.1970). The Chancellor concluded that quantitative restrictions on bank lending had to be removed to allow for "freedom for financial enterprise" and "more effective control of the money supply" (TNA/CAB184/40, 28.9.1971).

After almost twelve months of discussions, Chancellor Denis Healey published a 12 percent £M3 target in July 1976 and presented a fiscal package that cut spending by £1 billion (Cobham 2003: 16; Harmon 1997: 131). The archival material shows that with the continuing pressure of the crisis and central bank narratives, external confidence became a factor increasingly difficult to refute for the government (IO4). In his last defiant letter to the Governor, Healey argued: "I do understand very well why you feel that an explicit target would do more for confidence". And he promised to "take [it] very seriously" if monetary growth further expanded (BOE/6A50/19, 22.07.1976). This promise turned into a reality in September 1977, when the government decided to uncap sterling, focus on £M3 and cut spending (Burk/Cairncross 1992: 18; Needham 2014: 116-18). Healey explained, along the Bank's logic, that the target had to be announced and spending cuts had to be large enough to "re-establish confidence in sterling" (TNA/CAB129/191/6, 21.7.1976). Following the sense of urgency created by the Bank, he argued that if the planned deflationary measures were too "mild" they "would fail to carry convictions in the markets" (TNA/CAB/128/60/12, 25.11.1976).

6. Conclusion

This article set out to explore the role of state actor strategies in the emergence of monetarism and fiscal austerity. So far, the literature has focused on macro-level variables like globalisation pressures, the influence of international organisations, ideas, and institutions to explain radical institutional change. However, the micro-level interactions of different state actors have received less attention. The article proposes and tests a causal mechanism which links the interests and strategies of individual state actors in relation to a global exchange rate crisis and accelerating capital mobility and shows how these have contributed to the economic policy revolution in the 1970s.

The article finds that the crisis provided an opportunity structure for the Bank of England to pursue a monetarist reform and budget cuts. It shows that in the run up to the macroeconomic policy reform the Bank of England developed an interest in regaining control in the monetary sphere and developed strategies: Central bankers first projected a worsening of the crisis stressing the dependency of the British state

on the domestic banking sector for effective macroeconomic outcomes. Later, when speculative attacks moved further to the centre of the crisis, the Bank projected a run on sterling. Only if officials published an £M3 target global financial markets and international lenders would regain confidence in British fiscal and monetary policy. Moreover, the Bank highlighted windows of opportunity in which greater control of the central bank, through financial market deregulation or the implementation of a target, would allow for the resolution of the crisis. These initiatives were highly effective as the reasoning of the Bank was later adopted by policy makers when implementing the reforms.

Future research will have to investigate whether more recent crises also provided opportunity structures for central banks. Since the 2008 Global Financial Crisis (GFC) and the 2019 COVID-19 Crisis advanced market economies again experienced radical transformations in fiscal and monetary policy. While some accounts highlight the differences in fiscal and monetary responses to the crisis, Mandelkern (2016) stresses that there are also striking similarities: while monetary measures became strongly expansionary during the crisis, fiscal policy was not expansive enough to work against a downturn. Moreover, contractionary austerity returned soon after the peak of the GFC.

Since both crises were characterised by the collapse of a highly deregulated global financial system, central banks became key actors in providing crisis remedies and were able to further expand their control over the macroeconomic institutional framework. The GFC was a financial crisis characterised by a collapse of derivative values and mortgage-backed securities, followed by an international banking crisis. The COVID-19 Crisis was triggered by an external factor (the virus SARS-CoV-2) which instigated a crisis in asset markets – the market for American Treasuries in particular (Tooze 2021: 14). In both cases central banks have considerably expanded their remit to regain stability in the system. Central banks were able to present themselves as the actors with the capacity to solve the crisis by recovering lending capacity, resolving the credit crunch, and restoring faith in the commercial paper markets. Through unconventional policy programmes central banks bought significant shares of government and private sector bonds (Langley 2015: 84). This not only expanded their balance sheets to unprecedented sizes but may have also significantly expanded their capacity within the overall macroeconomic framework.

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RESEARCH

Theorizing State Power: The Multi-Sites of Power Approach, Race, and New York State's COVID-19 Treatment Guidelines

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Abstract

We might re-examine critical state theory by exploring the state's role in mediating conflicts around racism in the US during the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, we argue that the New York State Department of Public Health's guidance for COVID treatments in 2021 is best understood in the context of larger social struggles against racism in policing in the US, demonstrating the relevance of the multi-sites of power approach to state theory. We re-tool aspects Bob Jessop's critical state theory to argue for the salience of this approach in understanding contemporary state attempts to create social order out of societal divisions.

Keywords: state theory, racism, political sociology, COVID, social movements, multi-sites of power

1. Introduction

One salient factor in the study of political sociology is the activity of states – the institutionalization of our legal-rational order and set of social relationships which are designed to manage the conflicts that arise from a society riven by inequality. Critical state theory underwent decades of fierce debate about the nature of the state in a capitalist society. Much of this work maps out tensions theorizing the state as a site

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of capitalist class power while acknowledging that state actors might also act autonomously to secure their own interests in their pursuit of social order, of a certain kind. Similarly, theories of the state have looked at how state power intersects with race (Marable 1983; Omi and Winant 1990; Ignatiev 1995; Stevens 1999; Winant 2000; Feagin 2001; Goldberg 2002; Yanow 2003; Calavita 2005; Cazenave 2011), and feminist theorists have noted how the operations of state power are shaped by patriarchal power and gendered relations of inequality (Mackinnon 1989; Gordon 1994; Orloff 1996; Connell 1999; Abramovitz 2000; Curran and Abrams 2000; Haney 2000; Zylan 2000; Brush 2003). Much of this theoretical literature on the state mapped how the state serves to reproduce larger social relationships that make up capitalism, white supremacy, and patriarchy, thus managing and ordering group conflicts that emerge as a result of relations of inequality.

Beginning, perhaps, in the alterglobalization movement, there was a resurgence in anti-authoritarian theorizing about the state and the nature of state power. Much of this "new anarchism" (Graeber 2002) borrowed heavily from feminism, critical race theory, and left-wing forms of Marxism (particularly autonomism) (Pannekoek 2003; Flank 2007), rather than conceptualize the state as solely an organizing force for those larger social relationships; however, these anti-authoritarian theories insisted that the state as such was a relation of inequality. Importantly, many anti-authoritarians argued for prefigurative forms that attempted to create social movement organizations which refused bureaucratization, refused to be state-like, and perhaps, sowed the seeds for forms of dual power that escaped the logic of the state. These ideas were also an important feature of the "movement of squares" that arose as anti-austerity protests around the world after the global economic crisis of 2008, particularly in Occupy Wall Street in the U.S. (Bray 2013).

Alongside the rise of these theories and movements (and sometimes embedded within them in complex ways), queer theorists insisted that we understand power as diffuse throughout society. Even institutions like the state, in this view, could be understood as instantiating in the context of daily life, including in bodies of knowledge, or discourses, that produced particular kinds of identities, particular kinds of people (Foucault 1978). The state, then, was a complex set of institutions, but also a way of relating.

These ideas added important elements over time to critical state theory, offering conceptual tools to understand, theorize, and trace state power. Following this, the multi-sites of power (MSP) approach to state theory was developed to braid together salient elements from each of these perspectives, attempting a synthesis for understanding state power (Glasberg and Shannon 2015; Glasberg, Willis, and Shannon

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2018). This perspective modifies elements of Jessop's (1990) critical state theory, inviting scholars to examine state projects, the balance of political forces, and the selectivity filters that serve to focus the state gaze. Engaging with the important work of early critical state theories, largely developed within Marxist frameworks, the MSP approach argues that the state is best understood, not as a site solely of class struggle. Rather, the state is posited as a complex set of institutions and social relationships that includes activities related to class dominance under capitalism, but also processes that serve to uphold patriarchal power, white supremacy, heteronormativity, and the power of the state itself. Accordingly, these sites of power operate in complex, intersecting ways.

We argue that this approach is a useful lens to understand the unfolding of the COVID-19 pandemic, which began for the United States on January 20, 2020 when the first case of the novel respiratory illness was identified. We theorize that this case can be viewed as an alteration in how the state has attempted to create social order out of conflicts that have arisen due to longstanding racism in the U.S. and lends heft to some of the central arguments in the MSP approach to state theory. Drawing on previous state projects around pandemic policy, the U.S. state saw an uneven and scattered response. Helmed by President Donald Trump, in the early phases of the pandemic it was difficult to see a unifying message from the state, let alone a coherent national response. Filling the gaps in state policy, a number of mutual aid initiatives developed to alleviate the accumulating effects of the pandemic, in many cases mirroring the prefigurative arguments of feminist and anti-authoritarian radicals. The New York Times (de Freytas-Tamura 2021), for example, outlines the rise of these mutual aid initiatives across the U.S. to help people access much-needed resources, like food, clothing, and therapy and mental health services. Nevertheless, the state did respond to the emergent pandemic with a spate of policies, including stimulus checks sent to most families, pausing student loan payments, and protecting tenants from eviction. Given the federal nature of state power in the U.S., individual state policies were adopted in this scattershot approach. It is in this context that the New York State Department of Health (NYSDH) released its guidance on the administration of antiviral and monoclonal antibody treatments, which, in a historic moment, included racial and ethnic inequalities as part of its consideration in eligibility.

Given this entrance of state power to address pandemic conditions – now across two Presidential administrations – and the tensions between the state and social movement responses, we argue that it is a good time to revisit the MSP approach to state theory to specifically highlight the role of race and ethnicity in New York State's (NYS) treatment guidance. In this paper, we outline the literature on state theory and its

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coalescence into the MSP approach, focusing particularly on the balance of political forces and selectivity filters. We then analyze the state/society relationship and argue that the MSP approach offers crucial tools to understand the development of NYS treatment guidance as a mechanism for creating social cohesion and order in the midst of conflicts over structured inequalities, in particular racism.

2. From Early State Theory to the Multi-Sites of Power Approach

Theorists of the state have explored the question of the relationship between the state and society for decades, producing a lively and protracted but largely unproductive debate among proponents of contrasting models, most of which have focused on *class*-based frames of reference. Business dominance state theorists, for example, have consistently focused on the relationship between the state and economic or class actors that reproduces capitalist class relations through the state's authority to create policy and the huge dominance of capital interests over the state (Hooks 1990; Akard 1992; Burris 1992; Skidmore and Glasberg 1996; Clawson et al. 1998; Prechel 2000). Capitalist state structuralists, in contrast, have emphasized that the state is not simply situated *in* a capitalist society, but is instead a *capitalist* state (Poulantzas 1969; Mandel 1975; Wright 1978; Block 1987; Glasberg 1989).

State-centered structuralist theories diverge by framing the state as the site of bureaucratic political power. Accordingly, the state is neither necessarily capitalist in nature nor subject to capitalists' demands. As an institution, the state has interests separate from the demands of external groups or economic pressures. In sum, the state is impervious to mechanisms of intraclass unity identified by business dominance theory and unaffected by the "capitalist nature" of state structures assumed by capitalist state structuralists (Skocpol and Ikenberry 1983; Amenta and Skocpol 1988; Hooks 1990; Amenta and Parikh 1991; Skocpol 1992; Chorev 2007). It is also, according to this perspective, impervious to pressures from below.

Proponents of the class dialectic perspective disagree with this last assertion. Instead, they complicate the analysis of state policy formation by introducing the role of labor (again, focusing on class relations) in addition to the state and capitalists in the decision-making process. In this model, class struggle processes affect the state and its policy making (Zeitlin, Ewen and Ratcliff 1974; Whitt 1979; Esping-Anderson et al. 1986; Levine 1988; Eckstein 1997). Resistance from below is most effective, according to this perspective, when working-class interests are organized and workers are mobilized into social movements able to create mass disruptions (e.g., labor strikes) (Quadagno and Meyer 1989; Quadagno 1992). More often than not, before working

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class organizations can create mass turmoil, the state will seek instead to create order by mediating and cooling off conflicts through legislation designed to co-opt labor interests without seriously eroding capital accumulation interests (Witte 1972; Schmitter 1974; Galbraith 1985; Levine 1988; Swenson 2002).

Taken together, these models illuminate significant structures, processes, and relationships affecting state power and policy making. However, they remained mired in endless debates about which one of them was correct (and implying all others are inutile models). Moreover, there are whole areas of social and political policy-making relative to social disorder and oppression that are not adequately covered by these models because their (only) site of focus is the class relation. How do we explain the dominance of patriarchal, racialized, or heteronormative policy-making with the existing theoretical frameworks these models offer? Particularly for the purposes of this paper, how can models of critical state theory rooted in class explain the ways that contemporary antiracist movements have affected state policy in its pursuit of social order? What is needed is a model of the relationship between the state and society that allows for an analysis of *multiple* oppressions and how they intersect and overlap in policy and everyday life, one that widens our analytical lens beyond simply class.

Several analysts have explored the relationship between gendering and the state (Mackinnon 1989; Gordon 1994; Orloff 1996; Abramovitz 2000; Curran and Abrams 2000; Haney 2000; Zylan 2000; Brush 2003); between racism and the state (Marable 1983; Omi and Winant 1990; Ignatiev 1995; Winant 2000; Feagin 2001; Goldberg 2002; Yanow 2003; Calavita 2005; Cazenave 2011); and between heteronormativity and the state, particularly in the exploration of sexual citizenship (Evans 1993; Ackelsberg 2010). However, we need a conceptual framework that blends these literatures, as well as literatures concerning social movements and resistance to the state, in a broader explanation of the relationship between the state and society. What are the elements that such a framework would need to include? We propose an analytical framework that builds on Jessop's (1990) concepts of state projects, selectivity filters, and balance of class forces, though for the purposes of this paper we will focus on the latter two.

3. Selectivity Filters

Selectivity filters function to mobilize bias: they act as a lens through which actors perceive, understand, and act on issues. Some notions and perspectives are filtered in and others are filtered out of the policy-making process. As such, these filters have a mediating effect that frames and shapes not only perceptions of and discourse

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about issues, but also the emergence of policy solutions. Selectivity filters go beyond individual policy initiatives and are integral to the dialectic process. The reflexive interplay between selectivity filters and the relations of political forces reverberates through the implementation of that policy and sets the stage for later policy creation, modification, and implementation.

Several analysts have incorporated the notion of the role of framing in social movements (Gamson 1992; Benford 1997; Oliver and Johnston 2000): how do actors themselves come to define and understand issues, structures, processes, and strategies? What is the role of culture, ideology, and discourse in setting the parameters of analysis and action? This suggests an important question for theories of the state: how does the process of framing affect state-society relationships and policy making? Relatedly, how do social movements act as agents from below, setting the stage for new policy proposals around emergent selectivity filters?

Cultural and ideological frames, as well as prior legislative precedence, act as selectivity filters biasing policy creation and implementation, although these may be challenged by the processes and dynamics of political forces. Past legislative policies and implementations have tended to have the overall effect of acting as selectivity filters biasing the framing of newer policies so as to reproduce previous power relations, but there are historical moments when social movements force the hand of the state, creating new opportunities for policy-making.

Selectivity filters, then, act as significant prisms through which actors perceive, talk about, and act on issues that in turn affect the shaping and implementation of policy. However, the power of selectivity filters is not necessarily inexorable. The degree of salience of these filters is affected by political relationships and processes, or the balance of political forces, giving us a crucial window through which to view the role of social movements in affecting state power and processes.

4. Balance of Political Forces

Where Jessop talks of the balance of *class* forces, the MSP approach expands this concept to the balance of *political* forces. It does this because gendering, heteronormativity, and racial formation forces are similarly at work affecting state projects, just like class forces, and this expansion is of central importance to our analysis here. The notion of *balance* of political forces refers to the processes and dynamics of struggle between sets of interests to redefine the social constructions that inform social and political policy and practice. The conditions and dynamics affecting these

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forces, we argue, are similar to those affecting the balance of class forces as conceptualized by Jessop.

Furthermore, the concept of a balance of political forces expands on the class-centric focus of Jessop's (and much of sociological state theory's) conceptual framework to make room for analyses of class formation as well as other power relations such as gendering, sexuality, and racial formation, and the intersections of these. Hence, it becomes important to explore the balance of political forces (of both oppression and resistance) before, during, and after the implementation of policies and projects and the selectivity filters that operated to frame public and political discourse in the state's pursuit of social order. Here, the state becomes an actor and the state project an arena of contested terrain, both of which are subject to resistance from below as well as dominance from above. The state, thus, can become an agent of oppression as well as an agent and object of change.

The balance of political forces is conditioned by the relative level of unity within groups as well as among groups (Weinstein 1968; Peattie and Rein 1983; Levine 1988; Quadagno and Meyer 1989; Fraser and Gordon 1994); the relative level of unity within and among state agencies and branches (Skocpol 1992); the resources accessible to groups (McCarthy and Zald 1987); the ability of groups to mobilize such resources (McCarthy and Wolfson 1996); the ability to apply mobilized resources created by actual opportunities or perceptions of the potential threat to create mass turmoil or disruption (McAdam and Snow 1997); condition or health of the economy; structural positioning of groups and state actors in the political economy; and relative autonomy of state actors. Selectivity filters shaping and framing issues and perceptions of viable solutions are conditioned by prior policy precedents (Skocpol and Ikenberry 1983); party politics; ideology and culture; and the ability of groups and state agencies and branches to mobilize bias. The resolution of the dialectical process between the balance of political forces and selectivity filters moves policy initiatives toward policy creation and, thus, the creation of order.

5. Policy Formation and Implementation

How would these concepts of balance of political forces and selectivity filters help us analyze the state's relationship to society? What would an extension of these concepts to analyses of gendering, heteronormativity, and racial formation look like? We can organize the factors suggested as important by the prevailing theories of the state to identify the significant dimensions of the balance of political and institutional forces and of selectivity filters. In particular, such factors include (1) organization (including the extent to which classes, gendering forces, heteronormative forces,

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and racial formation forces are unified and the extent to which they may develop networks and coalitions, as well as these same factors within competing groups); (2) access to and ability to mobilize resources; (3) structural conditions (including the health of the economy, constitutional constraints on policy creation and implementation, existing regulations, and precedence in implementation); (4) opportunity (or perception of potential) for groups to create mass disruption or turmoil; (5) relative autonomy of state actors and agencies; (6) and unity and organization within and among state agencies.

The dialectical process between the balance of political forces and selectivity filters does not end with the passage of a single policy; but rather the dialectical process reverberates through the implementation of that policy and in the subsequent development of social repertoires and cultural practices. These then set the stage for later policy creation, modification, and implementation and cultural practices within the larger state project, which then become part of the selectivity filters that frame subsequent social behaviors and policy initiatives. Individual policy initiatives thus are framed by the larger state project and prior precedents set by existing policies within that project. The introduction of such initiatives triggers a dialectical process between the balance of political forces and selectivity filters.

State projects are animated, then, by the balance of political and institutional forces in the claims process, producing a dialectic process of policy making and implementation, as well as social practices and repertoires over time. Dominant interests may be challenged, resisted, and redirected from below in this process. Taken together, the concepts of the balance of political forces and selectivity filters provide us with useful tools for developing an analytical framework for understanding the relationship between the state, society, and oppression.

We argue that the MSP approach (Glasberg and Shannon 2015; Glasberg, Willis and Shannon 2018) and, in particular the concepts of the balance of political forces and selectivity filters are useful for helping theorize policy and practice related to COVID-19. In this paper, we focus specifically on the NYSDH (New York State Department of Health 2021) guidance sent to healthcare providers in December of 2021 titled, "COVID-19 Antiviral Treatments Authorized and Severe Shortage of Oral Antiviral and Monoclonal Antibody Treatment Products."

6. The Balance of Political Forces and Selectivity Filters: Race, Ethnicity, and New York State Treatment Guidance

First and foremost, it is vital to situate a particular line of importance in the NYSDH treatment guidance referred to above for the purposes of this particular analysis. But this needs to be understood in the context of larger state projects informing public health policy. The Association of American Medical Colleges (2020) defines "crisis standards of care" as those that "guide decision-making designed to achieve the best outcome for a group of patients rather than focusing on an individual patient." These are standards that are adopted during a crisis to protect both patients and providers, as well as public health. When the NYSDH issued its guidance, the U.S. was being hit with the omicron variant of COVD-19 and NYS was affected acutely. This was exacerbated by limits to access to oral antiviral treatments, as well as monoclonal antibodies, which have been shown to help reduce the symptoms of COVID-19 and lead to better treatment outcomes for those given access. Given the limited supply of treatments and the swiftly-rising demand buttressed by the wave of omicron, the NYSDH issued formal guidance to healthcare providers on how those treatments were to be distributed.

One particular line of guidance emerged that was both politically idiosyncratic and the cause of a small reactionary moral panic: NYSDH (2021) declared to healthcare providers that those patients who are authorized for oral antiviral treatment should meet multiple criteria, including having "a medical condition or other factors that increase their risk for severe illness." It was the bullet point underneath that set off public debate (NYSDH 2021): "Non-white race or Hispanic/Latino ethnicity should be considered a risk factor, as longstanding systemic health and social inequities have contributed to an increased risk of severe illness and death from COVID-19."

Right-wing media and politicians went into a disciplined tailspin, attempting to create a moral panic about the guidance. Fox News (Dorman 2022) amplified critics of the policy who argued that it was "illegal and warrants a [Department of Justice] investigation." Conservative pundit Tomi Lahren argued that it was "lunacy" to consider racial and ethnic health disparities in how treatments might be distributed (Fox News Staff 2022). Even former President Trump elevated the attempt at stirring up social outrage, falsely declaring at a January 22 political rally that, "[i]n New York state, if you're white, you have to go to the back of the line to get medical help" (Terreri Ramos 2022).

The policy was idiosyncratic and historically significant, in part, because U.S. policy tends to follow liberal, pluralist patterns that are ostensibly race-blind. It would be

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difficult to overstate the importance of this pattern for U.S. policy. As far back as 1896, in his dissent in Plessy v. Ferguson, Supreme Court Justice John Marshall Harlan noted that "Our Constitution is color-blind, and neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens" (Plessy v. Ferguson, 163 U.S. 537, 1896). Even in the Supreme Court's recent decision ending affirmative action in most settings, writing in support of the majority view, Justice Clarence Thomas notes "extensive evidence favoring the color-blind view" of the constitution (as quoted in Jacobson 2023).

Accordingly, one might assume that past policy tendencies and precedents would serve as selectivity filters for guiding current state policy. But states are sites of contestation, capable of bending and altering to accommodate the demands of social movements from below, at times in response to popular desires and, at times, to coopt and capture the energy of oppositional movements. That is, in some historical moments the balance of political forces is upended and redrawn as a result of social movement mobilizations and pressure from below as states attempt to reassert social order.

COVID-19 was first detected in the U.S. in January 2020. As the nation began grappling with the emerging pandemic, just a few months passed before George Floyd was killed by Minneapolis police that May. And what arose in response to the killing was one of the most significant uprisings in recent U.S. history. Protests, under the banner of Black Lives Matter, appeared in Minneapolis and throughout the country. The summer of 2020 became a summer of unrest with mobilizations taking the streets, and in some cases taking spaces, both public and private. In Seattle, movement organizers occupied six city blocks, called alternatively the *Capitol Hill Autonomous Zone* and the *Capitol Hill Occupied Protest*. In response to yet another police killing of a Black man, Rayshard Brooks, at a Wendy's in Atlanta, activists took the space and used it as a resource center for the movement for twenty-three days.

Across the country, talk of a *racial reckoning* entered the public consciousness and race became a focal point for public discourse and debate. Public schools, universities, nonprofits, state agencies, and corporations began altering their practices to accommodate a public mood that was influenced by the anti-racist messaging of the Black Lives Matter movement. The response – structural, cultural, and ideological – ranged across social institutions alongside a steady reactionary backlash, the most recent instantiation, perhaps, being a concerted attack against anti-racist initiatives in public schools that are often erroneously referred to as *critical race theory*. That is, the balance of political forces was changing as a result of social movement mobilization from below and this was having an effect on the state's selectivity filters.

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State policies are not created in vacuums isolated from the social and institutional contexts in which they are enacted. While past policy, precedent, and prior ideological commitments function as selectivity filters to fix the state gaze on the policies it is able to visibilize, a sudden and immense change in the balance of political forces can likewise focus the state gaze in new directions. The events of the summer of 2020 surrounding the Black Lives Matter mobilizations changed the public conversation in the U.S., centered racial inequality in the popular consciousness, and forced a range of social institutions to account for racial inequality in their practices – the state was no exception and this led to new selectivity filters that influenced a range of state policies. The NYSDH memo for crisis standards of care during the omicron wave is best understood in this larger context of social movement mobilization, cultural and institutional change, and the popular acknowledgement of racial and ethnic disparities diffused throughout daily life, including in our health institutions.

The MSP approach to state theory argues that we re-tool critical state theory in a few important ways. Most importantly, while the primary locus of change in early critical state theory was rooted in class relations, the MSP approach argues that we should give equal weight to struggles around race, gender, sexuality, and a range of oppressions, as well as their intersections. While the Black Lives Matter protests and social dialogue that followed them certainly contained elements of class, gender, sexuality, one of the centerpieces that emerged was a new public consciousness of racism and racial disparities. Using Jessop's (1990) concepts of selectivity filters and the balance of class forces – re-fitted to the balance of *political* forces to account for other forms of inequality and contestation – the MSP approach gives us a theoretical map for understanding the emergence of the NYDH's memo on crisis standards of care during the omicron wave, its accounting for racial and ethnic health disparities, and their inclusion in the statement rather than a reliance on historically-typical *race-blind*, liberal, pluralist models for policy-making.

7. Conclusions and Suggestions for Further Research

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate the utility of the MSP approach to state theory by showing how social movement mobilization around racial inequality led to a change in the balance of political forces affecting civil rights as well as public health policy. This led to the emergence of new selectivity filters to focus the gaze of the state as state actors enacted policy. We argue that the NYSDH's guidance – specifically recognizing racial and ethnic health disparities – in the distribution of oral antiviral treatments is best understood in this larger social context. This demonstrates the utility of the MSP approach to state theory both by centering race in the balance of political forces (rather than reducing social struggles to class) and by outlining the

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changing nature of that balance and its influence on the selectivity filters that inform state policy.

As a stand-alone analysis, we think this leads to some interesting conclusions about social movement mobilization and its possible effects on state power, widening critical state theory beyond its largely class-centric roots. Likewise, the MSP approach is well-positioned to facilitate intersectional analyses. Future analyses using this perspective and its concomitant theoretical tools might look at intersections of various relations of inequality. What might be said about the mobilizations of queer women of color, for example, and how have they affected state policy (or failed to)? How might state policies be driven by inequalities that exist *within* various intersections? For example, how might the state gaze be focused by the professional-managerial character of state actors, regardless of the intersections of marginalized identities they might emerge from?

Above we have argued that the MSP approach to state theory gives us important theoretical tools for understanding state policy generally, but more specifically the NYSDH's guidance on oral antiviral treatments as relates to racial and ethnic health disparities during crisis standards of care in the omicron wave of COVID-19. We outline how social movement mobilizations, driven in the contemporary period by Black Lives Matter protests against police violence, challenged the prevailing balance of political forces, altering the selectivity filters through which state policy is enacted. This is a beginning toward critical state theories that center non-class-based oppressions (which can include social class, but is not limited to it) and can be expanded toward an intersectional critical theory of the state.

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RESEARCH

Double Democratization and the Politics of Property in Municipalist Barcelona

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Abstract

This contribution proposes a conceptual lens on analyzing the political engagements with property by the new municipalist government of Barcelona (2015-2023) as a two-pronged approach to democratization: On the one side, the municipalists intended to strengthen public authority vis-à-vis property; on the other side, the objective was to build democratic capacities among civic, cooperative and administrative actors and promote grassroots-based collective decision-making around local resources. Three examples show the differentiated application of this double democratization, as well as the political and legal obstacles faced: the attempted municipalization of water management, the regulation of private property through public procurement and the cession of publicly owned sites for civic self-management. The critical contribution of the article is to reflect on these cases and show how multiscalar relations of property pushed themselves in front of the "politics of proximity", thus compromising the foundation that the municipalists sought to build on.

Keywords: municipalism/new municipalism, urban democracy, property, municipalization/re-municipalization, civic participation, public-commons partnerships, community-based management, Barcelona

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1. Introduction

For several decades, trends in commodifying or underfinancing social infrastructures – from education to health services – have ushered in a new urgency to the social question. The promise of efficiency through privatisation which has dominated for decades now looks riddled with cracks, as more and more people have been pushed over the brink of poverty and into precarious lives. Effectively, the conditions of possibility for democratic participation have been undermined for ever larger parts of the population. In response, social movements against the "accumulation by dispossession" (Harvey 2004) of welfare state citizens have been gaining influence following the financial crisis. Their demands do not only center on redistribution and re-enlarging the public sector but also on instituting democratic practices to gain control over and shape key aspects of everyday life and social reproduction, particularly at the local level (Kishimoto et al. 2020; Roth et al. 2023).

Against this backdrop, an analysis of the eight years of government under a municipalist leadership from 2015 to 2023[3] is interesting because the governing party *Barcelona en Comú* with its mayor Ada Colau emerged from such a protest movement and sought to institutionalize a comprehensive democratization. Its ambitious original anti-austerity politics emphasized a reversal of privatization by (re-)municipalizing key infrastructure and a renegotiation of *the public* based on civic co-production and public collaborations with commons initiatives (La Hidra Cooperativa 2019). The political project gained traction locally and became a lighthouse project for new municipalism in Europe and beyond (Thompson 2021).

In the following, we will argue that the political program of the municipalist government of Barcelona can be usefully understood as an approach that we term *double democratization*. This approach involves what we interpret as a *differential politics of property* by engaging underlying social relations around resources that are collectively deemed valuable. Double Democratization is characterized by two prongs, one of which emphasizes a stronger public authority to regulate and control property

3 The governing period included a coalition with the social democratic party PSC from 2016 to 2017 and from 2019 to 2023. The unsuccessful mayoral re-election bid of Ada Colau in May 2023 can be considered a turning point for the municipalist party and calls for greater analysis than we are able to provide here.

that has public relevance. The other prong calls for greater grassroots participation and decision-making competency concerning access, use, and management of resources.

To reconstruct our approach to the *politics of property*, we draw on the so-called bundle theory of property which conceives property as a heterogeneous bundle of rights. Bundle theory raises awareness of the fact that, given the diverse social, labor, and private law regulations, real existing private property cannot be reduced to the unrestricted, exclusive, and despotic power of disposal once described by William Blackstone in 1765 (Blackstone 1979). Building on the work of Anglo-Saxon legal scholars since the end of the 19th century, A.M. Honoré (1961: 113) differentiates eleven property-related rights, whereas Ostrom and Schlager (1992) identify four main bundles concerning a resource: (1) access and withdrawal, (2) management, (3) exclusion of others, and (4) transfer to others (Gamble/Kelly 1996: 72). Unbundling property as we shall do in the following into a differentiated set of rights, raises the question of how democratic any such given rights are – *de jure* and *de facto*. Such scrutiny needs to differentiate between the resources in question and therefore we study three examples: the case of managing municipal water service (focus on public property), managing publicly owned sites for civic management (focus on common property), and public procurement (focus on private property). All of these fields have in common what municipalists call a *politics of proximity*, building on the local and everyday issues of importance as matters for collective self-organizing and decision-making. Moving beyond a dichotomy of private and public property, we focus on Ostrom and Schlager's distinction between rights at the operational level (access and use) and rights at the decision-making level (management, exclusion, and transfer) in order to distinguish forms of authorized use from graded forms of ownership: "It is the difference between exercising a right and participating in the definition of future rights to be exercised. The authority to devise future operational-level rights is what makes collective-choice rights so powerful" (1992: 251).

Our take on the municipalist program of double democratization brings together two premises of politics that, considered individually, show significant shortcomings: The premise of *grassroots activism as a progressive force* and the premise of *the state as the reliable steward of the public*. The underlying idea of democratization thus can be thought of here in terms of a double, complementary movement from two ends towards each other, i.e. *top-down* and *bottom-up*. The conjuring of these complementary movements, however, differs depending on the field of concern with distinct roles for public, private, as well as civic actors *and* with different forms of property involved. In this approach, we provide a more nuanced account of property that crosses formal distinctions between public, private, and common. The most

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innovative policy aspect that we discern within what we call a municipalist politics of property is that it is not only about shaping formal rights and regulatory frameworks but also about what we call capacity-building, namely the enabling of particular actors to mobilize rights and property.

We must emphasize upfront that the concept of double democratization and its related politics of property is our interpretation of municipalist strategies. In fact, *Barcelona en Comú* largely neglected property as an explicit topic in political engagements which in retrospect suggests that it has underestimated how relations of property push themselves in front of relations of proximity. In the conclusion, we therefore propose some learnings for the debate around the future of municipalism.

Our primary data included more than 60 expert interviews, including governmental officials, administrative staff, activists, professionals, and researchers, as well as fieldwork observations from three field trips, all of which were collected between 2021 and 2023 (see appendix). In terms of primary documents, we analyzed election programs of *Barcelona en Comú* and government programs from the two election cycles as well as preparatory commissioned reports, material on program websites as well as official presentations of programs and policies, particularly around *Patrimoni Ciutadà* and progressive procurement were central primary sources from party and governmental side. We also consulted with relevant laws, particularly the austerity-driven *Organic Law 2/2012, of April 27, on Budgetary Stability and Financial Sustainability,* also known as the Montoro Law, and the Spanish *Public Sector Contract Laws* of 2017 following the EU Directive 2014/24/EU as they applied to our respective objects of analysis.

In the first part of this paper, we outline the ideal type of double democratization by reconstructing the ambiguity inherent in the idea of the public between state authority and civic deliberation and engagement. To do so, we draw on literature that rethinks the public on the backdrop of experiences with privatization, as well as from perspectives that have inspired leftist politics, i.e. commoning and the foundational economy approach. In the second part, we discuss double democratization by presenting political ambitions in three different relationships of property: municipalization of water services (transformation of private to public property), the public procurement policies that have sought to regulate private economic actors towards social aims (regulating private property) and the program *Patrimoni Ciutadà* of leasing publicly owned land and real estate to civic self-administration (managing public property as a commons). The concluding part reflects on the achievements and shortcomings of these programs, on the particularity of the capacity-building efforts, and considers the challenge of double democratization within the context of the capitalist state.

2. Conceptual Considerations: Double Democratization and the Renegotiation of the Public

There has been significant controversy in recent years about whether *the public* – given its frequent historical articulation as a realm of elite or authoritarian politics – can be a reference point for leftist politics or whether it should be rather substituted by a notion of *the common* that emphasizes democratic processes of collective self-management (Dardot/Laval 2019; Hardt/Negri 2009). In the following, we will develop the concept of double democratization as a political strategy that includes both a *commonification of the public* as well as a *publicification of the commons*. To develop this, we recognize a broad spectrum of ideas from commons conceived by Ostromian neo-institutionalists to the common proposed within post-Marxist accounts. We don't need to go into their theoretical differences here, as it is the shared impetus for radical democracy that is conceptually relevant for our analysis. Various accounts emphasize the principle of civic self-governance of resources deemed important for social reproduction as a key dimension of democratization. Developing our argument of double democratization in relation to the common(s) in the following, we should clarify that we don't consider democratization to be restricted to commoning but more broadly about the empowerment of civil society. Such empowerment encompasses a great variety of publics and associational forms, that may be ephemeral, charitable, labor-based, or campaign-related and thus not always geared towards the common(s).

Several authors have noted an ambiguity inherent within the notion of *the public*. Studying the meaning of *public* in public services, Newman and Clarke (2009: 13) reflect on the variety of usages of the term public: "public=public sector=state", "public=legal and democratic values=public sphere" and "public= citizens= the people=nation". Despite such variety, scholars like Habermas emphasize the ongoing relevance, even indispensability, of the terminology within the ordinary language and the sciences. Habermas contrasts the usages of *public* as referring to events and occasions "when they are open to all" with the "public" in "public authority" tasked with "promoting the public or common welfare of its rightful members" (Habermas 1991: 1-2). This two-sidedness of the notion of *the public* relates to the two prongs of double democratization: public authority, on the one side, civic participation in and democratic appropriation of public matters, on the other.

2.1 Between the State and Profit Interests

The frequent equation of the public with the state can draw on historical experiences in which state elites have proven to be bad trustees of public property, filling their own pockets through its sale (Kratzwald 2015: 28). Dardot and Laval (2019) even push

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this idea of an alienation of the public from its origins as an arena of common issues and highlight that the public has become an instrument of class domination. "Public ownership, in this sense, is not the protection of the common, but rather a form of 'collective' private property reserved for the ruling class, which it can dispense where it sees fit, and deprive from the population according to its desires or interests" (Dardot/Laval 2019: 4). While we reject their collapsing of any conceptual distinction between public and private, we recognize that historically, elite-driven private appropriation of the public at the expense of the working class has taken place in a variety of forms in the Global North since about the 1970s (Mercille/Murphy 2016: 687). On the one end of the spectrum, commercialization within public provisioning, governmental withdrawal of responsibility, as well as the commodification of public services, have formally retained infrastructure within the realm of the public sector. So-called public-private partnerships (PPPs) have been discussed as catalysts for these processes (Ringger/Wermuth 2020; Savas 2000). Such transformations of the public sector commonly happened at significant costs for public employees and users depending on these services. At the other end of the spectrum is the formal privatization of public services and infrastructure in the Global North, a process that occurred most dramatically in post-socialist countries (see also Peters 2023).

Privatization processes have not simply implied a delegation of particular tasks from public to private. The state enrolls non-state actors in the processes of government, for example, opening new possibilities and logics of action through PPPs as Biebricher (2022: 157) highlights. Feminist scholars have highlighted the uneven social consequences of these processes, such as the *double privatization* which not only involves a marketization of basic goods and services but also a gendered downloading of new responsibilities within family structures (von Braunmühl/von Winterfeld 2005; Altvater 2003). While commercialization and privatization of the public sector have been widely considered characteristic features of neoliberal hegemony, this hegemony became undermined by the inherent contradictions of these processes as well as ensuing social contestations.

Within the current post-neoliberal interregnum period, the relationship between civil society and the public has been renegotiated, leading to variegated outcomes. For one, Schultheis highlights that within the conjuncture the idea of "the state as the tendential monopolist of the public" (2012: 11) has lost traction thereby opening up the possibility of civic participation to be recognized as a constitutive moment of the public. Newman and Clarke (2009: 10), in turn, also observe that capitalist and civil society interests have increasingly competed with the state around defining the scope and governance of the public realm. They are less optimistic about progressive moments democratizing public services and point to how civic engagements

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have been coopted by the state. Emergent civic activism and volunteering practices quickly turned into a new object for policy-making raising all sorts of ambiguous questions about the developments towards a "community capitalism" (van Dyk/Haubner 2021). As a form of governance, community capitalism involves a "passive subsidiarity" (Castro 2018: 220) that overburdens community networks without neither improving precarious living conditions nor substantially increasing the collective capacities or resources for democratic self-management (Oosterlynck et al. 2013; Bianchi 2020: 66).

2.2 Commonifying the Public

Social movements have also used the institutional and discursive openings for civic participation in liberal democracies to *reclaim the public* from both state professionals and private enterprises towards greater collective deliberation and decision-making, particularly in the provision of basic goods and services (Kratzwald 2015). In this respect, the literature on commons offers illuminating ideas around such reclaiming of the public. Caffentzis and Federici (2014: 102) note the difference between the public and the commons, but emphasize the need to defend both: "There is a crucial difference between the common and the public as the latter is managed by the state and is not controlled by us. This does not mean we should not be concerned with the defence of public goods. The public is the site where much of our past labour is stored and it is in our interest that private companies do not take it over." Thus, they make the case for "connecting the struggle over the public with those for the construction of the common" based on the idea that "what we call 'the public' is actually wealth that we have produced and we must re-appropriate it" (ibid.).

However, such calls to reappropriate and thereby "commonify" (Fattori 2013) the public also entail significant shortcomings, when reducing the public to grassroots engagements and neglecting the positive functions and ultimately irreducibility of state authority. A significant line of research thus has occupied itself with the analysis of the relationship between state authority and the commons – and it is this strand that has been dominating research on Barcelona municipalism. Pera and Bianchi (2021), for example, find the local state in Barcelona to be an obstacle to the working of urban commons – even under a municipalist government – given technologies of power subjecting them to administrative norms and procedures as well as the "attempt by the local state to co-opt the transformative potential of these commons" (Pera/Bianchi 2021: 122). Roth et al. (2023) and Thompson (2021) don't view the municipalist local state as an obstacle but as a site in need of democratization and potentially turning into a temporary instrument of alternative politics, a "partner state" (Bauwens/Kostakis 2014) or an "enabling state" (Foster/Iaione 2023) to facilitate commoning activities. Considering the municipalist cases of Barcelona

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and Naples, Bianchi (2022) reflects on the challenges of codifying what she calls a local commons-state to foster the endurance of democratic institutions beyond electoral cycles. Milburn and Russell (2019) have strategized around "Public-Common-Partnerships" as a tactical appropriation of the state apparatus for the support of a commons-based economy – with the long-term goal of overcoming the reliance on the state. In a later work, Milburn and Russell (2021: 137) explicitly contemplate the withering of the state quoting Purcell's (2013: 40-41) call to "manage our own affairs, we work hard at it, and we get to the point where it is evident that we can truly govern ourselves."

Aside from the troubling question of who is (or who wants to be) included and excluded in the *we* that Purcell invokes, the withering of the state seems to be rather far-fetched when considering the provision of essential services that cannot be managed in a commoning fashion without involving a significant degree of professionalization and delegation. Movement scholars point to the inevitable character of public administrative capacities particularly in the case of basic infrastructures such as municipal water provision that are capital and knowledge-intensive and therefore "seem to limit the options for alternative institutional settings and direct community management. Thus, activists acknowledge that 'the terrain of the commons and the 'public' are much more interwoven than appears to be the case when one remains hanging in the theory" (Carrozza/Fantini 2016: 115). The question, therefore, arises as to what extent the result of a *commonification* will be a commons or a hybrid moving in the direction of becoming one (Méndez de Andés et al. 2021). Or is such commonification more accurately understood as a co-production between public and civic actors (Brandsen et al. 2018)? Overall, most of this literature conceptualizing the link between the commons and the public doesn't clarify the role of civil society more broadly speaking. In our view, however, it is important to bring processes of democratization into view that go beyond commoning.

2.3 The State Reconsidered: Public Regulation and Contested Multi-Level Governance

Another problem with the mentioned contributions is that they hardly ever question the inherently democratic quality of municipalist movements or commons. While most movements, commons, and civic initiatives emphasize values of inclusivity and collective, deliberative processes of self-management, the question is who gets to be involved in them – particularly given the prerequisites of time resources or knowledge about the when and how of participatory processes. Research highlights the class and education-specific conditions for engaging in civic and commoning initiatives such that well-educated, middle-class participants are overrepresented in them compared to working-class participants, a finding that also shows for Barcelona after

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the real estate and financial crisis (Cruz et al. 2017; Eizaguirre/Parés 2018; Bianchi et al. 2020). While inter-class alliances have been built in several instances (Flesher Fominaya 2015), the question of the accountability of such initiatives towards their local environment remains. Thus, other scholars are more positive about the idea of a state as a public authority to uphold certain standards, if need be, against particular commons and civic initiatives that engage in public activities.

Concluding their research on housing commons in various European countries, Ferreri and Vidal (2021: 14) argue that the state can help establish housing commons beyond "an alternative for the 'happy few' by existing inequalities in access to and ownership of land, property, and capital required for their establishment and maintenance." Public authority in housing commons can recognize 'multiple claimants' as legitimate going beyond a narrow definition of insiders and outsiders and implement broader social claims within particular housing commons initiatives, such as affordability criteria (Amin/Howell 2016). Implicit within Ferreri and Vidal's statements is a doubt that commons initiatives would take on this oversight and responsibility for affordability from a broader societal perspective. Contrasting with ideas of a *commonification* of the public (Bianchi 2022; Fattori 2013), this aspect raises the need for a *publicification* of the commons and civic initiatives, i.e. the regulation of such initiatives that operate within the public according to universal socially defined standards. The thorny question thus is to what extent the public should and could have regulatory authority regarding commons and civic initiatives. Clearly, systematic state intervention is incommensurable with the inherent ideals of commons governance (Kip et al. 2015), or civil society more generally (Cohen/Arato 1994). Thus *publicification* in this case refers only to those commons and civic initiatives that address a public function and receive public resources.

Public authority, however, warrants more nuanced conceptualization to understand the specificity of new municipalist engagements. First of all, the municipal scale is engaged as a strategic entry point because of the distinct materiality of the local state. As many scholars and activists emphasized (Davies et al. 2022: 91ff.; Cooper 2017: 345), the geographic possibilities that the local scale affords to control the public infrastructure of the everyday, as well as to foster direct relationships among inhabitants, amount to a specific quality of municipal politics. Building on these possibilities, municipalist scholars have therefore envisioned a *politics of proximity*, even when acknowledging that local actors have only a certain set of legally authorized competencies (Subirats 2016). In the case of a government coalition, as it happened in Barcelona under Ada Colau, the municipalist competencies were restricted even further to particular political fields and administrative silos. Second, new municipalist governments sought to expand their competencies through contestations

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within multi-level state governance. Barcelona municipalists attempted to leverage local state authority to push for political change at other state levels, be it towards regional, national, or international levels as we describe in the following. The question of commonification and democratization thus should not be posed in terms of its relationship to the state per se but in terms of what scale and what part of the apparatus.

In addition, the quest for democratization must not be limited to direct and radical democratic governance of vital resources. To develop this idea, the work of the Foundational Economy Collective is instructive as it emphasizes the regulation of private economic actors on the market as a key concern for democratic politics. According to Foundational Economy thinking, any basic goods and services deemed essential for social welfare can and should be regulated in the public interest, and therefore considered as part of the public (The Foundational Economy Collective 2018). The key issue is the public implementation and monitoring of the same ethical standards of all enterprises recognized as entities within the Foundational Economy (The Foundational Economy Collective 2018: 174). In other words, the concept of the public is open to various kinds of ownership, private, cooperative, public, etc., thus including private service providers as well as supermarkets (The Foundational Economy Collective 2018: 170). Interestingly, the idea of regulated private entities operating in a public interest amounts to a curious inversion of the previously mentioned insight that public ownership has often not precluded a (private) commercialization of the production of public goods (Böhnke et al. 2015). Market regulation has rarely been discussed in analyses of new municipalism, even though it became an important feature of the local political economic approach (see Salazar 2019 etc.) Aside from such standard-setting and monitoring approach to regulation, we find another form of regulation in Barcelona as part and parcel of the municipalists' double democratization that we call *capacity-building* and elaborate on in the following.

3. Differential Politics of Property: Three Examples

Our case study of Barcelona is situated in the national political economic context of Spain which has seen a drastic financial crisis since about 2007, followed by harsh austerity policies that were implemented starting in 2011. In its wake, public budget cutbacks were imposed on regions and municipalities, leading to waves of privatizations, and an underfunded public sector, while simultaneously, growing unemployment, poverty rates, and the increasing unaffordability of basic goods, such as housing in cities, have fuelled social unrest, leading most prominently to the 15-M protest on the squares of many Spanish cities and a subsequent movement that pushed for political change (Romanos 2017; Huke 2017). The charge of corruption

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against the governing two-party system of conservative and social democratic parties and the economic elite was a key element in these movements, denouncing the ways in which public affairs (such as the public policy-backed construction boom) had been appropriated by elite private interests. Moreover, while the austerity measures to consolidate the public budget left elite economic interests largely untouched, heavy cutbacks for working-class inhabitants were imposed (Observatorio Metropolitano 2014; Buendía/Molero-Simarro 2018). Parts of this movement consolidated in a new type of *municipalist* parties that sought to change local politics as a cornerstone for broader political transformations and first and foremost as a reversal of austerity measures and the various processes of privatization that had ensued (Blanco et al. 2020; Gillespie 2020). Decisive for the intensifying crisis constellations since 2008 was the message, "that austerity can be challenged and circumvented at the municipal scale and through judicious state-civil-society collaborations" (Davies et al. 2022: 29). In this vein, the municipalist ambition was to change institutional politics and open it up for civic co-production, building on civic self-organization and promoting democratic forms of controlling or regulating local resources. Beveridge and Koch (2022: 139) describe the *Barcelona en Comú* project "as intentionally engaging with seeming incompatibles: representative and direct democracy, state and social movements, governmental office and neighborhood associations, political parties and popular assemblies." Importantly, municipalists also made strategic use of the political clout of the local state to contest public authorities and reshape politics at other scales (see also Ada Colau's foreword in Ajuntament de Barcelona (2018a).

The name of the new municipalist party *Barcelona en Comú* evokes the city as a common space shared by its inhabitants. For many party activists, the idea of the commons – that the party name also points to – became a common ground and alternative political orientation to design, produce, use, and administer essential services and goods with substantial citizens' involvement or entirely left to civic initiatives. One of the party founders, Joan Subirats (2017), commented on the term *comú* that "it seemed interesting because it connected with the Commons movement, the idea of the public which is not restricted to the institutional and that was key" (quoted in Ambrosi/Thede 2017).[4] Last but not least, *comú* also refers to the *ordinary* – the *gente comú* that the party refers to is used in the sense of the *common* or *ordinary people*. The combative orientation towards the common as a guiding principle of *Barcelona en Comú*'s movement politics is well captured by its International Committee:

4 Gillespie (2020: 39) sees little relevance of the commons concept in the overall political program of Barcelona en Comú, stating that „(t)here is little evidence, that the currency of the conceptual thinking extends beyond a proportion of the activists."

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> *"We took the social networks, We took the streets and We took the squares. However, we found that change was being blocked from above by the institutions. […] So, we decided that the moment had arrived to take back the institutions and put them at the service of the common good. […] For us, 'winning back the city' […] means putting a new, transparent and participatory model of local government, which is under citizen control, into practice" (Barcelona en Comu 2016: 4).*

Three important efforts of democratization by the government demonstrate different ways of engaging property, thereby envisioning distinct roles of public, private, and civic actors in these processes: (1) the remunicipalization of water management in Barcelona, (2) the progressive regulation in public procurement, and (3) the Citizen Asset Management program (*Patrimoni Ciutadà*) of leasing publicly owned land and real estate to civic initiatives.

3.1 Municipalization of Water Management

The *Barcelona en Comú* electoral program from 2015 (Barcelona en Comú 2015), included a strong push for the (re-)municipalization of public infrastructure, particularly around water services that had been managed by a private company *Aigües de Barcelona* aka *Agbar* by way of concessionary agreements with the City Council since the time of the Francoist regime. This effort can be understood as a democratizing attempt through direct public authority over water services management, a municipalization that would have transferred these services into public property and thus would have amounted to a form of insourcing of this service. At the same time, democratization through municipalization also implied "commonifying" the management through the involvement of civic actors.

The electoral program from 2015 uses the terminology of the commons for water provision that is also found in many other official articulations:

> *"Water is an essential common good for life and access to quality water is a human right recognized by the United Nations. The City Council must guarantee universal access, and its management must be guided by social and environmental criteria, and not be subject to private business. However, today water management in Barcelona is private, final prices have skyrocketed in recent years – an increase of 70% since 2009 according to data from the Catalan Water Agency – and tens of thousands of families have suffered cuts of supply" (Barcelona en Comú 2015: 30, our translation).*

Municipalization was presented as a precondition for claiming water as a commons. In this vein, the electoral program proposes to "Make use of the instruments available to the City Council to achieve the municipalization of water and thus be able to

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carry out public and democratic management" (ibid). Unbundling property here, we can thus see an envisioned shift in ownership with a substantial granting of decision-making rights (following Ostrom and Schlager 1992) for civic actors in collaboration with politicians and professional staff.

The case of water municipalization entails a double democratization strategy insofar as it has built on significant mobilization of movements and NGOs (particularly *Agua Es Vida*) that rallied around making water provision a public service based on significant civic involvement in its management. Municipalization of water services became one of the most prominent campaigns of the government in the first electoral cycle. The campaign, however, faced enormous counter-efforts from the side of the private water services company (*Agbar*) as well as other political opponents, including media campaigns and extensive court litigation.

In 2017, *Barcelona en Comú* was instrumental in the setting up of the Catalan *Association of Municipalities and Entities for the Public Management of Water* (*AMAP*) including Barcelona, six other local councils, two public water agencies, and the NGO *Enginyeria sense Fronteres to* provide support for municipalities that intend to implement public water management (March et al. 2019: 368). The passing of a local legal framework for Civic Participation in 2017 opened the way for introducing public referenda in Barcelona and the first cause that mobilized sufficient signatures was the question of municipalizing water. This framework was heavily contested, including by *Agbar*, and it eventually was brought to fall. The municipal collaboration with movement NGOs such as *Agua Es Vida*, *Observatori DESC,* and various others promoting the cause of municipalization also became a target of the litigation strategy of *Agbar* and its allies, denouncing members of the government for fraudulent public subventions to favor of these groups illegally (Montaner 2023: 148-50). The major blow against the municipalization attempts, however, was the ruling of the Spanish Supreme Court in 2019 that legitimized the concession of the water services to *Agbar*, overturning a previous ruling of the Catalan Supreme Court that had already ruled in favor of the municipalization cause (Popartan et al. 2020: 1428).

These experiences suggest for one, that the financial capacities of powerful private property, particularly *Agbar*, at the time owned by the multinational company *Suez*, allowed for the running of a massive counter-campaign that obstructed the advances of municipalization and mobilized national jurisdiction against these municipal politics. Montaner sees in these instances a concerted legal and communication campaign that he calls "urban lawfare" (2023: 76-79). Several criminal lawsuits were launched against government members that were found to be unsubstantiated and therefore mostly have been dismissed already. The lawsuits succeeded, however,

in his view as effective backdrops to public relations smear campaigns against the municipalist government.

At the same time, a revealing shift in the counter-campaign took place that pointed towards changes in the hegemonic formation. Popartan and colleagues (2020) find that while the company *Agbar* initially ran verbally against the municipalization plans of the new city government, a re-framing of the company's public relations image gradually took place, indicating also a growing discursive pressure against which the company sought to find new legitimacy in the eyes of the public. *Agbar* presented itself as a quasi-public actor who had been managing the water on behalf of the population of Barcelona for decades. The argument was no longer aimed at the greater private-sector efficiency of the company, but at the idea that formal municipalization was superfluous since the corporation was already acting in the public interest as a trustee for water services.

Compounding this ideological battle, the hegemonic mobilization of the law within a multi-scalar constitution of the state put a halt to the legal ambitions of municipalization. More specifically, the case highlights, on the one side, the legal obstacles at the municipal level to transform property relations that are largely determined at higher political levels. Commenting on remunicipalization efforts of services that had been privatized by the previous local government, a municipal administrator criticized in an interview that the EU and national legislation are biased towards facilitating privatization of public assets while remunicipalizing them (again) needs to jump over much larger obstacles. In this respect, the national Montoro-Law stipulated that new public companies cannot be created, public spending is restricted, and retiring public employees cannot be substituted. Struggles around such (re-) municipalization continue in other municipalities of the metropolitan area of Barcelona and beyond; some of them are won by water movements (see e.g. Geagea et al. 2023).

While the establishment of a municipal electricity company and the remunicipalization of a women's shelter as well as several kindergartens were successful, key municipalization objectives related to water services, waste disposal, and home care were abandoned. The latter two were ultimately dropped mainly for financial and employment reasons. Legal and political disputes over the establishment of a municipal dental service and a funeral service continue to this day. Overall, no other project of the municipal government has generated as much opposition as the (re-) municipalization attempts (van Dyk and Gerstenhöfer forthcoming).

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3.2 Public Procurement

As (re-)municipalization efforts have been confronted with so many obstacles, the municipal government can be seen to change political strategy after the failure of the water services campaign. Even when the politics of property shifted from expropriating and socializing property towards regulating property, an orientation towards double democratization remained. Realizing that the challenges of (re-)municipalization in several areas were greater for the municipal government than anticipated, a former high-ranking public administrator told us that after the failed municipalization of water services, increasing efforts were put into politics of regulating private property.

An example of this strategic shift was the decision of the municipal government to no longer pursue the municipalization of home care services, and instead adopt stricter criteria in public procurement of these services concerning the payment and working conditions of care workers. This regulation of private sector providers has succeeded, among other things, in securing a 14-percent pay rise and a guarantee of shorter traveling distances (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2019). In this vein, the public procurement system became a key arena of transformation towards democratic ends – yet it counted with little public recognition, as several interviewees underscored.

Barcelona en Comú can be seen as part of a wider international movement for such progressive procurement under the pressure of labor movements and civic organizations (Grandia 2018; Wiesbrock 2016; Caranta 2010). In the electoral program 2019, Barcelona had a budget of over 1,300 million Euros for public procurement thus giving the City Council leverage to generate thousands of jobs in private companies and the third sector (Barcelona en Comú 2019). Following its intentions in the electoral programs of 2015 and 2019, the government under *Barcelona en Comú* has fostered the use of social and ecological clauses in procurement bids to set standards for economic production and service delivery (Salazar 2019). Throughout the Colau government, the relevance of pricing in the formula of the administrative awarding process was reduced from 80% to 35% under the government of Barcelona (thus giving greater weight not only to social and sustainability questions but also to technical aspects and expertise). In 2022, in a written message, the Commissioner for the Social and Solidarity Economy in Barcelona stated that 92% of public tender contracts include social clauses. However, other expert interviewees also remark that the administration lacks monitoring capacities to check compliance. Moreover, efforts were made to enroll civic and private participants in the execution as well as in the setting of objectives for social public procurement of the municipality through a Procurement Governance Board (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2023).

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In all three electoral programs to date, *Barcelona en Comú* (2015, 2019, 2023) has defined the objective of elevating the proportion of public procurement to entities of the Social and Solidarity Economy (*Economía Social i Solidaria – ESS*)[5] to 25%. Such ambitions were an important part of the strategy to promote the creation and sustainability of cooperatives and non-profit third-sector organizations as strongholds of democratic practice, which also included services like training and counselling as well as the provision of material infrastructure. Throughout the municipalist government it became clear to officials that public procurement for ESS actors was a far cry away from the promised 25% of the total public procurement – even as the exact statistical figure could not be determined due to a lack of available data as we found out from official sources. Nevertheless, Martí-Costa and Conde López (2021) show how the remodeling of procurement practices by the municipalist government benefitted Third Sector organizations more so than for-profit companies in the field of care services between 2017 and 2019.

The democratization strategy through public procurement thus intended to realize a public interest by regulating private actors. In view of unbundling property, some use and management rights of private property including the setting of employment or ecological standards were regulated on condition of participating in the tendering process. However, collective-choice rights were out of the picture within public procurement.

Beyond integrating clauses in public tenders, the municipalist government's regulatory efforts aimed to facilitate private entities in putting their properties to public use. The promotion of local SMEs and Social and Solidarity Economy entrepreneurs was deemed important for the enhancement of the local and regional circular economy, the strengthening of economic actors with internal democratic decision-making processes, and a general orientation toward the common good. We refer to these regulatory endeavors of enablement as capacity-building.

One important capacity-building measure was the publication of the internationally recognized *Social Public Procurement Guide* by the municipal government in 2017 (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2017b). The guide praises the virtues of combining the autonomous and efficient operation of private actors with the regulation according to

5 The municipal strategy document for the promotion of the Social and Solidarity Economy defines the ESS as follows: „The companies and organizations of the economy social and solidarity (ESS) are managed in accordance with common characteristics, principles and values such as primacy of the person and the social over capital; voluntary and open membership; and democratic management" (Associació Economia Social Catalunya and Ajuntament de Barcelona 2021: 4, our translation).

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public interest standards safeguarding social and ecological standards for producers, consumers, and their environment. As a main intention, the *Social Public Procurement Guide* sought to clarify the legal room of maneuver for the public administration to apply social and sustainability criteria in public tenders given national legislation. In addition, the municipality's Strategic Plans for the Promotion of the Social and Solidarity Economy (2016-2019 (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2016) and 2021-23 (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2021)) also included measures to increase the share of public procurement for this sector.

In conjunction with this legal clarification, training sessions were provided, on the one hand, for public administrators to strengthen their understanding and competency in applying social and sustainability criteria when setting up tenders – though movement actors criticized that there were too few of these trainings offered (Xarxa d'economia solidaria de Catalunya 2019). On the other hand, actors within the social and solidarity economy received support for establishing themselves. A newly developed *Department of Socioeconomic Development and Proximity* within the municipal agency *Barcelona Activa* provides (physical) incubation centers and offers other services to these actors. Participants were trained to compete successfully in the tendering process, particularly when social criteria were applied. For larger tendering volumes, ESS actors were supported to develop collectively a tendering bid by joining forces. Such support could be considered vital attempts to even the playing field in public procurement. Otherwise, considered structurally, tendering processes with large volumes would favor large private companies, while cooperative or other collective entities are less likely to have the capacity to prepare a bid, administer a large tendering volume, and fulfill the requirements made in the tender.

Yet it is important to bear in mind that such ambitions to favor particular kinds of economic actors are still premised on subjecting them to a logic of market competition and pushing them into entrepreneurial forms. Efforts to restructure the playing field of such markets have also hit limits since municipal procurement policies are bound to legislation at the national level (Public Sector Contracts Law from 2017) which in turn follows an EU directive on public procurement (2014/24/EU). Under these conditions, the room for maneuvering in public tendering processes to promote particular actors or to limit the selection of potential bidders (such as ESS) is very limited – even as it improved somewhat through the promotion of social and environmental obligations in public procurement with the European Directives 2004/18/EC and 2014/24/EU (Salazar 2019).

Despite the transformative potentials in public procurement that have been highlighted in other contexts such as England by the Community Wealth Building approach

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(Brown/Jones 2021; Manley/Whyman 2021), public procurement has received little attention from the local public in Barcelona. A public administrator in procurement commented in an interview that public procurement policies are not sufficiently *sexy* in public debates. Along such lines, Grandia (2018: 363) claims that the instrument has not been even given much attention in public administration research. This is even more true for the movement-focused research on new municipalism which has mostly left this administrative, yet crucial issue a blind spot. On that background, the municipalist policies and measures around public procurement in Barcelona did, however, receive considerable attention from public administration experts internationally, who took the new procurement policies, administrative regulations, and related programs in Barcelona as an inspiration.

3.3 Citizen Assets Management Program

A third case for the democratization strategy refers to the promotion of "urban commons" as an original objective for Barcelona municipalists. An early municipal manifest from 2014 (Observatorio Metropolitano 2014), an activist-research study in Barcelona published that same year (Observatori Metropolitá de Barcelona 2014), and the report by La Hidra that was commissioned by the municipality (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2017a) highlighted urban commons as a mode of democratic collaboration around the use and maintenance of a shared resource that is deemed important for the collective members' reproduction operating beyond state and market imperatives. La Hidra described such urban commons as a civic mode of self-organization of public services that involves its design and delivery – whether applied to the municipal delivery of public goods (such as water or energy) or to direct democratic appropriation of public spaces and places (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2017a: 11). A genealogy of this notion of *urban commons* in governmental municipalist activities points to a program that in an early iteration of its development still carried *urban commons* in its name (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2017a), but that was later referred to as *Patrimoni Ciutadà* only to avoid the immediate association between urban commons (*comuns urbans*) and the party *Barcelona en Comú*, also casually referred to as, *els comuns*.

The program of *Patrimoni Ciutadà* – the Citizen Asset Management program – is based on the existing stock of locally owned public property and sets the framework for the leasing of publicly owned land and real estate for self-management and programming by civic initiatives and neighborhood associations. The program entails around 400 sites, from community gardens, boule playgrounds to neighbourhood houses for Catalan folklore groups, and sociocultural centers with a range of activities from education to sports. It is important to note that the cession of these public sites and neighborhood and civic self-management has been practiced since the time of the

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Spanish transition to democracy in the mid-1970s. The innovation of the program was to give greater legitimacy to these practices, promote transparency, and foster public-commons collaboration (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2022a).

Local activists saw this program as a significant shift towards enabling public-commons collaborations in the sense that here the local state is not perceived as the owner that grants and sets conditions for access and use of state-owned property, rather the state takes the responsibility to "guarantee that particular resources may be used for the development of common resources" (Castro Coma/Forné Aguirre 2021: 30, our translation). While formally speaking the Spanish constitution does not know *common property* and the sites of *Patrimoni Ciutadà* are municipally-owned and, the program seeks to take a step towards its de facto recognition when the official description of the program speaks about the underlying goal of "communalization of the public" – "*comunalització d'allò públic*" (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2022a: 3). In this program, the local state recognizes existing and long-standing claims to common property and associated practices of commoning. Considering property as a bundle of rights in this case, significant rights are conferred not only at the operational but also at the collective-choice decision-making level to civic and community self-organization for about three years, pending re-approval by program boards in which civic initiatives have a considerable influence.

While this aspect underscores the objective of democratization through the grassroots, the program also reveals an effort towards increased public authority through a participatory governance structure of the program. It includes representatives of the political and administrative sphere as well as from various participating associations. The previous practice of such cessions of municipally-owned public equipment had often faced severe accusations of political favoritism and clientelism. Seeking to rectify this problem and to expand on the potential, the ambition of this program is to make this process transparent and existing resources accessible to new civic initiatives. The program introduces democratic processes of oversight over the various activities and provides administrative support, on the one hand, to coordinate the overall development and the network of activities and sites, on the other hand, to provide assistance and training sessions for initiatives (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2022a: 6). Since it was recognized among coordinators and activists of the program (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2022c) that the existing practices of self-organization show social biases, particularly along the lines of class, race, gender, citizenship, and other, efforts were made to rectify this in part through a self-evaluation process with a community survey protocol that is another central piece of the *Patrimoni Ciutadà* called *Balanç Communitari* (Xarxa d'economia solidaria de Catalunya 2021). The *Balanç Communitari*, once it is officially established and passed as part of the

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program, would form the basis for evaluation by the governance board. The renewal of cessionary contracts of such *common property* would thus be approved based on this survey. This monitoring process is complemented also by capacity-building formats, such as training in civic engagement, awareness around discrimination, and others. Two employees have been hired through the NGO Barcelona Associations Council (*Consell d'Associacions de Barcelona*) with public money to provide assistance and counseling to civic initiatives that participate in *Patrimoni Ciutadà*.

The key achievements of the program development thus have been to set up a common framework to promote these grassroots practices and to democratize their internal processes. Previously, these practices have been dispersed across different departments and districts, creating an intransparent situation in these cessionary contracts. After years of preparatory conceptual, legal, and administrative work that began in the first year of the Colau government in 2015, the program was presented in 2022, but it is yet to be approved by the City Council. So far, governmental officials have been concerned with publishing a catalog of the various locations that are part of the program. Substantial legal examination went into the preparation of the catalog for fear that its transparency might open the possibility for public attacks by political opponents questioning who has the right to use and manage these assets – and who doesn't and why. And yet, the catalog is still to be publicized, thus leaving the prospect of the program in limbo. A possible reading of this situation is to take politicians' hesitance as a political mode of avoiding conflicts around property issues. Criticisms also persisted within the program that the prerequisites in terms of time and energy to be spent for such volunteering acts were unevenly distributed along such social lines of discrimination. Last but not least, from a lens of community capitalism, the practices of civic initiatives under the umbrella of *Patrimoni Ciutadà* also warrant scrutiny given a fine line differentiating the delegation of public service tasks onto the civic sphere from the empowerment of civic actors to appropriate and manage public resources. In the most famous cessionary agreement in Barcelona between the city council and the civic initiative at a former factory site called *Can Battló*, the public evaluation emphasized the amount of money (roughly 1,5 million Euros in 2017 alone) that was saved by drawing on voluntary labor instead of spending money on employees (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2018b).

It has not been the intention of the program *Patrimoni Ciutadà* to challenge existing property relations and change the stock of such sites for community and civic management (e.g. through the expropriation of private assets or rededication of public land). Significantly, as one expert who was involved in the development of the program commented in an interview, the program does not *bite* any private interests. Even so, the co-production of the program by politicians, administrators, and

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civic activists has also been a complicated process taking years and is still incomplete, given the concern with *lawfare*, i.e. strategic deployment of legal administrative complaints and lawsuits against the program from political opponents that seek to discredit the municipalist government. The fear was, as one administrator told us, that if one bit of the program doesn't hold legal challenges, the entire project might fall apart.

The initiatives produce civic and cultural content and facilitate civic participation at a level that hardly anyone has objections against. *Patrimoni Ciutadà* does not allow for services to be administered by civic initiatives that are legally defined to be public and that would fall under existing procurement law, requiring distinct regulations for the cession and operation. Thus, to make a transfer to local actors possible, the city government had to designate the projects as the promotion of civic participation, thereby effectively amputating the important socioeconomic functions of the commons – otherwise, their commoning activities would be considered services subject to a competitive tendering process.

4. Concluding Reflections

We have proposed a reading of municipalist strategies in Barcelona through our conceptual lens of a *double democratization* involving what we term a *differential politics of property*. In all three cases considered, municipalist efforts sought to enhance civic involvement and safeguard public interest as cornerstones of democratization. A key difference within these cases lies in the envisioned areas of responsibility for the provision of the services: From the perspective of the state, (re-)municipalization amounts to an *insourcing* within public sector responsibility. By contrast, in the case of public procurement and *Patrimoni Ciutadà*, the providing *source* is *outside* – either in the private or the civic sphere[6] – and the state assumes the role of a democratically legitimated regulator.

4.1 Double Democratization

Against a dominant take in the academic literature on the Barcelona municipalist project emphasizing the movement-driven *commonification of the state*, our most remarkable finding was that the democratization strategy of *Barcelona en Comú* did not uncritically affirm grassroots activity as a one-way street of democratization. In our conceptualization, the move that renders the democratization strategy

6 We hesitate to use the term outsourcing here since it usually refers to a strategy of shifting provision to the outside (of the state, the firm, etc.) which doesn't apply in these cases.

double is the articulation of a public authority to ensure that a set of values apply universally across the urban population: whether this relates to cheap and reliable water services, transparency of and equal opportunities in ceding public sites to civic groups, or regulatory mechanisms to promote an economy that works in favor of the common good, thus reigning in on the negative consequences in production: (hyper-) exploitation, precarization, externalization of costs, and refusing social responsibility for the social and ecological environment. Importantly, this public authority to regulate property relations was conceived based on civic participation and engagement, resulting in broad legitimacy when intervening in civic or private affairs, or executing public standards and laws. It is thus misleading to take the state as a monolithic bloc vis-à-vis the grassroots. Complicating any simplistic understanding of statehood, the municipalists have affirmed public authority at the local level for multiscalar political engagements to contest strategies and policies of the central government. Further, local state politics have also influenced legislation at other levels, as the development of *Patrimoni Ciutadà* exemplifies. The basic idea of this program has been taken up by a governmental initiative at the Catalan level and has been integrated into a draft law to promote the Social and Solidarity Economy. Since the municipal council cannot pass laws, such transference to the Catalan level would provide the *Patrimoni Ciutadà* with a more solid legal standing.

Two important qualifications concerning the goal of "the public to become commons" (Méndez de Andés et al. 2021; see also Castro 2018: 207) through greater civic participation need to be made, however: First, as much as such goal transforms the articulation of the public, the distinction is far from collapsing in practice. There is a positive role for the state in democratization that cannot be taken over by civic or commoning initiatives themselves. Far from advocating for generalized state regulation of such initiatives, in Barcelona, the public authority did monitor and potentially intervene in civic activities insofar as these were publicly funded or commissioned to provide services. Public authority, in this respect, was considered legitimate to execute democratic decisions and standards. As we have seen in the case of the (re-)muncipalization and *Patrimoni Ciutadà* the state can play an important part in relieving civic initiatives and movements of coordination and administrative tasks.

Second, the capitalist state sets structural limits and selectivities to (civic) participation in political matters (Jessop 2008). As Habermas (1985), Offe (1984), and other analysts remind us, the late capitalist state requires a *mass loyalty* that becomes actualized in general elections based on the promised provision of public goods and privileges. The state is not simply a free-wheeling actor but rather a field crystallized in a historical play of social forces with significant selectivities toward ensuring continued capitalist accumulation (Jessop 2008). From this view, the functional

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requirements of the capitalist state set limits to an encompassing civic participation and broader democratization in economic matters and political governance particularly when jeopardizing profit opportunities and political-administrative efficacy for retaining control. Calls for greater participation – even if promoted by the local government – are repeatedly resisted on various grounds including a lack of technical expertise or lack of property rights.

4.2 Differential Politics of Property

The constitution of the property order has posed a significant challenge to the transformative politics of property of the municipal government. Among the three examples, we saw how democratization efforts were most strongly contested when seeking to change ownership as in the case of (re-)municipalization. Moreover, many years of intensive engagements in regulatory efforts around public procurement and *Patrimoni Ciutadà* yielded only modest outcomes, a far cry from initial hopes of "winning back the city" or instituting a "transparent and participatory model of local government, which is under citizen control" (Barcelona en Comú 2016: 4). Considering Ostrom and Schlager's (1992) distinction we mentioned in the beginning, collective choice rights around management were consolidated within the *Patrimoni Ciutadà*, however, otherwise did not expand to additional cases; rights at the operational level, in turn, made only modest advances within public contracting. The latter is strongly circumscribed by multi-scalar legislation and thus even small modifications demand significant energy and capacity-building efforts. Our cases showed how the local state is tightly intertwined within the multi-level state governance, and therefore, local government should not be mistaken as an instrument ready to implement universal standards at any given moment and within circumscribed fields of action, however small. Even modest changes require ongoing movement pressure at many levels simultaneously – as the story of the 15-M and the municipalist movement illustrate (see also Bua/Davies 2023).

In line with this insight, it may not come as a surprise that the municipalist government engaged substantially in what we have called capacity-building as a politics of property that channels civic and movement energy into entrepreneurship and the effective mobilization of rights. Here public authority is tasked to set up infrastructure or to offer opportunities for (self-)empowerment. This resembles "the partner state" as Bauwens and Kostakis (2014) or "the enabling state" as Foster and Iaione (2023) conceive it. As the sociology of law has long shown, formal rights entitlements are usually not realized in any straightforward way but depend on various other factors (Black 1973; Cyrus/Kip 2015), significantly (potential) rights-bearers' capacities to claim them. Capacity-building can be realized in various ways, and we can distinguish three forms in which the municipalist government has implemented this:

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via (1) infrastructural provision in the form of physical facilities or financial support services for incubation and collaboration, (2) training to disseminate knowledge and promote practices among both public administrators in relating to particular actors and programs as well as civic and private actors to mobilize them around certain opportunities and (3) incentivizing the creation of eco-systems or self-organized networks among cooperative and civic actors through events, public campaigns, or political recognition. Capacity building thus seeks to enhance the actors' abilities, on the one side, to collectively claim rights to objects, and on the other, to support civic collaboration or incentivize particular forms of entrepreneurship.

In contrast to (re-)municipalization efforts, cessionary agreements, or regulation of standards that are directly aimed at the property object, capacity-building thus targets various groups that deal with property objects, most prominently civic, cooperative as well as administrative actors. Capacity-building became an important and innovative strategic engagement for municipalist activities, precisely to increase the capacities of particular groups that have encountered structural disadvantages to produce more competitive bids, such as local SMEs or cooperatives competing with large corporations; or civic neighborhood initiatives competing with professional NGOs. Arguably, a major reason why capacity-building has become so important (and possibly convenient) is that it avoids conflicts with regulatory laws – particularly the Spanish Public Sector Contracts Law – restricting the government's ability to benefit particular groups.

4.3 Beyond the Movement Cycle

One activist lamented about the municipalist government that they failed to *govern to disobey*, institute activist politics to foster solidarity across municipalities and provoke changes at other political levels. However, it should also be borne in mind that the Indignadxs movement has also substantially demobilized since its peak in 2011 and the municipalist movement has also weakened for various reasons since 2015 (Sarnow 2021). In consequence, the political force to push for legal changes or back up politically courageous measures around procurement, (re-)municipalization, or public-commons-partnerships has been compromised. *Barcelona en Comú* was backed in the 2015 elections by a significant share of working-class voters but has over time lost its ability to reach and appeal to this constituency and actively enroll them in their political mobilization. Significantly, without major public attention to public procurement issues, it has been difficult for the government to push any transformation within an administrative apparatus that has enormous forces of inertia against changes. Simultaneously, the enemies of the municipalist government have consolidated over the years and launched massive campaigns of lawfare (as pointed to in the case of municipalization) against political representatives and

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major political projects of the government, thus effectively slowing down or stalling progress on these matters (Montaner 2023).

At the same time, even with original political objectives unachieved, the municipalists contributed to instituting structures and platforms for civic engagement and democratic processes. They were able to shift the discursive terrain of politics as illustrated in the case of Agbar's reframing. *Participation*, a key concern following the uprisings and the first electoral cycle in 2015, was hardly mentioned as a concern in the municipal electoral campaigns of 2023 – partly, perhaps, because it had been mainstreamed through the introduction of participatory budgeting, neighborhood assemblies, and a new regulation on Civic Participation (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2022b). While this hasn't secured re-election for the *Comunes* in May 2023, these developments should not be discarded given their democratic potential and they might set a basis for movements to come. As for future municipalist research and practice, our analysis suggests paying closer attention to how relations of property push themselves in front of relations of proximity. While we highlighted the municipalists' differential and innovative engagement with property, the municipalists rarely made property relations an issue of public debate after the failed municipalization of water services and thus missed the opportunity to politicize the multiscalar constitution of property.

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Appendix

Interviews that were most relevant for this analysis (in alphabetical order):

- *Luis Basteiro*, former administrative staff at the Barcelona City Hall responsible for matters of (re-)municipalization, 5.10.21 and 1.12.21
- *Mauro Castro*, researcher at La Hidra, 8.10.21
- *Pablo Cotarelo*, researcher at Ekona, 16.6.22
- *Laia Forné*, researcher at La Hidra and former staff at Barcelona City Hall responsible for Patrimoni Ciutada 15.11.21
- *Enrique Gornes,* administrative staff at the Barcelona City Hall responsible for matters of (re-)municipalization Gornes 24.11.22 und 3.12.21
- *Albert Martin i Gomez* and *Fidel Gonzalez*, administrative staff at Barcelona City Hall responsible for Patrimoni Ciutadà 11.11.21; 16.6.22 and 23.5.23 (only with Albert)
- *Alvaro Porro*, commissar at Barcelona City Hall responsible for the promotion of the Social and Solidarity Economy 22.11.21 and 9.5.22
- *Xavier Rubio Cano*, administrative staff at Barcelona City Hall, responsible for the promotion of social and solidarity economy, 8.10.21
- *Yunailis Salazar*, researcher, and administrative staff at Barcelona City Hall on public procurement 17.6.2022
- *César Sánchez Rique*, administrative staff at Barcelona City Hall on public contracts 17.10.22 and 12.9.22 (written interviews)
- Kate Shea Baird, activist and representative at Barcelona en Comú, 7.10.21
- *Mariona Soler*, staff at Ateneu Nou Barris, 15.6.22
- *Jon Subirats*, former vice-mayor and co-founder of Barcelona en Comú and researcher, 6.10.2021
- *Ruben Suriñach Padilla*, project manager at XES and researcher 10.2.22; 25.11.21
- *Josep Vidal*, director general at the Generalitat de Catalunya responsible for the social and solidarity economy 14. Juni 2022
- *Jordi Via*, former commissar for the promotion of the Social and Solidarity Economy 25.10.21

Moreover group conversations with:

- staff at Barcelona Association Council responsible for Patrimoni Ciutadá (*Ana Rico* and *Miquel Caum*), 16.6.22
- members of the Casa Orlandai 14.6.22 (with *Aleix Porta*); 24.5.23 (*Natalia Oliete* and *Enric Capdevila*)
- members of umbrella cooperative ECOS, 4.10.2021 (*Guernica Facundo*) and 14.6.2022 (*Laura Hernández, Laura Cruz,* and *Joan Manel Sánchez*)
- members of FemProcomuns (*Monica Garriga*, 15.12.21 and *David Gomez* 21.1.22)

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RESEARCH

Trust and Distrust in Political Institutions

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Abstract

This paper focuses on trust in political institutions. It builds on a large body of research that has provided a wealth of insights but has neglected the relationship between trust and distrust and the specificities of the relationship between institutions and citizens. Drawing on insights from a variety of research fields (philosophy, organisation studies, sociology and political science), the paper argues for treating trust and distrust as two separate concepts. A relational and institutionalist approach is used to show that trust and distrust are part of institutionalised relations, operating at the individual and collective levels, and involving reciprocities and complementarities.

Keywords: political trust and distrust, trust-distrust distinction, trustworthiness, political institutions, political attitudes and behaviours, relational perspective, institutional approach

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1. Introduction

Trust in political institutions has received a great deal of attention from the academic community. This has to do with the relevance of popular support for the stability and legitimacy of political systems, especially with regard to democratic forms of

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governance (Warren 1999; Ankersmit and te Velde 2004). The high priority given to institutional trust is reflected in the diversity of studies rooted in different disciplines (political science, philosophy, sociology, economics, psychology, among others). Scholars have addressed different branches, levels and policy areas of political systems, described trends and scenarios, and identified determinants and consequences (e.g. Levi and Stoker 2000; Zmerli and van der Meer 2017; Searle et al. 2018; Carstens 2023). The wealth of evidence is remarkable. However, it has been repeatedly acknowledged that research has tended to privilege certain aspects while downplaying others (Lewicki et al. 1998; van de Walle and Six 2014). Furthermore, the analysis of trust has been conducted in different disciplines and research areas, resulting in a number of important but partial and disjointed findings.

Two related areas of reflection deserve further attention. On the one hand, research has focused almost exclusively on the analysis of trust, largely ignoring the analysis of distrust as a separate issue. It is true that nuanced analyses of trust in political institutions do not forget to say that some distrust is functional, while unconditional trust is dysfunctional for democratic regimes (Bertsou 2019). These voices add to the growing chorus praising the importance of scepticism in liberal democracies (Bufacchi 2001; Norris 2022). However, the specificities of distrust and trust have been little developed conceptually, and the same is true of the relationship between distrust and trust, although it is generally accepted that democratic governance is built on both (Sztompka 1998).

On the other hand, scholars have been interested in analysing political institutions as targets of trust. The aim is to better understand whether, why and under what conditions politicians, institutions or systems at different levels of governance and in different policy areas are trusted by citizens. Research has provided a wealth of insights into these questions, but has paid much less attention to the specificities of "institutional trust" (e.g. Möllering 2006: 71-75; Warren 2018). Most of these efforts aim at specifying the trustworthiness of political institutions as targets of public trust, for example by referring to the importance of institutional performance, political legitimacy and moral values (Hardin 1996; Sztompka 1998; Uslaner 2002). However, the trustworthiness of institutions provides only a partial picture of what institutional trust and distrust are in its inherent specificities.

This paper seeks to deepen our understanding of trust and distrust in political institutions by addressing these two interrelated shortcomings. To this end, it will briefly describe how institutional trust has been conceptualised and operationalised in previous research. Against this background, the merits of an analysis that treats trust and distrust as distinct but interrelated phenomena will be highlighted. In a

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second step, the specificities of institutional trust will be reflected in terms of the characteristics of trustors, trustees and trust relationships. This will also allow to see how trust and distrust are institutionally linked. The paper draws on an interdisciplinary field of research. It aims to bring together evidence from different fields of research that have provided rich but partial insights. Reference is made to philosophy, political theory, organisation studies and sociology, because they contribute complementary knowledge to an relational and institutionalist approach that helps to differentiate different layers of institutional trust and distrust.

2. Trust and Distrust in Institutional Research

Social science research largely shares the conviction that trust deserves privileged treatment. In sociology and political science in particular, trust is seen as a functional prerequisite for social integration and cohesion, political stability and legitimacy (Lewis and Weigert 1985; Putnam 1993). The priority given to trust over distrust is particularly true when reviewing empirical research on institutional trust. In this area, research has dealt almost exclusively with trust, especially when considering measurement instruments (e.g. OECD 2017). Distrust is not entirely absent, as political theory has been interested in how democratic polities institutionalise trust against distrust (Sztompka 1998; Warren 2018). And more recently, researchers have become increasingly interested in scepticism, arguing that some form of distrust is important and even functional for liberal democracies (e.g. Bertou 2019; Norris 2022). However, these attempts provide only a very tentative account of distrust. Indeed, van de Walle and Six (2014: 166) show that empirical research does not measure distrust per se, but rather refers to somewhat related attitudes (e.g., political inefficacy, cynicism, alienation, etc.) or behavioural effects of distrust (e.g., abstention, voting for non-incumbents, lower tax and legal compliance, participation in protests, or other system-challenging behaviours).

This focus is not surprising when one considers the implicit assumption of most studies, namely that trust and distrust are two dimensions of the same phenomenon. In general, the assumption is that distrust is the absence of trust and that measures focusing on the latter are therefore sufficiently complex. A large proportion of studies, for example, ask respondents to rank their trust in political institutions ("to what extent do you trust the following institutions? ") and provide answers ranging from "tend to trust" to "tend not to trust", from "do not trust at all" to "completely trust", or from "very trustworthy" to "not trustworthy at all" (e.g. OECD 2017: 186-196; Marien 2013). This bias towards trust relationships has consequences for the study of distrust, because the dominant stream of analysis follows the latent assumption that "not trusting" implies "distrusting" and that the scales

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should therefore be understood as a continuum from trust to distrust (e.g. OECD 2017: 102, 158, 193; Schneider 2017: 965, 968). The idea is that trust and distrust are two entities bound to a zero-sum game, i.e. the more trust there is, the less distrust there will be, and vice versa.

2.1 Distinctiveness and Co-Presence

The one-dimensional approach to the study of trust and distrust has been repeatedly criticised. This is the case, for example, with Hawley (2012), who has criticised the one-sidedness of philosophical considerations (see also Jones 2019). Similar claims have been made by Lewis and Weigert (1985) in sociology, by Lewicki et al. (1998) for management and public administration studies, or by Saunders and Thornhill (2004) for organisational studies. Since then, distrust has received more attention (e.g., Guo et al. 2017; Carey 2017; Sitkin and Bijlsma-Frankema 2018), especially in organisation studies. However, a review of research on organisations, public administration and political institutions still shows the prevalence of a unidimensional approach. Van de Walle and Six (2014) attest to a widespread neglect in the analysis of distrust, with research in these areas failing to conceptualise it as a distinct construct, instead treating trust and distrust as opposites on a continuum.

This raises important questions about the distinctiveness of trust and distrust and their potential interrelationships (Guo et al. 2017; Sitkin and Bijlsma-Frankema 2018). A review of conceptual approaches suggests that there are three options for conceptualising the assumed distinctiveness. The first position is that trust and distrust are two sides of the same coin. Hawley (2012), who is interested in the philosophical foundations of trust and distrust, argues that it is important to provide a unified account of both trust and distrust in order to better understand why we trust and distrust others and on what foundations these relationships are based. For him, the essential conceptual element is commitment (fulfilled or unfulfilled): "Roughly speaking, to trust someone is to rely upon that person to fulfil a commitment, whilst distrust involves an expectation of unfulfilled commitment" (Hawley 2012: 1; also Hardin 1996). According to this conceptualisation, trust and distrust are either mutually exclusive, as commitments are either fulfilled or unfulfilled, or there is a zero-sum relationship, depending on the degree to which commitments are fulfilled or frustrated.

A second position has been taken by writers who subscribe to functionalist thinking. Trust and distrust are seen as interrelated phenomena, reflecting to some extent Hawley's position. However, this approach places more emphasis on the distinctiveness of each. In fact, in situations characterised by complexity, contingency and uncertainty about the agency of others, trust and distrust are opposing options

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used by a trustor to reduce the range of choices (Lewis and Weigert 1985: 969). That is, trust and distrust are functional equivalents in situations involving a bet on the future (Luhmann 1979). This means that actors may choose to trust or distrust – or a combination of the two – depending on what predictions they make about the actions of a trustee. Moreover, trust and distrust can co-exist in a situation because they are complementary ways of organising social relations. This complementarity is particularly relevant in settings governed by more formalised relationships, such as formal organisations or political institutions. The functional argument even implies that trust requires the presence of distrust in order to develop and flourish. Formal organisations and political systems institutionalise both in order to maximise the functionality of governance. This position resonates well with Sztompka (1998), who argues that democratic systems institutionalise distrust (e.g. separation of powers, rule of law and judicial review, periodic elections) in order to promote a *culture of trust* because it allows institutional trustworthiness to be repaired (also Braithwaite 1998).

This functional understanding has some similarities with Hawley's unified account, but it softens the assumption of the same *coin*, since trust and distrust provide – functionally – very different solutions to the same problem. Functionalism thus opens the door to a third option that treats trust and distrust as two distinct phenomena with different characteristics, determinants and consequences. Most of these efforts are related to organisation studies, which have seen the need to move beyond the unidimensional focus on trust to acknowledge the ambivalence and complexity of social relations in organisational settings. Empirical studies have confirmed that distrust is an empirical dimension in its own right, thus requiring different constructs to measure trust and distrust (Sitkin and Bijlsma-Frankema 2018: 51). In terms of determinants, organisational studies have shown that trust and distrust depend on different factors, both at the individual level and in organisational and situational contexts (Guo et al. 2017: 8-16). For example, Sitkin and Roth (1993) have shown that trust is determined (i.e., corroded or restored) by regulatory and legal measures (or the lack thereof) that make interactions and mutual commitments more predictable and reliable, whereas distrust is more influenced by value incongruence and the violation of shared values. Moreover, trust and distrust are associated with different emotional antecedents, as Liu and Wang (2010) have shown in simulated negotiations, for example, anger is associated with distrust and compassion with trust.

In terms of consequences, empirical evidence underscores the distinctiveness of trust and distrust. Trust and distrust may be functionally equivalent solutions to the problem of uncertainty and complexity, but they will lead to very different constellations, e.g. solidarity versus atomism, in the patterning of social relations and social

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order (Barber 1983). In organisational contexts, trust enables collaboration and integration, while distrust entails suspicion, personal safeguards, disruptive competition and potential withdrawal from continued relationships (Lewicki et al. 1998; Liu and Wang 2010; Bies et al. 2018). The problem is exacerbated by the inherent dynamics of social relationships, as trust and distrust can unleash different interactional dynamics, leading to self-reinforcing processes of trust or distrust formation (Korsgaard 2018), which can act as self-fulfilling prophecies (Frisell 2009).

The differentiation of consequences often leads to the distinction of two antagonistic forces: trust as a productive and positive factor, whereas distrust has negative consequences for interpersonal, intergroup and interorganisational relations (e.g. Sitkin and Bijlsma-Frankema 2018:54). In its extremes, distrust becomes a problem that requires repair in order to restore trust (Gillespie and Dietz 2009). Formulated in this antagonistic way, it brings the conceptualisation back to the one-dimensional model of a trust-distrust continuum. Scholars of organisations criticise this position, arguing that trust and distrust have both *dark* and *bright* sides and thus entail detrimental and beneficial outcomes (Lewicki et al. 1998; Guo et al. 2017: 8-16). Distrust, for example, has been shown to promote active information seeking and healthy vigilance (Kramer 2002), and to help prevent exploitation and protection (Levi 2000) in organisational and institutional contexts. And political theorists of democratic governance argue that trust and distrust are not inherently good or bad in the governance of political power. Liberal democracies limit trust and defend distrust as public virtues by granting rights and establishing institutions that limit, distribute and control political power, for example by providing individual citizens, civil society and the mass media with the necessary opportunities and means to monitor, oppose or replace those in power through electoral processes or legal action (Szomptka 1998; Warren 2018).

The three approaches described so far make different assumptions about the pervasiveness of trust and distrust. The first approach leans towards a monist understanding that advocates the unidimensionality of trust and distrust (Marien 2013; OECD 2017). It advocates a trust-distrust continuum and assumes a zero-sum game, i.e. a loss of trust always implies a gain of distrust. The position of a trustor would be clearly identifiable because it could be located on a scale ranging from blind trust to scepticism to outright distrust. Although this position might vary over time and in different situations, the relationship to a trustor would be unambiguous, excluding the co-existence of trust and distrust. The second approach subscribes to the idea of functional equivalence and complementarity, and thus assumes a partial co-presence of trust and distrust. The co-presence is partial because formal organisations and political systems are internally differentiated, which means that trust

and distrust are assigned to different organisational units and/or public institutions (Sztompka 1998; Braithwaite 1998). Citizens would also allocate trust or distrust differently, for example, by favouring international over national institutions, the judiciary over the legislature, civil servants over politicians (Marien 2013: 24-7). The third approach argues strongly for the distinctiveness and pervasiveness of trust and distrust, and thus assumes a general co-presence of both. Citizens may trust or distrust public institutions to different degrees depending on the time and situation, but each institutional target would always mobilise elements of public trust and distrust at the same time.

The available research on formal organisations and political institutions presented earlier suggests that the second and third approaches are the most plausible. The first position seems immediately plausible when focusing on the realm of personal relationships, since continuous interactions and experiences among relatives, friends or acquaintances may lead to more stable and unambiguous relationships that are clearly located on the continuum of trust or distrust. The two assumptions arguing for (partial) co-presence are much more plausible when we move into the realm of more distant, complex and formalised relationships within organisational fields and/or political institutions. Partial co-presence is to be expected in organisational and institutional contexts characterised by internal differentiations, and thus populated by a number of different entities, mandates and procedures. However, this assumption has the disadvantage of the first one, because it stipulates unambiguous relations of trust or distrust with the different institutions, units or representatives.

The scenario of a pervasive co-presence of trust and distrust seems the most coherent and likely. There are two reasons for assuming such a co-presence. On the one hand, pervasiveness is to be expected because social relationships are generally characterised by ambivalence and uncertainty. Even personal contacts may not behave in a fully coherent and predictable way, depending on context and time. These ambivalences are much more relevant in the context of organisational and institutional relationships (Lewicki et al. 1998; Guo et al. 2017: 54-8), due to the complexity of these entities, the fact that relationships are more distant and mediated, and that actions are more difficult to anticipate. Citizens are therefore likely to have different experiences and develop mixed emotions and cognitions; at best, their expectations of the agency of organisations and their office-holders are cautious, hesitant or changeable.

On the other hand, it is to be expected that every organisational and institutional relationship will be shaped by different criteria of (un)trustworthiness at the same time. Research converges in showing that trustworthiness depends primarily on

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perceived competence, integrity and benevolence (Bacharach and Gambetta 2001), although people also tend to have different conceptions of trust depending on cultures and political regimes (Schneider 2017) and the different conceptions of (un) trustworthiness that prevail in these cultural and political contexts. These criteria may correlate and thus merge into a coherent perception of trustworthiness, but they do not necessarily coincide. Citizens may trust and distrust a politician or public official at the same time if they perceive him or her to be honest but incompetent, or competent but unreliable. Moreover, although distrust has received little attention so far, it can be expected to add another layer to these relationships. Indeed, it is to be expected that distrustworthiness is a relevant issue in its own right. Citizens may perceive a person, organisation or institution as distrustworthy if the above criteria of trustworthiness are violated, i.e. if a trustee is dishonest, disloyal, malevolent, careless or incompetent. However, especially in the political sphere, it is to be expected that notions of distrustworthiness are not limited to notions of trustworthiness. On the contrary, proper notions of distrustworthiness are well established in political systems. The most prominent and researched notion of distrustworthiness is corruption (e.g. Uslaner 2013), but favouritism, nepotism and cronyism have also been shown to be relevant (Im and Chen 2020). Depending on the country and political culture, concepts such as arbitrariness, insolence, incivility, authoritarianism or ostentation may also indicate distrustworthiness (e.g. Daloz 2003). A politician or civil servant might thus be perceived as competent but corrupt, reliable but ostentatious.

The assumed co-presence of trust and distrust leads to the proposition that every relationship between citizens, formal organisations and political institutions is governed by different combinations of trust and distrust. This proposition was developed by Lewicki et al. (1998) in relation to interpersonal relations within organisations and consists of four cells: (1) a *high trust-low distrus'* situation characterised by congruence and cooperation; (2) a *high trust-high distrust* situation characterised by scepticism and monitoring (trust but verify); (3) a *low trust-low distrust* situation characterised by arms-length transactions; and (4) a *low trust-high distrust* situation characterised by fear and general suspicion. Recent survey results, which distinguish trust and distrust as two separate constructs, show that this typology also applies to the relationship between citizens and political institutions. On the one end, citizens conform to the notion of "trust but verify" when they simultaneously express full trust and high vigilance; on the other end, they express low trust and little scepticism (Tsatsanis et al. 2023; Maggetti et al. 2023).

This typology needs to be extended when moving beyond the realm of formal organisations, where members are very likely to have developed some form of trust or

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distrust. In an institutional context, where relationships between citizens and political institutions may be distant, mediated or suspended, it is necessary to consider that trust and distrust may be absent altogether. Citizens may be disillusioned, disengaged or distant, and thus not inclined to trust or distrust institutions in the fulfilment of their commitments. Alternatively, citizens may be convinced that trust and distrust are not relevant issues, assuming that their relationship with political institutions is governed more by formal rules and hierarchy, power and compliance.

2.2 From Latency to Salience

The possibility that citizens abstain from trusting or distrusting political institutions may be empirically marginal, but it is theoretically highly relevant because it opens the door to a relevant debate on the conceptual meaning of trust and distrust. According to this debate, trust can oscillate between a conscious disposition and an implicit behavioural rule (Möllering 2006:51-4). They can operate at the level of internalised and unconscious behavioural patterns, habitual and semi-conscious predispositions and/or explicit verbalisations and reflections (Endreß 2014:62-8; Offe 1999). For Luhmann (1988), this conceptual ambiguity was a reason to distinguish analytically between familiarity, confidence and trust. These conceptual distinctions are helpful to better understand that citizens' expectations may oscillate between implicitness and reflexivity. For example, citizens may not express institutional trust or distrust as long as the reliability of institutions is taken for granted. Citizens may be used to relying on public infrastructure (e.g. rubbish collection, water supply, transport routes), implicitly assuming that the state will regularly take care of them, and only when state institutions fail to do so will they ask why and whether the question of trust should be raised. Or they are used to not expecting anything from public authorities and are surprised by efficient services, which raises the question of the reasons for these unexpected signs of trustworthiness.

A similar conceptual distinction has been proposed by Hawley (2012) when distinguishing between reliance and trust. For him, trust is not to be confused with reliance or reliability, because people rely on many things, including people and non-human objects. Citizens rely on people without worrying about trustworthiness, and the same applies to most everyday objects (coffee machines, lifts, mobile phones, etc.) and public infrastructure (roads, bridges or buildings). This dependency also affects the institutional sphere. For example, when citizens rely on machines or infrastructure, they implicitly rely on these artefacts, but also on companies to produce safe products, on governments to establish safety regulations for these products, and on agencies to monitor their implementation. But none of this is of concern to citizens as long as they routinely rely on things and people to work as they usually do. The same argument applies to the unreliability of things and people. Citizens may be used to

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things or people in their environment not working as they should, which means that they avoid them or learn to cope with them. This does not necessarily mean that citizens distrust them, as they simply accept that things work as imperfectly as they do. However, distrust may arise under certain circumstances, for example when disruptions (positive or negative) to this everyday order bring issues of trust and distrust to the fore.

Following the conceptual distinction introduced so far, it is advisable to distinguish between habitual faith and disbelief as taken-for-granted, implicit and latent attitudes and habits on the one hand, and trust and distrust as conscious and explicit choices on the other. The conceptual boundaries are blurred, as habitual faith in the proper functioning of public infrastructures may predispose citizens to express institutional trust when asked. At the same time, conscious experiences of institutional trustworthiness may be sedimented into a latent faith or disbelief. However, distinguishing between the two levels is important for analytical reasons, as it allows for a better understanding of the conditions that make institutional trust or distrust a salient personal issue. In this regard, it is possible to point to a number of conditions that have been proposed by research in philosophy and sociology. These conditions do not refer to individual and contextual determinants explaining different degrees of trust and distrust (e.g. Carstens 2023), but to the constitutive elements of trust and distrust themselves.

In this context, two conditions are repeatedly emphasised: vulnerability and uncertainty. On the one hand, it is argued that trust is a salient issue within a relationship between two actors (a trustor and a trustee) characterised by dependence and vulnerability. Dependence is an issue because the trustor is exposed to the action or inaction of a trustee, which may affect him or her positively or negatively. This dependence entails vulnerability because the trustor opens himself to the possibility of being disappointed, betrayed or even harmed by others (Baier 1986). Making oneself vulnerable to others could promote positive relationships with people, because vulnerability invites the commitment of a trustee to act on one's behalf, thus contributing to the development of fulfilling personal relationships and stable forms of social cooperation. But vulnerability can also have a negative side, opening the door to greater dependency, exploitation or abuse. In this sense, vulnerability can also develop into overt forms of precariousness (Mackenzie 2020). With regard to political institutions, we can therefore expect institutional trust and distrust to come to the fore as soon as citizens experience or perceive dependency and vulnerability, even precariousness, in relation to institutional action or inaction.

On the other hand, uncertainty (Luhmann 1988) is important because trust and distrust become salient concerns as soon as citizens are unable to anticipate the actions or inactions of others, be it a person or a political institution. In particular, in cases where a person has to decide whether or not to enter into a personal or institutional relationship (e.g. to vote, to apply to social services, to contact politicians), the uncertainty about institutional responses requires a decision rule. And in this respect, trust and distrust as options seem to play a crucial role.

Vulnerability and uncertainty help to understand why trust or distrust emerges as a relevant personal issue (Möllering 2006: 111), but they do not necessarily help to understand which route individuals take, whether trust or distrust in others is the more likely option. In this regard, three further conditions have been highlighted: cognitive, emotional and normative.

Cognitively, trust and distrust depend on what a trustor knows about a trustee, how people perceive the other person, and how they evaluate the interpersonal relationship and the planned interaction. According to Hardin, this cognitive dimension involves rational cost-benefit calculations. Trust and distrust are based on the trustor's expectation that the intentions and actions of others will be favourable and beneficial or unfavourable and detrimental to oneself (Hardin 2002; also Lewicki et al. 1998). Following this line of reasoning, he even claims that trusting a person – and especially an institution (Hardin 1999: 23) – is not a very rational choice for most people most of the time, because trust should be in the individual's own interest (Hardin 1999: 39). Trusting a person or an institution implies the expectation that one's interests will be protected and promoted by the counterpart. In evaluative terms, trust has a strong cognitive dimension (Lewis and Weigert 1985) and requires various cognitive operations to anticipate the other's ability or willingness to refrain from harm or betrayal: recalling the other's past activities, inferring his or her personal interests, and extrapolating his or her motives or intentions. The assumption would be that congruence or complementarity of interests, intentions and motives leads to trust, while divergence cognitively favours distrust (Sheppard 1995).

A second condition of trust and distrust is related to affections and emotions (von Scheve and Slaby 2019: 43). The relationship between trust and emotions is complex, as emotions can be an antecedent, correlate or consequence of trust (Sitkin and Roth 1998; Liu and Wang 2010; Sitkin and Bijlsma-Frankema 2018:54). Nevertheless, research suggests that emotions play a constitutive role in generating trust and distrust. Studies attribute trust to emotions such as esteem, empathy and compassion, while distrust is associated with contempt, fear and anger, meaning that the two different sets of emotions also drive distrust and trust respectively (Jones 2019).

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Furthermore, emotions are also responsible for feedback loops that reinforce and self-perpetuate trust and distrust: "If we accept an affective attitude account of trust and distrust, we should expect these phenomena to focus intention, shape interpretation, direct inquiry, structure inference and so affect the salience and perceived desirability of action options. This is exactly what we find: seen with distrust an action or remark that might otherwise have seemed innocent will be taken to reveal an ulterior motive, or a lack" (Jones 2019: 959).

Finally, trust and distrust depend on (shared) norms and values. In other words, a person will trust and distrust others depending on normative expectations about the behaviour and commitment of the trustees. Scholars argue that shared norms are conducive to trusting relationships, while normative disagreement or value incongruence promotes distrust, for example when a trustor assumes that a trustee disregards or even violates shared norms (Sitkin and Roth 1998; Sitkin and Bijlsma-Frankema 2018: 53-4). Shared norms reduce the uncertainty associated with the trustee's actions because the trustor can assume that the trustees are bound in their motives and intentions by these norms and values. Moreover, if the trustees' obligations are defined in normative terms, compliance with these obligations can be ensured through normative compliance. This normative condition is thus intrinsically linked to criteria of trustworthiness and distrustworthiness (Levi and Stoker 2000: 481; Bertsou 2019). They show that citizens assess the trustworthiness of individuals or institutions in relation to a particular set of norms and values.

3. Institutional Trust and Distrust

Research on trust and distrust has tended to engage in generalizing reflection, arguing that trust in institutions is not entirely distinct from trust in people. Some scholars even argue that an adequate "theory of trust must offer a conceptualisation of trust that bridges the interpersonal and systemic levels of analysis, rather than dividing them into separate domains" (Lewis and Weigert 1985: 974; see also Hawley 2012). The previous chapter has provided evidence that such an integrated account of trust and distrust can be a compelling proposition. The conditions of trust and distrust that have been identified among individuals also appear to apply to citizens' relationships with institutions. Moreover, the criteria of trustworthiness seem to revolve around a limited set of concepts (e.g. competence, integrity and benevolence; Bacharach and Gambetta 2001), and this observation seems to apply equally to interpersonal, organisational and institutional relationships. But does this mean that there are no differences between these different levels and goals of trust and distrust? And if there are differences, what are the specific characteristics of institutional trust and distrust?

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3.1 The Institutionalisation of Trust and Distrust Relations

The conceptual debate on trust has converged on the conviction that there are different levels of trust attribution. Most commonly, scholars distinguish between interpersonal, organisational and systemic trust (Kroeger and Bachmann 2013: 256-8), depending on whether the target of trust is a person, an organisation or a social system (e.g. the economy, the state, science or the mass media). Three characteristics seem to be particularly relevant in this distinction. First, trust in people, organisations or systems differs in the level of abstraction. Interpersonal trust relies less on abstractions when it is anchored in individual encounters and relationships, and when generalised trust in others is discounted as a construct. Trust in organisations may also relate to tangible establishments with their organisational characteristics (a name, a building, a formal structure, a set of practices). But at this level it is based on a more abstract expectation that organisations will act in a predictable, reliable and considerate way. In relation to systems, the level of abstraction increases disproportionately, as systemic trust is said to relate to the expectation "that a system will work" (Luhmann 1979: 50).

Second, trust in people, organisations and systems is characterised by increasing complexity. This complexity can be attributed to scale and internal differentiation, which means that trust relationships in organisations, and even more so in social systems, become more distant, indirect and mediated. Internal differentiation also implies that the larger entities are aggregates of the smaller ones, which means that trust relationships with the larger entities also include the smaller ones. According to Kroeger (2017), citizens may trust or distrust an organisation as an operational entity, but the relationship with the organisation may also be intertwined with the relationship with the organisational representatives with whom they interact. And the same applies to systemic trust, which will depend on the particular organisations and their representatives, and the experiences that individuals have with them.

Third, trust in people, organisations and systems does not necessarily differ in terms of the criteria of (dis)trustworthiness, but in the way they are made relevant. Organisational trust, for example, depends on perceived competence, integrity and benevolence, as does interpersonal trust (Schoorman et al. 2007). However, the level of codification and formalisation of rules and norms governing human behaviour and interactions is higher at the organisational and systemic level than in interpersonal relationships. This codification and formalisation affects trust relations, as political institutions establish a set of normative principles and rules that make it possible to assess the trustworthiness of the operating system, individual organisations and office holders (Sztompka 1998; Warren 2018). Sociological institutionalism is correct in qualifying that institutions are not only governed by formal principles and

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structures, but that they also operate at an informal level on the basis of practical routines, bodies of knowledge and myths (March and Olsen 1984; Möllering 2006: 61-71). However, the specificity of trust in organisations and inter-organisational fields lies precisely in the duality of formal and informal rules and norms, and the complementarities, ambivalences and tensions associated with them.

The heuristic distinction between interpersonal, organisational and systemic trust has been widely used in research on political trust, because it is agreed that institutional trust must be located at the intersection of these goals and levels: the *state* or *political system*, the various *political institutions*, the various organisations and their individual representatives (Offe 1999; Hooghe and Zmerli 2013; Warren 2018). Political systems are understood as fields of organisation that have institutionalised a distinctive rationality with a set of rules and norms that regulate and evaluate their functioning (Möllering, 2006: 71-5; Kroeger 2012). The structuring principle of this system (the separation of powers) has created different political institutions, which can be defined as organisational fields that comprise an ensemble of organisations (e.g. *the* executive, judiciary and legislature, *the* public administration, courts or parliaments) that are patterned by a set of operational practices, rules and norms. Public trust in political institutions is thus located at different levels of aggregation and abstraction (individual office-holders, organisations and larger organisational fields). While these levels provide different targets for public trust, it has been found that citizens tend to trust the different levels and branches of political institutions in similar ways (Marien 2013; Schneider 2017). This suggests that political institutions, with their internal differentiations, are judged against a set of similar institutional rules and norms that establish specific ideas and beliefs about what is trustworthy (e.g. competence, benevolence, integrity, impartiality; Bachrach and Gambetta 2001; Norris 2022) and untrustworthy (e.g. corruption, nepotism, favouritism, ostentation, arbitrariness; Uslaner 2013; Im and Chen 2020; Daloz 2003). It is important to remember, however, that the spotted convergence of trust levels is the product of surveys that are interested in generalised trust in political institutions. They do not take into account the specific experiences that citizens may have in a political system that is highly differentiated along governance levels and policy areas. In such a context, citizens may maintain more ambivalent, mixed and contradictory relationships.

The research debate outlined so far has been strongly guided by an institutionalist approach, which argues that public trust (and distrust) is deeply shaped by a country's institutional architecture (e.g. Möllering 2005; Bachmann and Inkpen 2011; Zmerli and Hooghe 2013). Rules and norms that ensure trust and channel distrust are inscribed in constitutional documents, institutional designs, organisational

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structures and operational practices. The aim is to create institutional settings within which distrust can be productively processed and trust-building encounters and interactions between citizens and public officials can develop. This institutionalist approach thus generally subscribes to a learning theory according to which citizens learn to trust or distrust political institutions depending on the experiences they make within institutionally structured settings (e.g. personal encounters, written communications, public events) and the lessons they draw from public talk about institutional legitimacy. Institutionalist theories in political science tend to emphasise the influence of the institutional architecture of democratic governance (Sztompka 1998; Warren 2018). They argue that trustworthy institutions inspire public trust (e.g. Rothstein and Stolle 2008), although distrusting institutions are to some extent important in channeling distrust and restoring trust (Braithwaite 1998). Sociological institutionalism has added that the institutional rules and norms that shape relations between organisations, their employees and citizens are not only codified, implemented and reviewed from the top down. They insist that these rules and norms are reproduced through institutional work within and between the various organisations involved (March and Olsen 1984; Möllering 2006: 61-71; Bachmann and Inkpen 2011). The ability to shape institutional rules and norms across organisations has been attributed not only to the state, but also to professions (lawyers, economists, social workers, etc.). Their professional ethos, knowledge and practice influence institutional trust relations with citizens through their everyday work (e.g. Poulsen et al. 2020; Karlsson et al. 2022), but also establish *chains of trust* within and between organisations (Kroeger and Bachmann 2013).

The institutionalist approach seems particularly promising, when combined with a relational approach to the study of trust and distrust, as it allows to disentangle the ways in which the three elements of a trust or distrust relationship are institutionally embedded: the trustor, the trustee and the relationship itself. First, institutional trust and distrust implies that a trustor is not just an individual actor. Relationships between citizens and public officials (e.g. the local elected politician or the relevant street-level bureaucrat) may be highly personalised, and individual experiences and evaluations may therefore be crucial. Citizens may choose to trust public officials and the organisations they represent if they expect them to act in their interests, while they may distrust them if they expect harmful decisions or betrayed commitments. However, citizens do not trust or distrust institutional actors only in terms of personal relations, because institutional relations are defined along specific characteristics or roles. Individuals interact with political institutions on the basis of their rights and entitlements as citizens, immigrants, voters, taxpayers, social beneficiaries, etc., and their expectations and anticipations will be based on these grounds. Individuals know that their relationship to political institutions should be

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the same for the category or group of people to which they belong. That is, their relationship with political institutions is the same for all members of, for example, the group of vulnerable families, the unemployed, taxpayers, voters, etc. Uncertainty may be a problem for individuals, since taxpayers or benefit claimants do not know with certainty whether they will be treated similarly or differently from other people belonging to the same group or category. But it is precisely this institutionalised reference point that makes a difference: in trusting or distrusting an office-holder or political organisation, individuals will relate their personal situation to the commitments that political institutions make to the group or category in general. It can thus be assumed that institutional trust adds a collective dimension to the individual dimension: a trustor is not just an individual person, but a member of a class or group that shares similar characteristics, and the trust or distrust that the individual develops is shaped by collective conditions of vulnerability and uncertainty, and by the cognitions, emotions and norms that the person may share with others. The collective dimension also explains why considerations of equality, justice and fairness play such an important role among citizens when it comes to institutional trust (Hough et al. 2010; Schnaudt et al. 2021).

Second, differences from the interpersonal level emerge when considering that the target of trust is a collective actor. Conceptually, it has been proposed to limit trust to interpersonal relations in institutional settings, claiming that only specific commitments by tangible office-holders can inspire trust, while complex and opaque social systems can only stimulate confidence (Offe 1999: 56). This observation is correct when focusing on the aggregate level of societies, but is misplaced when moving to the organisational level. Agency is not limited to individuals, but extends to the organisational level through formal operating procedures and established routines of decision making and implementation. Individual citizens may develop trust and distrust depending on the *facework* (Kroeger 2017) of recognisable public officials. However, their experiences will also be impersonal when it comes to highly formalised, standardised and digitised procedures and encounters with public administrations, courts or party organisations. Citizens will trust or distrust individual office holders as well as organisations, depending on whether they fulfil institutionally prescribed obligations or fail to fulfil their mandates.

However, both levels of agency converge on an observation that institutionalist theories in sociology and political science have repeatedly made (Offe 1999; Warren 2018; Möllering 2005; Kroeger and Bachmann 2013). Institutional rules are at the heart of trust and distrust relations because they allow citizens to assess the trustworthiness of public officials, organisations and the wider inter-organisational field. For example, citizens may find their public servant in an employment agency to be

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less reliable and benevolent, they may find their responsible authority to be less reliable and benevolent than others, or they may find the institutional rules that govern individual and organisational actions to be arbitrary or harmful. Trusting institutions therefore means three things at once: trusting that the office-holder and/or organisation will not betray or harm by their actions, trusting that the institutional rules will not be harmful in their operation, and trusting that the office-holders, organisations and institutional rules will be consistent in responding to citizens' needs. This complexity shows that institutional trust is highly conditional, as it refers to *rules in action* and is thus located at the interface between what the rules say and how they are applied: trustors need to trust the institutional rules not to exploit their weaknesses, but they also need to trust the office holders or organisations to abide by these rules (Kroeger 2017). Thus, distrust will arise when citizens expect office holders to implement harmful rules and/or when they anticipate that office holders or organisations will deviate from responsive rules.

Third, the specificity of institutional trust can also be identified in terms of its relational dimension. As discussed above, trust always involves relational work between a trustor and a trustee, because it helps to overcome the uncertainty and dependency inherent in their encounters. In interpersonal encounters, trust relationships are mostly informal, sometimes spontaneous, and the social rules and norms that shape these encounters are not necessarily codified. Relations between citizens and political institutions also exhibit this informality, especially when considering *street-level* encounters with public officials. But these relationships are embedded in institutional settings that are highly regulated and formalised. In a democratic system of governance, these regulations and formalisations aim to limit the power of office holders and the vulnerability of citizens. As political theory emphasises, constitutionalism, the rule of law and the separation of powers vest citizens with civil, political and social rights that seek to reduce the dependency and uncertainty inherent in their relations with political institutions (Braithwaite 1998). Citizens can legitimately expect political institutions to fulfil their mandates and obligations, and they are provided with legal, administrative and political means to question, control or resist institutional decisions, be they those of parliaments, public administrations or courts (Offe 1999: 73-5; Sztompka 1998: 25-7). Institutional relations of trust thus require that distrust is a legitimate option to which citizens can resort. Such legal, administrative and political provisions regulate trust and distrust relations directly (e.g. public access to information, judicial review, elections) and indirectly (e.g. guarantees of free media, organised civil society; Braithwaite 1998; Warren 2018), although scholars agree that the arousal of trust relations is fragile and contested, and thus subject to constant reproduction.

3.2 Reciprocity between Mutuality and Complementarity

The relational dimension shows that institutional trust and distrust are linked to situations and settings that are institutionally predefined and prefabricated, even though organisations and their employees introduce variance into the way these settings are designed and the way institutional rules and norms are repproduced and updated. However, further precision is needed to better understand the logic of trust and distrust formation within these settings. In this regard, the concept of reciprocity seems to provide important insights into the constitutive elements of trust and distrust formation processes (Serva et al., 2005; Siktin and Bijlsma-Frankema 2018: 54-5; Kosgaard 2018). The general message is clear, but clarification is needed because the meaning of reciprocity oscillates between the logic of mutuality and complementarity.

With regard to interpersonal trust, it has been shown that reciprocity is a consequence of continuous encounters and interactions (Kosgaard 2018). This is the case when individuals continuously rely on each other, for example by helping each other, exchanging services or goods, and collaborating on joint activities. In these cases, interactions may involve role-swapping, where a trustee and a trustee alternately depend on each other's actions to enable exchange or collaboration. Reciprocity is thus linked to the notion of mutuality: individuals will trust others on whom they depend because they experience that their trust is reciprocated. Ultimately, reciprocity allows second-order trust to develop because both sides experience that they can rely on their trust relationship. This means that trust is not a disposition of the trusting party that refers to or depends on the trustworthiness of the other; it is a quality of the interpersonal relationship itself on which both can rely. Relations of trust and distrust thus develop as a (learning) process: "We learn that, tentatively and conditionally, we can trust trust and distrust distrust, that it can be rewarding to behave as if we trusted even in unpromising situations" (Gambetta 1988: 228). Accordingly, trust is a quality of social relations that requires constant nurturing: "like the ability to speak a foreign language or to play the piano, these moral resources are likely to become depleted and to atrophy if not used" (Hirschman 1984: 93). The same logic of *learning* applies to distrust, as the latter can develop along a self-reinforcing process of negative expectations and experiences, even in the sense of self-fulfilling prophecies (Frisell 2019).

This assumption of reciprocity needs to be adapted with regard to institutional trust, because the institutionalised setting assigns different roles to citizens and officials, and thus different duties and rights, mandates and obligations. The setting implies asymmetrical power relations that involve different but complementary experiences of dependency, vulnerability and insecurity. Even within these complementary roles,

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trust and distrust can be reciprocated: Citizens will distrust political institutions to the extent that they experience that they are distrusted; and trust is more likely in contexts where trust in citizens is more proactively institutionalised. Institutionalist theories support this idea of reciprocity when they argue that the institutionalisation of trust in democratic polities and welfare states has a positive impact on generalised interpersonal and institutional trust (Levi 1998; Rothstein and Stolle 2008; Hänninen et al. 2019; for a more nuanced analysis, Wellander and Sanandaji 2020). Conversely, the institutionalisation of distrust should lead to the generalisation of public distrust. This is echoed by political theorists of democratic governance, who are concerned about an unbalanced promotion of public distrust (Sztompka 1998; Uslaner 2016), but also by welfare state scholars, who see the risk that restrictive welfare state provisions (e.g. restrictive eligibility criteria, means testing or credibility checks) promote distrust as a default setting in encounters between citizens and public authorities: "to preserve citizens trust in the system, the system needs to demonstrate trust also in the clients" (Karlsson et al. 2022: 483).

The idea that trust and distrust are contagious relational attributes that imply mutuality has empirical plausibility, but it is generally too simplistic. In institutional settings, asymmetric power relations between citizens and public officials prevail, so that the complementarity of trust and distrust is assumed to be a necessary structural feature of complex social systems. This argument reiterates the functionalist assumption presented above, which argues that the institutionalisation of distrust at the level of social systems is functional in order to increase trust at the interpersonal level (Luhmann 1979). The same argument applies to institutional trust within democratic systems of governance, since generalised trust in political institutions paradoxically requires the institutionalisation of distrust, even if the latter is used sparingly (Sztompka 1998). "As part of this, there are certain professions that entail the exercise of suspicion and distrust as a professional duty, including the police, border guards, attorneys, ticket controllers and, crucially, judges" (Albi 2022: 7).

The presumed complementarity of trust and distrust also applies at the level of organisations and their staff. In terms of internal relations, distrust is institutionalised in organisational structures and roles or positions (e.g. quality control inspectors, auditors, first-line supervisors) or in specific procedures and regulations (e.g. penalties for transgressions, contract clauses for misconduct), and these regulations make it possible to increase trust at the operational level of organisational work (Lewicki et al. 1998). Similar observations apply to external relations, as external control bodies aim to increase external trust in the organisation and its performance (e.g. Elken and Telmann 2021). Contracts play a particularly important role in regulating trust and distrust with regard to internal and external relations, as they set out

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rights, obligations and clauses for misconduct and thus aim to combine coordinating and controlling functions (Lumineau 2017; Guo et al. 2017: 56-7).

Empirical evidence suggests that citizens welcome the prevalence of trust and distrust. High levels of public trust in the police or courts (Marien 2013: 24-7) indicate that citizens trust political institutions to be willing to distrust citizens and public officials to abide by established rules and norms. And similar findings apply to citizens' personal relationships with public institutions. Citizens tolerate elements of distrust in their personal dealings with executive institutions. In part, they seem to expect this institutional distrust because it signals impartiality, due process and law-abiding behaviour (Schnaudt et al. 2021). Reciprocity may thus involve complementary roles, organisational structures and institutions, which arouse interlocked relations of trust and distrust: citizens may trust institutional distrust, while distrusting institutional trust.

Conclusions

The analysis of trust in political institutions can build on an extensive body of research with ample evidence on the forms and levels of institutional trust, its determinants and consequences. However, previous research has downplayed the relationship between trust and distrust and the specificities of the relationships between institutions and citizens. The paper argues for a more nuanced approach that treats trust and distrust as two distinct concepts and relationships, as opposed to a monist understanding of trust and distrust as ends of a single dimension, and a functionalist perspective that treats them as functional equivalents. A dualist conception is proposed, which presupposes different antecedents, correlates and consequences, and maintains that institutional relations are multifaceted and ambivalent, characterised by different criteria of trustworthiness and distrustworthiness. With regard to institutional trust and distrust, a relational and institutionalist approach is adopted in order to highlight the specificities of institutionalised trust and distrust relations. These relationships are located at different levels – office-holders, organisations, organisational fields – and are characterised by personal and impersonal, informal and formal dimensions. In all cases, these relationships are highly institutionalised, i.e. they are based on collective categorisations, roles and mandates, and an asymmetry of dependence and power. Additionally, institutionalised relations of trust and distrust exhibit a reciprocity that oscillates between mutualism and complementarity. Not only do citizens reciprocate the trust and distrust they experience, but they may also be suspicious of institutional trust and supportive of institutional distrust. The relationship between citizens and political institutions is thus characterised by reciprocities, complementarities and ambivalences that deserve more in-depth analysis.

The reflections in this paper suggest avenues for further progress in the analysis of institutional trust. Research has developed in different and partly disconnected fields (e.g. philosophy, political science, sociology, psychology, organisation studies). A more structured dialogue between political sociology and organisation studies is particularly promising. Political sociology could greatly benefit from organisational studies in order to better understand how trust and distrust are institutionalised within organisations and organisational fields, and how the co-presence of trust and distrust generates ambivalences, tensions and conflicts at the individual, organisational and inter-organisational levels.

Research on democratic governance and political institutions has echoed these insights in describing the institutional architecture of liberal democracies and the fragile balance between institutions of trust and distrust, but the focus has been primarily on institutional trustworthiness. There has been less systematic research into the tangible relationships of trust and distrust between citizens and political institutions. One of the main shortcomings of current empirical research is the lack of studies that operationalise and analyse trust and distrust as separate constructs. Against this background, it is difficult to develop a solid and deep understanding of how institutionalised trust and distrust are interrelated in public perceptions and experiences. Following the dominant unidimensional trust/distrust continuum, research is limited to analysing how institutions push trust or distrust in or out. However, little is known about the complementarity or incommensurability of institutional trust and distrust in terms of public perceptions and experiences, attitudes and behaviours. This interdisciplinary field of research suggests that institutional trust and distrust have complex relationships that merit more systematic analysis.

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DEBATE

How to Stay in Academia without Becoming Cynical?

Lisa Herzog[1]

This text is an adapted translation of the speech given at the ceremony for the Schader Preis 2022, a German prize handed out to scholars in the social sciences whose work contributes to addressing societal problems. The German original can be found at https://www.schader-stiftung.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Schader-Preis_2022_Vortrag_Lisa_Herzog.pdf.

"How do you manage to stay in academia without becoming cynical?" That's what a doctoral student asked me recently, when I was visiting another research institution. I was supposed to talk to him about his research topics, but instead, he felt the need to ask much more fundamental questions.

There are many reasons why one could become cynical in academia. Science – which I here mean as including the social sciences and humanities, "Wissenschaft" in the broad sense – is supposed to be the pure striving for knowledge, insight, maybe even truth, if you want to use such a big word. But the processes of knowledge generation are all too human. They take place in social contexts in which many things can get in the way of these ideals: various forms of power and social exclusion, arbitrary decisions, and in Germany also the difficulty of moving from temporary position to temporary position. In addition, in societies that combine a democratic political system with a capitalist economic system, the question often arises: whom does science serve?

For a long time, the misunderstanding that science was "value-free" persisted, and that one could therefore devote oneself to the pure search for truth without asking questions about values. If this were indeed the case, researchers would be relieved

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of the question of what motivates their work, who benefits from it, whose questions they investigate, and whose voices are heard in the process. According to this idea, academic research provides pure facts, while values and interests – and thus necessarily also conflicts – only play a role in other social spheres, for example politics.

But as the philosophy of science[2] has argued for a long time – successfully, in my opinion – values do play a role in science: in the choice of research topics as well as in the question of permissible research methods, e.g. ethical questions of research on humans and animals, or in decisions about which evidence thresholds are considered sufficient for individual or political action. In addition, complicated questions can arise about how to relate different bodies of knowledge, based on different methodologies, to each other. Of course, there are also steps in the research process that must be carried out without being influenced by political or ethical values – otherwise what is happening would simply not be academic research. However, epistemic values – i.e., values that relate to the quality and nature of the knowledge to be generated – also play a role there, and they are often interwoven with ethical values in complex ways. And so, as an academic, you cannot avoid the question of which values drive your own work.

There are at least three possible answers to this question. The first is to refer to the inherent logic of science: to knowledge for its own sake, the pure desire to know and to understand, or to continue working on the questions that generations before one have already grappled with. Hardly anyone will endure the trials of an academic career if they are not driven by the intrinsic fascination with research. This, however, does not yet answer the question to which topics one should devote one's scientific energy. Sometimes it may be enough to simply continue the work on projects that others have started – but what if the existing paradigms exhaust themselves? And is it really ideal for the scientific discourse to revolve only around itself, without any external impulses?

This attitude might also shift all too easily from an orientation towards "pure science" towards the logic of scientific careers: what gives you recognition in your field, which trends prevail there? Especially when many positions in science are precarious and the competition for permanent jobs is fierce, young scientists are almost forced to put the value "I want to stay in the scientific system" at the top of their agenda. This can lead to conformism and insufficient criticism of existing paradigms – and, also,

2 See in particular Heather Douglas. 2009. Science, Policy, and the Value Free Ideal. Pittsburg: Pittsburg University Press.

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all too easily to cynicism, given the discrepancies between the noble ideals of science and what the scientific community really rewards.

A second possible answer to the question of values is to put one's research directly or indirectly into the service of economic value creation. Knowledge has many characteristics of a common good: it takes effort to produce it; but once it is there, it can be used by everyone, and may therefore need to be protected by intellectual property rights. In capitalist-democratic societies, we can expect a clear pattern: knowledge that is economically useful is privately appropriated, and sometimes also generated with admirable speed by private-sector actors. Knowledge that serves the general public, let alone knowledge that would imply that someone has to take on costly responsibilities, is typically not provided by market players, or only if they find a way of making profits by addressing it. Such happy coincidences of private interests and the common good can exist, but it would be naïve to assume that they are everywhere. Too much is now known about how capitalist players, e.g. the tobacco industry, have abused science for their own interests, against the interests of the common good. In the case of the tobacco industry, this meant: systematically promoting those researchers who considered the health risks of tobacco consumption to be negligible and distorting public discourse around the harms of smoking.[3]

Researchers who put themselves in the service of the private sector – which may suggest itself especially in more applied fields – have to ask themselves which values they are thereby serving and whether the collaboration is legitimate. They need to keep in mind what it means for society's long-term trust in science if science teams up with economically interested actors in problematic ways.

The third alternative is that science explicitly serves certain social values. Of course, democratic societies thrive on the fact that there is a pluralism of ways of life and thus also of values. But there is also what John Rawls called the "overlapping consensus": agreement on certain non-negotiable core values, such as those enshrined in the Declarations of Human Rights.[4] In recent years, in view of climate change and biodiversity loss, the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations have emerged as another set of broadly acceptable values.[5] They understand "sustainability" not only in terms of ecology, but also encompass a wide range of social goals.

3 See e.g. Naomi Oreskes and Eric Conway. 2010. Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming. London: Bloomsbury.

4 See in particular John Rawls. 1987. "The Idea of an Overlapping Consensus." Oxford Journal of Legal Studies 7(1):- 1-25.

5 https://sdgs.un.org/goals.

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Generating knowledge that can help to achieve these goals, without giving up rigorous standards of scientific methodology, whatever they are in different fields – this can also be an answer to the question of which values research pursues. This orientation can interact with the internal logic of research, and sometimes also with an application-oriented logic in the sense of commercial usage. But it means setting clear priorities, and it can also require the delineation from certain research fields or types of collaborations. Moreover, it means asking oneself, as a researcher, how one's own scientific knowledge can be combined with other relevant forms of knowledge, for example, the experiential knowledge of those directly affected, or the knowledge of indigenous peoples, when it comes to the solution of concrete problems.

Science in the service of the common good, that may sound like big words – or like youthful naivety. But just imagine what it would mean if every researcher would work, say for one day a week, on a project that directly serves a specific social goal (which, by the way, can also happen together with students). This could consist in a citizen science project on environmental issues in one's own region, or in a cooperation with schools, especially in districts where children rarely meet scientists, or in cooperation with colleagues from the Global South, who are so often disadvantaged, or in attempts to help at- risk scientists[6] to continue to contribute their knowledge to scientific discourse. In view of today's extreme forms of social inequality and social fragmentation, I see it as a particularly important task for my own field, the social sciences and social philosophy, to enter into dialogue with those who are otherwise rarely heard, but who, given their experiences, can possibly contribute particularly important perspectives on today's social order.

Of course, there can then be conflicts about what the most valuable projects are – but in democratic societies, we can accept a healthy pluralism of values, and thus also of value-oriented projects. And of course, there will also be individuals who use such projects to advance their careers. Nevertheless, it would offer the possibility of living academia in a different way than what "the system" currently demands of young scientists. My optimism in this respect is based on my experiences with those spaces in academia, for example the young academies,[7] where something like this is already happening. But today, these are often privileged spaces that are only accessible to those who have been very fortunate in the academic system. Imagine the social dynamics that could develop if all scientists had the opportunity to develop concrete

6 This term is used to refer to scholars who are threatened for political reasons and/or have to leave their countries because of such threats or because of other forms of violence. See https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/faqs/#4.

7 See e.g. https://globalyoungacademy.net.

projects in cooperation with society! Ideally, they do so while holding permanent positions that offer enough security even for long-term and risky projects.

Ultimately, this is also a question about the future of democracy. Democracies in modern, highly complex societies require numerous forms of expertise, including scientific expertise – not only in the form of "policy advice," but also in order to inform the general public (call it "citizen advice" if you like), and in cooperation with civil society. If science does not deliver in this respect, this can all too easily lead to an imbalance of power that undermines democracy's ability to regulate the economic system effectively, especially in the face of opposition from powerful economic players. If the knowledge of how regulation could be beneficial to the common good lies with the actors who are supposed to be regulated, and is possibly even *withheld* by them, this jeopardizes the ability of democratic politics to set the rules of the game, and thus undermines the "primacy of politics."[8]

Staying in academia without becoming cynical – for me, this has not always been easy, and it often meant working against the system rather than with it. But "the system" is ultimately all of us, especially those of us who no longer have to worry about getting the next job contract. We need an open discussion about what values are driving this system. All three value orientations that I have described can have a legitimate place. But we need to be honest about which game is being played (and collaborations with interested economic parties will require careful delineations and clear governance structures). And from the point of view of democratic theory, the logic oriented towards the common good must have the last word.

All of this also means that academia, as a system, needs to engage in a meta-discourse: about its own goals and values, and about how these are achieved or missed in the existing institutions, incentive systems, and social practices. And as an individual, you need others with whom you can exchange ideas and arguments about these questions, both in general, and when it comes to very specific decisions about setting one's own research priorities, deciding what invitations to accept, or dealing with the constant pressure to acquire third-party funding.

Therefore, I would like to close with a big "thank you" to all those who have been, and continue to be, my role models for non-cynical science, and to all those inside and outside of science with whom I can talk about these issues. I remain committed

8 Sheri Berman. 2006. The Primacy of Politics. Social Democracy and the Making of Europe's Twentieth Century. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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to changing the scientific system in this direction, to finding projects with which one can make a real contribution to solving social problems, and to enabling everyone, but above all young scientists, to do this as well.

Thank you very much!

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DEBATE

Political Deliberation vs. Social Media Branding in Crisis-Prone Capitalist Democracies

A Discussion of Habermas's New Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere

Michael Hofmann[1]

Abstract

This review essay discusses Jürgen Habermas's recent reflections on the threats to deliberative politics by a new structural transformation of the public sphere. Renewing his 1962 concept, he analyzes "crisis-prone capitalist democracies" as the *necessary* condition for transforming the public discourse of self-determined citizens into political branding that seeks to manipulate the citizen as a consumer.

Habermas then identifies social media's blurring of the private and the public realms already in the *perception* of democratic deliberation as the *sufficient* condition for today's commodified discourse in a new political public sphere that has been colonized by the digital marketplace.

Keywords: public sphere, human rights, social media, echo chambers, digital authoritarianism, surveillance capitalism

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"I support [California's] Coastal Act [which defines public access to beaches as a right]. … But property rights are even more important."
Vinod Khosla, Silicon Valley venture capitalist; Founder, Sun Microsystems; Owner, Martin's Beach near Half Moon Bay, California, October 2018

"… property rights alone do not spontaneously make a decent society."
David Brooks, Conservative New York Times columnist, July 2022

"I have made a fortune on the international financial markets, and yet I now fear that the untrammeled intensification of laissez-faire capitalism and the spread of market values into all areas of life is endangering our open and democratic society."
George Soros, whose Quantum hedge fund in 1992 played a key role in pushing the British pound out of the European currency grid, January 1997

"We are mission driven; we are not brand driven. I always seize up when people say 'brand.' I don't want to be Starbucks."
Robert Redford, Founder, Sundance Institute, April 2012

Jürgen Habermas's German-language essay about a new structural transformation of the public sphere was first published in August 2021, as the crowning chapter in a 500-page special issue of the journal *Leviathan,* edited by the social scientists Martin Seeliger and Sebastian Sevignani. It was then included, with minor changes, as the first chapter of the September 2022 Suhrkamp-publication *Ein neuer Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit und die deliberative Politik* [A New Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere and the Deliberative Politics]. The other two chapters of Habermas's 108-page new book contain translations of a thematic interview with him for the *Oxford Handbook of Deliberative Democracy* (2018) and of his preface to *Habermas and the Crisis of Democracy* (2022), a volume of interviews edited by Emilie Prattico.

The unique significance of Habermas's 2021 essay can now be valorized in the global discourse of Habermas scholars. Ciaran Cronin translated it into today's *lingua franca*, English (Habermas 2022), and the British journal *Theory, Culture, and Society* grants open access to this most illuminating essay until December 2023. Directly at its beginning, Habermas for the first time confirms in public that his original book on the *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962/1989) has remained his most successful in terms of worldwide sales. Significantly, he does not yet acknowledge its success as his work with the most scholarly citations and the greatest impact in nearly all disciplines of the social sciences and humanities. In spite of the fact that his first book received the most attention in the majority of the more than thirty contributions by forty Habermas scholars from around the globe to *Habermas global*

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(2019), the Suhrkamp-*Festschrift* edited by Luca Corchia, Stefan Müller-Doohm, and William Outhwaite, which commemorated his 90th birthday.

This review and discussion of Habermas's presumably final interpretation of his public sphere concept draws on my research about the complex methodologies underlying his 1962 classic that I published in *Habermas's Public Sphere: A Critique* (2017) and *Reading Habermas: Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (2023). Especially with regard to his sociological grounding of the political ideal of the ancient *polis* in Hegel's analysis of civil society's sphere of commodity exchange and social labor, which provided his theoretical framework for researching the modern public sphere. An argument can be made that between 1981 and 2021 Habermas had exchanged this methodology for systems theory (Talcott Parsons, Niklas Luhmann), due to the demise of the Hegelian-Marxist philosophy of history and "the euphoria of the democratic moment after 1989" (Seyla Benhabib).

However, the terminal failure to spread democratic governance in the wake of global free trade, from Tiananmen Square to Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya, and beyond, while at the same time adding ecological catastrophes in most of these countries through global warming, resulted in major reassessments among G-7 elites. This reckoning is epitomized by recent books like the one by Harvard emeritus professor Gary Gerstle, titled *The Rise and Fall of the Neoliberal Order: America and the World in the Free Market Era* (2022). Arguably, Habermas's owndisenchantment with "systems theory's sophisticated brand of dogmatic liberal political economy" (William Forbath) grew while observing the backlash against Globalism under the authoritarian presidency of the elected demagogue Donald J. Trump. It is plausible to assume that his second thoughts about wealth production through globalization might have culminated on January 6, 2021 when he could watch live the storming of the United States Capitol on the global news network CNN. For Habermas might have been reminded that such a development had been predicted already in 1998 by one of his American friends, the late philosopher Richard Rorty, in reaction to the systematic outsourcing of mostly unionized manufacturing jobs located in the American heartland.

Habermas's Rediscovery of Capitalist Crises and their Impact on Deliberative Democracy

As if to honor the bicentennial of the *Philosophy of Right* (1821/1991), Habermas's legacy turn in the third section of his essay from 2021 implicitly foregrounds Hegel's insight which he first quoted in 1962: "... despite an excess of wealth civil society is not rich enough... to check excessive poverty..." (quoted in Habermas 1962/1989: 119). Admittedly, Habermas's wording in 2021 is less explicit. It cautiously refers

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to a "*capitalist democracy*, which tends to reinforce social inequalities" (Habermas 2021: 483, emphasis in the original). In 1962, he still adopted "Hegel's concept of civil society," i.e. of the sphere of commodity exchange and social labor, and his "insight into the at once *anarchic and antagonistic* character of this system of needs" (Habermas 1962/1989: 118, emphasis added).

Nevertheless, Habermas newly introduces the term "crisis-prone capitalist democracy" not only *en passant*. Instead, already the introductory outline of his 2021 essay classifies the "conditions for the stability" of a "crisis-prone capitalist democracy" as "improbable" (Habermas 2021: 471). Moreover, he not only repeats the term on pages 480, 483, and 498, but also speaks on that next-to-last page of his essay about the "complex preconditions for the sustainability of *systemically* crisis-prone democracies" (Habermas 2021; 498, emphasis added). Above all, when Habermas introduces on page 480 the central thesis of his 2021 essay (and of his 2022 book), he reveals that in his tacit legacy turn away from *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy* (1992/1996) he now regards "the complexity of the causes for capitalist democracies being susceptible to crises" as more significant for "the impairment of deliberative opinion- and will-formation" in the political public sphere than "specific changes in the media structure," like the "digitalization of public communication" (Habermas 2021: 480).

Specifically, Habermas locates the causes for the current crises of capitalist democracies in "the neoliberal turn" of economic policies which for 36 years, from the Reagan to the Obama administration, have facilitated "a worldwide deregulation of markets and the globalization of financial markets." In turn, Wall Street-dominated global finance now "controls the financial policies of the [nation] states" (Habermas 2021: 484, 483). In spite of the fact that by "the time the [2008/9] financial crisis hit, the flaws in modern capitalism were blindingly obvious," to quote again David Brooks, the self-described former democratic socialist who, toward the end of President Reagan's tenure, had turned into a *Wall Street Journal* editorial page writer who would be admired during his early 1990s reporting trips to Moscow as, in his words, "cutting-edge and hip" (Brooks 2022).

In retrospect, Habermas diagnoses a 1990s "coincidence between the emergence of Silicon Valley, i.e. the commercial use of the digital internet" and "the global spread of the neoliberal economic program." For the "technical structure" of the internet facilitated "free flows of communication" on a global scale – thus "systemically offering the mirror image of an ideal market" that "did not even need to be deregulated" (Habermas 2021: 498). In 1992, thirty years after his conceptual blending of Kant's ideal of the bourgeois public sphere and Say's "Law of Markets" in *Structural*

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Transformation (Hofmann 2017: 1-25, 95-126), this ideal of free market capitalism once again struck a responsive chord with Habermas in his "Further Reflections on the Public Sphere" and in his German original of *Between Facts and Norms*. When the latter was honored in September 1992 at a high-profile law school conference in New York City, Habermas declared that a "world-historical event like the collapse of the Soviet Union certainly requires us to rethink our political positions" (Habermas 1998: 442).

To comprehend the intellectual and political magnitude of Habermas's final turn, one has to juxtapose his 2021 dictum that the "self-perpetuating capitalist modernization generates a need for state regulation to tame the centrifugal forces of social disintegration," and his advocacy for free market principles from 1981 and 1992. Already in his first magnum opus *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1981/1984, 1987), after a decade of growing influence on his thinking by the systems theories of Parsons and Luhmann, did Habermas consider "state apparatus and economy to be systematically integrated action fields that can no longer be transformed democratically from within … without damage to their proper systemic logic and therewith their ability to function" (quoted in Hofmann 2017:138). By 1992, his partiality for free market capitalism would be even more explicit: "a modern, market-regulated economic system cannot be switched … to one involving … *democratic decision making*, without threatening its performance capacity" (Habermas 1992: 436, emphasis added; cf. Selk/Jörke 2020). It took almost three decades of globalization before Habermas would return to his insights from 1962 and acknowledge that the "centrifugal forces of social disintegration" could not be contained by market forces alone within a self-regulating economic system. Instead, it takes systemic government intervention to reduce the social inequality among citizens in a democratic welfare state (Habermas 2021: 483).

Already in 1997, when reviewing the 1996 English translation of *Between Facts and Norms*, Habermas's second magnum opus, the philosopher Seyla Benhabib, who had witnessed in Starnberg the creation of his first one, commented on his 1992 book's "statesman-like optimism" that reflected "the euphoria of the democratic moment after 1989" (Benhabib1997: 726). She then added a long list of reasons for "democracy's discontent" (Michael Sandel) which remained unrecognized in Habermas's work. Several of these reasons anticipated with a striking similarity the ones that Habermas would give in his tacit 2021 turn. Among them are, in Benhabib's words, "the dismantling of the welfare state by neoliberal governments," "the eclipse of popular sovereignty through the rise of new financial , capital, and communication networks," the "rise of right-wing charismatic leaders such as Perot or Berlusconi who exploit the circus of the electronic media," and "the tremendous sense of apathy, cynicism, and disillusionment with the political process." In 1996, all these pathologies were "missing from Habermas's account of democracy" (Benhabib 1997: 726).

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Arguably, it took Trump's United States presidency, culminating in his incitement of "the storming of the Capitol" (Habermas 2021: 479, 474), before Habermas would make explicit and highlight the few rather hidden qualifiers embedded in his 1992/1996 argument in *Between Facts and Norms.* Already in 1998, the constitutional law theorist and historian William Forbath teased out the astounding tension between "Habermas's embrace of systems theory's sophisticated brand of dogmatic liberal political economy" (Forbath 1998: 286) and his "eloquent but Delphic remark" (Forbath 1998: 284) in *Between Facts and Norms* that only "in an egalitarian public of citizens that has emerged from the confines of class and thrown off the millennia-old shackles of social stratification and exploitation can the potential of an unleashed cultural pluralism fully develop." In short, such an egalitarian public sphere must "enjoy the support of a societal basis in which equal rights of citizenship have become socially effective" (Habermas 1992 / 1996: 308).

Accordingly, Habermas posits a causal relationship between the "furious response of the citizens who stormed the Capitol on January 6, 2021" and the empirical evidence that "the political elites had … for decades disappointed the legitimate, constitutionally guaranteed expectations of a significant portion of their citizens" (Habermas 2021: 474). Implicitly validating Benhabib's 1997 observation of "the tremendous sense of apathy, cynicism, and disillusionment with the political process," Habermas now emphasizes that "equal rights of citizenship" can only "become socially effective," if "democratic elections actually correct substantial and structurally entrenched social inequalities" (Habermas 2021: 482). Otherwise a rising percentage of voters "among the lower status segments of the population" will no longer participate in the democratic process – thus triggering a vicious circle in which the political party that traditionally represented them stops doing so because it can no longer count on their votes (Habermas 2021: 482). Exactly that happened after the self-styled American "New Democrats," spearheaded by Bill Clinton, Al Gore, and Hillary Clinton, had abandoned FDR's New Deal coalition of voters to push through the U.S. Congress vast free trade agreements and financial deregulation on a global scale.

Habermas's Return to "Historically Focused" Scholarship and "Straightforward Analysis"

In his review of James Marsh's book *Unjust Legality: A Critique of Habermas's Philosophy of Law* (2001), the philosopher Thomas McCarthy who in the 1970s and 1980s was instrumental in introducing Habermas's work to an English-speaking global audience, with the notable exception of *Structural Transformation* (McCarthy 1978, Hofmann 2021), would concede that Habermas's theory constructions had reached a unique level of abstraction. In McCarthy's words, "[*Between Facts and Norms*] is not

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a work aimed directly at a critical theory of contemporary democracy." Instead, "it is a work in *Rechtstheorie* intended to articulate and justify the normative standpoints from which such a critical theory might set out" (McCarthy 2003: 763-64).

Already in 1989, at the Chapel Hill conference that introduced and discussed the English translation of *Structural Transformation*, Habermas had acknowledged "the need to have a more contextually and historically specific analysis of social movements." While insisting on "the institutional differentiation between the science system … and political action," he nevertheless accepted the critique that he was engaged in abstract theory "without entertaining a historically focused, straightforward analysis" (quoted in Hofmann 2023: 4). After decades of increasingly deadly wars, global warming, human rights violations, migration flows, health crises, and authoritarian governance in more and more countries, Habermas now reaffirms the Kantian definitions of the rational *morality* [Vernunftmoral] and rational *law* [Vernunftrecht] inherent in the European Enlightenment (Habermas 2021: 472), which permeated his original public sphere concept from 1962. For the "Declaration of Human and Civil Rights" in the French Revolution facilitated the migration of "the substance of rational morality," i.e. Kant's *universal* moral laws, into "the medium of binding constitutional law." Accordingly, these "*historically unprecedented* acts of founding democratic constitutional orders" allow social movements to this day to validate the legitimacy of their democratic demands on behalf of the common good by confronting the civilized barbarism of *Realpolitik* with the unrealized constitutional rights which nevertheless enjoy the "validity of positive law" (Habermas 2021: 472-73, emphasis in the original).

Habermas's historical excursus on pages 471 to 474 of his 2021 essay delineates how constitutional revolutions spawned this "*normative gradient*" between maintaining the "status quo" of power politics and realizing universal human rights. Gradually, it "moved into the consciousness of citizens and thus into *social reality*" (Habermas 2021: 472, emphasis in the original). This development can explain why voters who feel betrayed due to broken promises and continuous neglect of their interests might want to oppose or even obstruct the democratic process that seemingly does not work for them (Habermas 2021: 472). Voting for a demagogue then becomes an act of revenge aimed at the ruling elites: "Trump drives those people crazy" (David Brooks).

Habermas's straightforward analysis when dissecting crisis-prone capitalist democracies identifies the necessary condition for the new structural transformation of the public sphere and provides the background criteria for future empirical research, especially with regard to the role of the political public sphere in the 2024

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Presidential Election of the United States. Accurately measuring voter perceptions of the gradient between constitutional normativity and facticity will be decisive in "Rust Belt" battleground states like Michigan and Pennsylvania where Globalism has creatively destructed the societal basis in which equal rights of citizenship had a chance of becoming socially effective (Lux 2021/22). In all likelihood, the winning margin in the Electoral College will again be razor-thin.

In 2016, it was barely 0.07 percent of the 134 million votes cast nationwide. In 2020, incumbent President Trump lost by less than 0.03 percent of the 160 million votes cast by the American electorate. In spite of his scandal-ridden tenure, which on Election Day already included the first of two impeachments by the U.S. House of Representatives, Trump received about seven million additional votes compared to 2016 (Hofmann 2023: xvii).

In the meantime, opinion polling and focus group research in preparation for the 2024 political campaigns have confirmed Habermas's 2021 analysis of the steep gradient between expectations grounded in constitutional norms and real-world disappointments among the majority of American citizens. Namely, the sixty percent of the electorate without a four-year college degree. Especially among "swing voters" in "Rust Belt" states who decided the 2016 and 2020 elections, "populist messages" with "red-blooded" critiques find a responsive chord: "Americans who work for a living are being betrayed by superrich elites" and "Americans need to come together and elect leaders who will fight for us all." (quoted in Leonhard 2023: A15).

Habermas's essay was also correct when stating that the ruling elites had disappointed many citizens *for decades*. Already in 1993, Edward N. Luttwak diagnosed in his book *The Endangered American Dream* that 1950s expectations of owning your single-family home with a two-car garage on one income and sending your children to college had "become too blatantly unrealistic for most Americans." Accordingly, once "better hopes are worn away by bitter disappointment," there will be a political opening "for the strong false remedies of demagogues" (Luttwak 1993:127).

"Trump used our own words to speak … to the real suffering, fears and anxieties that so many felt." That's how United Steelworkers president Leo Gerard acknowledged in a letter to the union's 600,000 members Trump's success in exploiting labor's opposition to the Trans-Pacific Partnership (quoted in Hofmann 2018:11). Praised by Hillary Clinton as the "gold standard" of free trade agreements, the Obama administration had planned to push this legislation through Congress in the lame duck session after Election Day, with the votes of Democrats who were ending their political careers and no longer needed union support for reelection.

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Following up on Luttwak's book, Rorty precisely anticipated the election of a demagogue as the commander in chief of the global power with the largest military budget by far. Of course, his prediction could be more detailed, because he had been able to observe the impact of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) regarding the Democratic Party's eroding support among unionized blue-collar workers. Nevertheless, Rorty's words seemingly were too controversial to be included as a reminder in the political news and commentary in the A section of the *New York Times*. Given the newspaper's preferred advocacy for Free Trade, only a book critic could reference Rorty's prediction in the C section: "Members of labor unions, and unorganized, unskilled workers, will sooner or later realize that their government is not even trying to prevent wages from sinking or to prevent jobs from being exported. … At that point, [they] will start looking around for a strongman to vote for" (Rorty 1998: 89-90).

These illuminating quotes can advance the discussion of Habermas's 2021 essay, because they reconnect to his original analysis of the structural transformation of the public sphere when he still included the criteria of classical political economy from Quesnay to Smith and Say as well as their critique by Marx (Hofmann 2023: 76-103). As Habermas now acknowledges in section 3, only from the perspective of political economy can one comprehend "the systematic interconnection of political system and society" – especially the "precarious relationship between the democratic state and the capitalist economy" (Habermas 2021:483).

In comparison, the criteria of political economy are mostly absent from *Between Facts and Norms.* This omission was intentional. For his intellectual biography of Habermas from 2010, the legal historian Matthew G. Specter asked him whether his monumental work, begun in 1985, signified a "legal" turn of his political theory in the 1980s. Habermas not only denied this by pointing out that his "interest in legal theory stems from the 1950s…". He also emphasized the magnitude of this interest underlying his scholarly work: "… as I came to know the literature, [I] regretted not having studied law". In response to Specter's interview question, Habermas then volunteered the following observation: "But my interest in political economy, in which I had never felt at home, declined" (quoted in Specter 2010: 209).

Habermas's reassessment of the entwinement between the legal theory of the bourgeois constitutional state and its political economy finds a timely confirmation in the results of the comprehensive research project by Forbath and his fellow constitutional law theorist Joseph Fishkin, titled *The Anti-Oligarchy Constitution: Reconstructing the Economic Foundations of American Democracy* (2022). Its detailed analysis of the current challenges to our republican form of government, due to the rise of American

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oligarchs and their increasing stranglehold on economic and political power, offers the specifics underpinning Francis Fukuyama's reversal in his book *Liberalism and Its Discontent* (2022). Addressing the glaring failures of globalization, he now concedes that neoliberalism became "something of a religion" and resulted in "grotesque inequalities."

Fishkin and Forbath begin their analysis of the constitutional arguments about political economy with the framing of Virginia's state constitution and Noah Webster's dictum that "equality of property" is "the very *soul of a republic*" (quoted in Fishkin/Forbath, February 2022:5). They then highlight the efforts of the Jackson administration in the 1830s to avoid an "unconstitutional concentration of special privileges and power" in the hands of a "moneyed aristocracy" before addressing the commitments to economic equality as the hallmark of Populist and Progressive Democracy from the 1890s to World War I. Perhaps the strongest reaffirmation of Webster's dictum came from President Franklin D. Roosevelt when he maintained in no uncertain terms that political equality is "meaningless in the face of economic inequality" (quoted in Fishkin/Forbath, February 2022:8).

Although Habermas does not make the link explicit in his 2021 essay, its section 1 can be connected to lectures he gave in 2010 about the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 10, 1948. Specifically, its Articles 21 to 26 address the social and institutional preconditions for the economic autonomy of citizens. Since Eleanor Roosevelt headed the United Nations Human Rights Commission at the time, her husband's New Deal legislation served as a blueprint for these articles. With its emphasis on "human dignity," Article 23 (3) signifies that the "American Dream" always meant more than the proverbial "Freedom from Want:" "Everyone who works has a right to just and favorable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection" (quoted in Hunt 2007: 227).

In 2004, Habermas launched his famous dictum that the state of a democracy can be measured by the heartbeat of its political public sphere (Habermas 2005). In 2021, he would emphasize that the structural changes in and of the public sphere began more than a decade before the introduction of the digital internet and social media. Once Globalism's mantra of downsizing and outsourcing acquired hegemony, more and more citizens could no longer achieve the level of disposable income and education that enabled and motivated them to participate in political deliberation. Then even the "democracies of the West entered into a phase of increasing inner destabilization" (Habermas 2021: 484).

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The Political Public Sphere from the "Age of Machinery" (Carlyle) to the Digital Age

By analyzing the "crisis-prone" character of capitalist democracies as the *necessary* condition for the impairment of deliberative opinion- and will-formation" in the political public sphere in the wake of its new structural transformation, Habermas returned to his Hegelian insight from 1962 that the claim about an "allegedly universal interest of property-owning private people engaged in political debate" is "discredited" by "the inability" of the bourgeoisie "to resolve rationally the competition of interests" stemming from the antagonisms in the sphere of commodity exchange and social labor (Habermas 1962/1989: 119, 135). In other words, Article 2 of the Declaration of Human and Civil Rights from 1789 reaffirmed the status of property *only* as a universal *right* in the seventeenth century natural law tradition of John Locke (quoted in Hunt 2007: 221). It thus took Say's political economy from the 1820s (Say 1821/1834), which turned Smith's magic wand of the "invisible hand" (Smith 1776/1994) into *the* liberal dogma from John Stuart Mill in 1848 (Sowell 2006) all the way to Milton Friedman in the 1970s (Friedman 1970) and beyond, to assert that unregulated uses of property in a capitalist economy serve the public good and are in the universal *interest* of all citizens.

To create this capitalist dogma, Say had to ignore that Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* was published in 1776, several years *before* the Industrial Revolution began to exponentially increase the productivity of the division of labor on the factory floor by introducing machinery powered by steam-engines. When Thomas Carlyle coined the phrase "age of machinery" in 1829 (Carlyle 1829 /1971), he had witnessed more than a decade of intensifying cyclical overproduction and unemployment crises. They triggered the "general glut controversy" in political economy that pitted Say and Ricardo against the underconsumption theories of Sismondi and Malthus (Sowell 2006, Sismondi 1815/1966, Hofmann 2017: 122).

Arguably, the creation of a lasting "alternative reality" by dogmatic liberalism began at that time. While Say conceded in his famous open letter to Malthus (Say 1821/1967) that there was not enough space for all the unsold commodities in the warehouses and on the docks of the ports, he still maintained the validity of his "Law of Markets" which postulated that "supply creates its own demand" (Sowell 1972). To assert that he had discovered a natural law akin to those in the natural sciences, he compared himself to Copernicus and Galileo who "also had to contend with …the evidence of the senses" when they corrected the "universal prejudice" about the planetary movements of the sun and the earth (quoted in Hofmann 2017: 123). Needless to say, "supply-side economics" were resurrected in the Reagan era and would became a Silicon Valley article of faith.

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Implicitly adopting the suggestion of the German literature scholar Peter U. Hohendahl from 1978 (Hohendahl 1978/79, cf. Hohendahl 1974), Habermas in 1992 moved up the onset of the structural transformation of the public sphere from the development of the first global capitalist crisis and depression after 1871 to the bourgeois revolutions of 1848/49 (Hohendahl 1978/79; Habermas 1992). Nevertheless, there is sufficient empirical evidence to assume that Hegel, who had studied England's political economy, finalized his above conclusions in 1819 after the Peterloo Massacre and the Six Acts (Read 1958). That was the year when Manchester's bourgeois militia on horseback and the liberal Tory government elevated property rights above "one of the most precious" human rights. Namely, that of the "free communication of thoughts and opinions," to reference Article 11 from 1789 (quoted in Hunt 2007: 222).

This privileging of the "self-seeking" bourgeois "interest in freedom of trade and commerce" over the Enlightenment principle of free communication is emblematic of what Hegel called the "disorganization of civil society" (quoted in Habermas 1962/1989: 119). In 1962, Habermas concluded that Hegel's insight into this disorganization "decisively destroyed the liberal pretenses upon which the self-interpretation of public opinion as nothing but plain reason rested" (Habermas 1962/1989: 118). In other words, once the role of the bourgeois is allowed to trump the one of the citizen, market forces structurally transform the public sphere. The political culture of "rational-critical debate" will then have "a tendency to be replaced by consumption" of political stereotypes (Habermas 1962/1989: 161).

In 1997, Soros thus only recycled an early nineteenth century insight when he publicly announced his fear that an unleashed "laissez-faire capitalism and the spread of market values into all areas of life is endangering our open and democratic society" (quoted in Ibsen 1997: 1). Nevertheless, his words provide additional empirical evidence for the accuracy of Habermas's analysis from 1962. They also illustrate just how structurally similar the precarious relationship between a crisis-prone capitalism and the public sphere of the bourgeois constitutional state has been as the necessary condition for its old as well as for its new structural transformation.

In 1829, Carlyle was prescient when he described in his essay a systemically alienated lifeworld in which "the internal and spiritual" are "managed by machinery" and human beings have "grown mechanical in head and in heart, as well as in hand" (Carlyle 1829/1971: 64, 65). For he anticipated the changes in the creation and distribution of the "idols of the marketplace" (Francis Bacon), facilitated by the late nineteenth century printing technology of the stereotype plate. Combined with the machinery of the rotary press, it allowed for the high-speed printing of mass-circulation newspapers that were hawked in crowded city streets. Cast out of hot metal,

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these stereotype molds permanently coined the currency of emotionally charged commonplaces which served as the building blocks for seemingly mechanized thought processes (Hofmann 2019: 51).

By the time the political philosopher and public intellectual Walter Lippmann adopted the term "stereotype" in his classic study *Public Opinion* (1922), it had entered everyday language as a short-hand expression for memorable phrases that instantly struck a responsive chord with a mass audience and thus were suitable for sensationalized headlines designed to grab the attention of commuters rushing by the shouts of news vendors and the glaring displays of news-stands. By integrating this term with reflections by John Dewey and William James about "the acquisition of meaning" in the process of human cognition, Lippmann defined the "perfect stereotype" as the one that "precedes the use of reason" and "govern(s) deeply the whole process of perception." In short, Lippmann was the first to analyze the mechanics needed for manipulating democratic will-formation (Lippmann 1922/1965: 59, 65).

In 1839, Carlyle would expand on these essentials of the "Age of Machinery" to fully identify the *sufficient* condition for the original structural transformation of the political public sphere. His findings directly connect to Habermas's 2021 analysis of its new transformation. To this day, Carlyle's observation that "*Cash Payments*" had "grown to be the universal sole nexus of man to man" can trigger major irritation (Carlyle 1839/1971: 193, emphasis in the original). In 2001, the British philosopher Alan Ryan conflated in the *New York Review of Books* Carlyle's italicized phrase "*Cash Payments*" and Marx's addition of the adjective "callous" to it when using it in *The Communist Manifesto* – without identifying Carlyle as his source. Due to this conflation, Ryan could claim that Adam Smith has been demonized "as the theorist of the society held together by nothing stronger than the callous cash nexus of *Marxian folklore*, an alienated world where human relationships are reduced to self-interested bargaining and the worth of every man is the price at which his services can be bought" (Ryan 2001: 42, emphasis added).

Admittedly, Ryan offered his spirited critique of what was actually Carlyle's original thought *before* the introduction of Facebook when social media began to supercharge "the spread of market values into all areas of life" (George Soros). By 2021, Habermas could thus analyze the terminal commodification of the political public sphere as the *sufficient* condition for its new structural transformation in the digital age. Based on the premise that the personal is not only the political but also the marketable, this ultimate hegemony of self-branding is achieved in transactional "selfies" as the digital medium for monetizing one's identity and skill sets. Accordingly, these video clips have to be most elaborately produced in the race for the necessary "likes" that bestow the

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required celebrity status. Emblematic for this fierce competition was the too-close-to-call race between President Trump and the social media influencer Kim Kardashian when both boasted about their respective 88 million followers in the Twittersphere.

Habermas's seminal essay captures the essence of this digital transformation in crisis-prone capitalist democracies. While Carlyle reflected on the mechanization of thought processes as the threat to political self-determination, Habermas can now identify the existential dimension of this development. Initially, the European Enlightenment grounded the existence of human beings in their ability to think rationally and critically in public deliberations, culminating in Kant's dictum about the public use of reason by citizens. However, once the pathologies of modernity go digital, the proof of existence is already fulfilled as soon as one's selfie goes viral as a new consumer brand.

Habermas's essay focuses on this "semi-public, fragmented, and self-fixated mode of communication" that is seemingly practiced "by exclusive users of social media," because it "distorts their *perception of the political public sphere* as such" (Habermas 2021: 471, emphasis in the original). Democratic self-governance requires that citizens make their political decisions "in the tension-filled field between their self-interest and their orientation toward the common good" (Habermas 2021: 495). Due to the seemingly neutral platform technology they provide free from any interference by biased "gatekeepers" in the flow of communication, social media companies like to claim that they are uniquely situated to provide an ideal medium for working through these tensions and to facilitate a balancing of the private and the public good. However, since they are in the business of unlimited data harvesting for instant sale so that the highest bidder can place targeted ads with pin-point precision, their algorithmic steering mechanisms have to maximize user attention and engagement by functioning as "echo chambers" for user self-interest and by incentivizing self-branding as a narcissistic exercise (Habermas 2021: 485, 498, 488, 489, 494).

This secret digital manipulation through undisclosed algorithms has cynically betrayed social media's original promise to equally empower all citizens by giving them "their own, publicly recognizable voice, which even would be endowed with the power to mobilize." Once again, "the egalitarian-universalistic claim of the bourgeois public sphere to include all citizens with equal rights" remains unfulfilled (Habermas 2021: 488, Hofmann 2022). Small wonder that Habermas reacted to these betrayals with uncommonly harsh language that would have made the new media moguls blush, if "old European human dignity" (Habermas 1973/1975: 143) still counted: "But the lava of this simultaneously anti-authoritarian and egalitarian potential, which was still discernible in the Californian founding spirit of the early years, soon petrified

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in Silicon Valley into the libertarian grimace of digital corporations that dominate the globe" (Habermas 2021: 488).

The Remote Steering of Political Will-Formation in the Era of "Surveillance Capitalism"

Habermas's reflections on the new structural transformation of the public sphere in the digital age reference the economist Soshana Zuboff who coined the term "surveillance capitalism" to analyze social media's business of unlimited 24/7 data mining in all spheres of the lifeworld, even the most intimate ones (Habermas 2021: 492; Zuboff 2019). Based on this wealth of highly personal data, Facebook's artificial intelligence capability can generate "six million behavioral predictions each second." Once they are "weaponized as targeting algorithms," it becomes possible "to reinforce or disrupt the behavior of billions of people." In 2021, Zuboff identified the dire consequences for democratic will-formation and self-governance: The "abdication of our information and communication spaces to surveillance capitalism has become the meta-crisis of every republic, because it obstructs solutions to all other crises" (Zuboff 2021: SR 8).

This abdication of the "semi-private, semi-public communication spaces" created by social media occurs, because "the digitalization of public communication blurs *the perception* of this boundary between the private and the public sphere of the lifeworld." In comparison, in Habermas's original public sphere concept this boundary was still "recognizable" (Habermas 2021: 480). In 1962, he illustrated this physical separation of private and public spheres by pointing out that readers of the moral weekly *The Spectator* threw their letters to the editor through the jaws of a lion's head "on the west side of Button's Coffee House." Those that were printed would then enter into the public sphere constituted by the weekly journal and by their public discussion in the coffee house (Habermas 1962/1989: 42). In comparison, today's selfies can be created in one's bedroom and instantly go public in cyberspace while being commodified as marketable consumer brands in the process.

The private property rights of social media proprietors who own the technology platforms needed for broadcasting one's selfies reinforce this blurring between private and public. As the headline of a *New York Times* editorial put it already in 2014: "Facebook is Not the Public Square," even though the U.S. Supreme Court would call social media "the modern public square" in 2017. Social media businesses do not constitute "the digital equivalent of the public square where opinions can be freely shared." Instead, these companies resemble privately owned shopping malls where "the management always reserves the right to throw you out if you don't abide by its rules" regarding the contents of your public statements (Kaminski/Klonick 2017).

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Of course, Mark Zuckerberg does not need a security guard to escort one out. Moreover, Facebook's highly sophisticated algorithms can not only curtail one's freedom of expression but also remotely steer one's political will-formation. As early as March 2011, a TED conference offered a talk titled "Beware Online 'Filter Bubbles.'" It analyzed how Facebook's algorithmic filters reinforced user preferences even if their "friend list included a balance of liberals and conservatives." If one clicked more often on liberal links, the filter algorithms would "prioritize such content, eventually crowding out conservatives entirely" (McNamee 2019: 67,66).

Accordingly, Habermas can point to the paradox that while communication flows "spread centrifugally" on global social media networks, thus seemingly advancing a new dimension of outward-looking inclusivity, they actually tend to condense into inward-looking "communication circuits *that dogmatically seal themselves off from each other*" (Habermas 2021: 489, emphasis in the original). Such self-immunization against outside views and inconvenient truths mutes any fact-checking messages. Especially if the property rights of stockholders are involved. When Fox News reporter Jaqui Heinrich fact-checked on Twitter after the 2020 election President Trump's claims about rigged Dominion voting machines, Tucker Carlson texted his fellow Fox News host Sean Hannity: "It needs to stop immediately, like tonight. It's measurably hurting the company. The stock price is down. No joke." In spite of the fact that Carlson had already dismissed these conspiracy theories by Trump's lawyer in a text to fellow Fox News host Laura Ingraham: "Sydney Powell is lying by the way. Caught her. It's insane." To which Ingraham responded that Powell was "a complete nut" (quoted in Goldberg 2023: 19). Finally, when Fox chairman Rupert Murdoch was asked in his deposition for the Dominion libel lawsuit why he did not want to further "antagonize" President Trump after the 2020 election, as he had written in an email to Fox News chief executive Suzanne Scott, his response was simple and direct: "He had a very large following. They were probably mostly viewers of Fox, so it would have been stupid" (quoted in Rutenberg 2023: 36, 37).

Murdoch's deliberate replacement of the citizen with the consumer, and of the public with the market, in the coverage of political news, reflects his subsumption of First Amendment rights and responsibilities under the property rights of Fox stockholders. Since the Trump brand was so powerful, he had to align the Fox brand with it. No matter, if the Fox viewers were wrong regarding the facts, thus violating the basic tenets of responsible citizenship, as *consumers* they were always right. In short, he personally saw to it in his email exchange with Scott that their fact-checking reporter was not only reprimanded but also sidelined regarding future White House coverage.

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In stark contrast to Murdoch, the early Facebook investor and former Zuckerberg advisor Roger McNamee had been seriously concerned about the distortion of political deliberation on social media platforms even before President Trump started tweeting his violence-inciting lie about his allegedly stolen election in November 2020. In April 2019, McNamee declared in the *Columbia Journalism Review* that "Facebook is the biggest problem we have for democracy" and pointed to the evidence his just published book presented to prove his claim. Just two weeks later, Facebook co-founder Chris Hughes announced in a long opinion article in the *New York Times* that "It's Time to Break Up Facebook," because the social network had become "a threat to our economy and democracy" (Hughes 2019: SR 1).

McNamee's and Hughes's urgent warnings that Facebook algorithms can be exploited to undermine the democratic process dovetail with Habermas's analysis that under "the imperatives of the attention economy" social media platforms strive to attract "the attention of *consumers*" by employing the century-old techniques of the tabloid press like "the affective charging" of "the issues with which the political public sphere is increasingly concerned" (Habermas 2021: 494, emphasis in the original). As McNamee explains, Facebook's algorithms are designed "to nudge user attention" in a specific direction, because "the goal is behavior modification that makes advertising more valuable" (McNamee 2019: 9). In comparison, when *citizens* consciously remain dispassionate in order to solve complex issues in rational-critical discourse, they are of "relatively little value to Facebook." Its algorithms thus have to "choose posts calculated to press emotional buttons." While videos of cute puppies and babies generate joy and thus can serve as powerful emotional buttons, "fear and anger produce a more uniform reaction and are more viral in a mass audience." As the winning votes for Brexit & Trump in 2016 demonstrated, "Facebook may confer advantages to campaign messages based on fear and anger over those based on neutral or positive emotions" (McNamee 2019: 8, 9).

Say, Pryme, Friedman, and Silicon Valley's Services for "Digital Authoritarianism"

In his letter to Say from April 22, 1815, the Physiocrat Dupont de Nemours chastised him for having narrowed political economy from "the *science of constitutions*" to a mere "*science of wealth*." He thus "begged Say 'to leave the counting house' and return to the French language of liberty" (quoted in Whatmore 2000: 37, 38). Eight years later, George Pryme, "the first professor of political economy at the University of Cambridge," confidently dismissed all criticism when reducing a science, that in the seventeenth and eighteenth century undergirded republican constitutions, to economics. Moreover, he announced that while his redefined discipline "may seem

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less interesting than Political Philosophy its utility is more extensive, since *it is applicable alike to a despotism and a democracy*" (quoted in Rothschild 2001: 3, emphasis added).

In 1962, Habermas introduced his seminal distinction between the purely political *polis* of antiquity, which excludes the private economy from the *res publica*, and the modern public sphere with its rational-critical discourse about commodity exchange and social labor in the *political* economy. In the same year, Friedman reaffirmed Pryme's insight that from a capitalist point of view, political freedom and democracy are disposable: "History suggests only that capitalism is a necessary condition for political freedom. Clearly, it is not a sufficient one. Fascist Italy and Fascist Spain, Germany at various times in the last seventy years, Japan before World Wars I and II, tsarist Russia in the decades before World War I – are all societies that cannot conceivably be described as politically free. Yet, in each, private enterprise was the dominant form of economic organization. It is therefore clearly possible to have economic arrangements that are fundamentally capitalist and political arrangements that are not free" (Friedman 1962: 10).

In December 2021, President Biden's "Summit for Democracy" called for safeguarding democracy and human rights by rallying the world's democracies against Russia and China's authoritarianism as "the defining challenge of our time." Specifically, his administration seeks to fight "digital authoritarianism" by strictly controlling the export of information technologies that are needed by "surveillance states" (Crowley and Kanno-Youngs 2021: 6). On August 25, 2022, the *New York Times* gave its leading opinion article by an exiled Indian journalist the headline "Modi's India Is Where Global Democracy Dies," because the "battle between liberalism and tyranny is being lost" when, for example, state-supported Hindu extremists engage in vigilante violence and "now openly threaten the genocide and rape of Muslims, while the government arrests journalists who call out acts of hate" (Chowdhury 2022: 19). In this context, an Indian history professor at Harvard reminded *Times* readers in June 2023 that of "the 180 nations surveyed in the 2023 World Press Freedom Index, India sits at 161, a scant three places above Russia" (Jasanoff 2023: 20).

In the run-up to the Modi state dinner in June 2023, the Biden advisor and India chair at the Center for Strategic and International Studies reassured a *New York Times* reporter that only "a dramatic step to worsen the livelihoods of Muslims in the country" might interfere with the event. Afterwards, he was granted the last quote in the article: "But right now, I think the small stuff that we read about, we can kind of work around" (quoted in Shear 2023: 11).

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On the first day of Prime Minister Modi's state visit, the *Times* informed its readers that "India has just surpassed China as the most populous nation," is "the planet's fifth-largest economy, … has a young work force, a strong technology industry, a growing consumer market and barely scratched potential as a manufacturing hub." It also expects "6 percent growth or better" this year. In short, "American companies and political leaders eye India as a country fit to shoulder some of the immense weight that China carries in the world's economy." In light of these facts, the *Times* quoted a professor of global affairs at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies who concluded: "The reality, of course, is that every U.S. president – including the ones most devoted to democracy and human rights – realized that there were some relationships that were just *too strategically important to hold hostage to concerns about democratic values*" (quoted in Baker/Mashal 2023: 11, emphasis added).

Since Prime Minister Modi has a reported 300 million followers across various social media platforms (Mashal 2023: 10), serving his digital authoritarianism with the blessing of the White House will not only offer Silicon Valley corporations a lucrative business opportunity but also a welcome alternative to their previous role in providing China's video surveillance and facial recognition start-ups with the necessary capital, technologies, and know-how to facilitate the development of a highly sophisticated Orwellian police state. As Josh Chin and Liza Lin document in their book *Surveillance State: Inside China's Quest to Launch a New Era of Social Control* (2022), only after cybersecurity researchers in Europe and the United States had exposed the image recognition algorithms targeted at Uyghur Muslims and the databases containing even DNA information on more than 2.5 million residents of the Xinjiang region, did Silicon Valley companies sell their shares in such start-ups whose valuations had risen as high as $ 7.5 billion by 2019. Nevertheless, they continued to sell advanced computer chips worth billions of dollars per year to China's surveillance industry (Chin and Lin 2022: 155-164; 167-170).

It is no coincidence that the Silicon Valley venture capitalist and founder of Sun Microsystems, Vinod Khosla, quoted at the very beginning of this review essay, spent millions of dollars in a long-lasting lawsuit trying to assert his private property right against the California law that guarantees public access to his personal beach near Half Moon Bay. When Habermas emphasizes that the "anti-authoritarian and egalitarian potential" of California's computer and Internet start-ups was soon eclipsed by the "libertarian grimace" of Silicon Valley's "digital corporations that dominate the globe" (Habermas 2021: 488), he points to this libertarian worshipping of property rights that was successfully launched by Milton Friedman in September 1970 and would accompany the growth of Silicon Valley. Titled "The Social Responsibility

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of Business Is to Increase Its Profits," Friedman's manifesto was catapulted into the public debate at the time by *New York Times Magazine*. It received an enormous amount of public attention, because it was published by *the* liberal Establishment platform that advocated for corporate responsibility on its editorial page. Fifty years later, the *Times* itself had changed so profoundly that the paper would publish a commemorative issue of its magazine section and congratulate itself on having provided a megaphone for Friedman's "call to arms for free market capitalism that influenced a generation of executives and political leaders, most notably Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher" (quoted in Hofmann 2023: 221-2).

According to Friedman's libertarian logic, it is the fiduciary duty of Silicon Valley executives to generate shareholder value by maximizing profits, even if this means doing business with the Ministry of Public Security for a Stalinist dictatorship that is in charge of stifling all free speech, tracking down all dissenters, and suppressing all minorities. Among the many trailblazing insights in Habermas's analysis of the new structural transformation of the public sphere, the one about Silicon Valley's "libertarian grimace" stands out. If Facebook co-founder Hughes and Zuckerberg's former advisor McNamee explain in great detail why this social media company is a threat to democracy, and if Zuboff can conclude that Silicon Valley's surveillance capitalism has become the "meta-crisis of the republic," because it fundamentally obstructs a rational-critical discourse in the public sphere without which none of the existential crises like global warming can be solved, then Habermas's declaration that it is a "constitutional mandate" to safeguard a media structure that facilitates "the deliberative character" of the public sphere (Habermas 2021: 499), should be regarded as a call to arms more beneficial to humankind than Friedman's from 1970 was. For Habermas's new book clearly demonstrates that the future of human rights and of democracy is at stake.

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DEBATE

"For the Workers" – A Tribute to Prof. Edward Webster

Carmen Ludwig[1]

Keywords: Edward Webster, South Africa, global labour studies, labour movements, trade unions, social movement unionism, power resources

As a distinguished research professor, Edward (Eddie) Webster made a huge contribution to the field of labour sociology in South Africa and globally. Eddie Webster's engagement as a political sociologist went beyond the careful analysis of political processes and changes in society, he also took a principled standpoint for social justice and in support of the democratic labour movement all throughout his career. With this commitment he inspired generations of students. It was motivated by his own biography and the eventful history of his country South Africa. This slightly revised personal tribute to Eddie Webster was held by the author at the 20th year anniversary event of the Global Labour University on 30th April in Berlin.

Eddie Webster's unexpected passing on 5th March 2024 came as a big shock to everyone who had the chance to engage and work with him. Immediately, many friends, comrades and colleagues shared their stories with Eddie, and demonstrated the deep impact he had made on other people's lives during his 81 years, of which he acted more than 45 years as a professor at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. It was also a very moving testimony when the Uber Eats riders Eddie had recently helped to organise paid their last respects to him at his funeral in Johannesburg, leading the funeral procession on their motorbikes.

Eddie Webster liked to break a topic down into three points, so I'll share three lessons I learned from Eddie.

1 International Secretary at German Education Union (GEW), Reifenberger Str. 21, D-60489 Frankfurt am Main and International Research Associate at the Society, Work and Politics Institute (SWOP), University of Witwatersrand Johannesburg, carmen-ludwig@gmx.de.

The first lesson is: Engage and look out for the puzzles

Eddie was an incredible source of knowledge about global labour studies and the labour movement in South Africa that he was part of. Eddie always remained so excited about discussing the changing world of work and engaging on workers' power. In each discussion he would find something interesting, challenging or surprising. I remember him at meetings excitedly saying, this is a puzzle! And puzzles needed further exploration. Or he used to ask after meetings, 'what did surprise you?'

This was just the way Eddie was as a person and how he engaged. He was genuinely interested in his students and other people's thoughts and interacted on an equal footing. This also reflects one of Eddie's many strengths as an intellectual that he preferred to work collaboratively, and that he enjoyed the engagement and open discussions. "I believe that all knowledge is collectively produced", he wrote in the preface of his last book (Webster 2023: xiii). For this purpose, he always carried his notebook with him, in which he made notes during conversations.

The serious commitment is also what made Eddie a remarkable teacher. Eddie would take off his shoes in the classroom to explain to students the character of value chains. Also, he had that strong confidence in everyone he worked with that we could do better than we often thought ourselves. As Andries Bezuidenhout wrote, Eddie "build people, and this is maybe the most radical thing anyone can invest their time in."[2]

The second lesson: Stay true to your beliefs and get involved (or as Eddie might have said, get your hands dirty)

Eddie's curiosity, deep commitment and inviting way of engaging encouraged and inspired generations of students and trade unionists in South Africa and around the world not only to study labour but to also become involved as activists.

Eddie lived the concept of an 'engaged researcher' – someone who remained dedicated to support workers' struggles and to challenge oppression and exploitation.

2 Andries Bezuidenhout, Obituary: Eddie Webster's influence over generations of students extended to the country and beyond its borders, Mail & Guardian, 6th March, https://mg.co.za/thought-leader/opinion/2024-03-06-obituary-eddie-websters-influence-over-generations-of-students-extended-to-the-country-and-beyond-its-borders/

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He supported the emergent black trade unions in South Africa, which brought him into conflict with the apartheid regime.[3] Eddie and four members of the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) were arrested by the Security Branch and put on trial in 1976. Eddie said: "1976 was a tough year. I was on bail after I had been arrested for calling for the release of Nelson Mandela. I had to report to the police station twice a week."[4] Although acquitted later, the personal risk remained. Some of Eddie's friends and intellectuals like Rick Turner were assassinated by the apartheid regime.

The challenge for an engaged researcher is to choose sides by supporting democratic movements while maintaining independence. Eddie wrote: "I prefer the stance of critical engagement. Squaring the circle is never easy, as it involves a difficult combination of commitment to the goals of these movements while being faithful to evidence, data and your own judgment and conscience." (Webster 2022: 53)

The idea of research that has a practical impact and benefits the labour movement is also reflected in the many institutions Eddie was instrumental in establishing, like the South African Labour Bulletin and the Global Labour Journal, the Society, Work and Politics Institute (SWOP) at Wits University and the Global Labour University.

This was also a way of bringing the experiences of the South back into the global debates on the sociology of labour – be it the experiences and struggles of workers in the informal economy or of trade unions challenging authoritarian regimes and changing society, which was captured by Eddie in the concept of 'social movement unionism'.

In South Africa, the struggles of the black trade union movement simultaneously aimed at improving the wages and working conditions while engaging in a successful struggle for democracy against the apartheid regime. Eddie coined the term social movement unionism to describe a union orientation that sees "labour as a social and political force, not simply as a commodity to be bargained over" (Webster 1988: 195).

3 Following the tradition of critical scholars in South Africa, the term black is used to refer to all racially oppressed people during Apartheid, who were until 1979 not allowed to organise in trade unions.

4 Alexia Webster, Tracing lives: a visual response to coronavirus, The Guardian, 26th June 2020, https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2020/jun/26/tracing-lives-visual-response-to-coronavirus

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The third lesson is: Workers do have power!

Eddie was an optimist in that he believed in the ability of workers to act collectively. A key event for the labour movement in South Africa, and for Eddie as a younger researcher, was the Durban strikes 1973, when more than 100,000 black workers took part in the spontaneous strikes that started in Durban and spread around the country. The mass strikes took the apartheid state by surprise and triggered a new phase of worker militancy and trade union organising. It demonstrated that workers could wield significant power even under the most difficult conditions of racial oppression.

The question of how to build workers' power in a changing world of work is a recurring theme in many of Eddie's publications, which include several books and more than hundred articles. As Eddie examined in his book "Cast in a Racial Mould" (1985), the changing labour process in the foundries in apartheid South Africa laid the foundation for the rise of the democratic trade union movement during the 1970s. In his award-winning book "Grounding Globalisation" (2008), Eddie and his co-authors Rob Lambert and Andries Bezuidenhout analysed how workers in the white goods industries in South Korea, Australia and South Africa responded to the insecurities of globalisation.

In his last year published book "Recasting Workers Power: Work and Inequality in the Shadow of the Digital Age" (2023), Eddie and his team, including myself, reflected on the impact of digital capitalism on workplace restructuring and how workers in South Africa, Uganda and Kenya are experimenting with new forms of organisation and resistance in response. The book seeks to address the question whether the role of labour could be revived in post-colonial Africa in the context of dramatic changes in the world of work and a representational gap of traditional unions, by looking at different sectors including boda boda and food delivery riders in the platform economy. It concludes: "What emerges from our case studies is that we need to move away from the standard narrative of the end of labour. Our research highlights that precarious workers do have agency and power. New and hybrid forms of organisation are forming on the margins of the global economy. The question raised by these findings is whether these embryonic forms of worker organisation – what we are calling the Southern trend – are sustainable and could become the foundations for a new cycle of worker solidarity and union growth." (Webster 2023: 172)

The recent book also draws on a global project that we were part of: The Trade Unions in Transformation Project, initiated by the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation with a focus on power resources (Schmalz et al. 2018). The 26 case studies around the world provided examples of trade unions' ability to make strategic choices and to revitalise.

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On the side of the workers

Eddie liked to listen to Pete Seeger's song "Which side are you on?" For him that was never a question.

A story that Eddie told me illustrates this well: We were sitting at the office at the house of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) in Braamfontein in Johannesburg and Eddie pointed to a building nearby, which is today the City Council. In 1977 Eddie participated in the hearing of the Wiehahn commission as an academic expert.[5] The Commission investigated whether, following the strikes in Durban, the scope of legality should be extended by allowing the recognition of black trade unions. At the hearing, Eddie was asked the question whether he was against capitalism. During Apartheid and in light of the Suppression of Communism Act this was a dangerous question, which was intended to expose him as a communist. Eddie answered: "I am for the workers."

"For the workers" – that's what Eddie unwaveringly stood for in his many contributions to building the labour movement.

Generations of students and labour activists have a lot to thank Eddie Webster for, and it is now on us to follow in his footsteps. Amandla!

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5 See for a reflection on South Africa's contested industrial relations and the Wiehahn recommendations Webster 2013.

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DEBATE

Europe Outside Europe? An Interview with Agnieszka Weinar about the Potentials of Building a European Diaspora[1]

Hanna Kieschnick[2] and Kseniia Cherniak[3]

In this interview, we discuss the book *European Citizenship and Identity Outside of the European Union* with the author, Dr Agnieszka Weinar. Weinar reveals her motivation and broader research behind the book and talks about the colonial heritage of EU emigration policy, the factors for enduring ties between the place of origin and the diaspora and how EU and national diaspora policies could reinforce but also be obstacles towards each other. Ultimately, the author explains her strong plea for a more holistic approach to EU diaspora engagement. The interview was held in July 2023, as an email and video-call conversation.

Keywords: European integration, emigration, diaspora, migration policy, European identity

Introduction

Emigration and diaspora policies are relatively new areas in research and politics of European countries, as for a long time, the EU was considered to be only a region of immigration. Agnieszka Weinar has become one of the first researchers to tackle emigration and diaspora policies and to focus on their Europeanization. Her research explores the intersection of migration and European governance structures, shedding light on the complexities of migration management within the EU framework.

1 Interviewee: Dr Agnieszka Weinar, Ph.D, Adjunct Research Professor at the Institute of European, Russian and Eurasian Studies (EURUS), Carleton University. agnieszka.weinar@carleton.ca.
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In her earlier works, Agnieszka Weinar studies European migration cooperation and integration governance, particularly in the context of Eastern Partnership, and considers the role of mobility partnerships in migration, diaspora, and general European neighborhood policies. Later on, her focus shifts solely to EU-level emigration. Agnieszka Weinar is the first researcher to provide a comprehensive overview of EU emigration and diaspora policies (*Emigration policies in contemporary Europe*, 2014 & *From emigrants to free movers: whither European emigration and diaspora policy?*, 2017) and points to the limits of European migration and diaspora studies that follow "a strict West/East divide" (*Politics of emigration in Europe*, 2018). In the focus of her research are primarily highly-skilled migrants who, on the one hand, do not face similar obstacles as low-skilled when deciding to migrate, but at the same time, experience similar problems in the integration process (*Highly-Skilled Migration: Between Settlement and Mobility*, 2020).

Agnieska Weinar has been involved in various research and consultancy projects for the European Commission, studying and evaluating migration-related initiatives such as the European Migration Network and the European Integration Fund.

The book *European Citizenship and Identity Outside of the European Union: Europe Outside Europe?*, discussed in this interview, is a logical continuation of Agnieszka Weinar's research on EU emigration. In this book, she studies high-skilled EU migrants outside of the EU, their membership and identification with the EU, and their potential to become a European – rather than national – diaspora. The analysis considers EU national and supranational emigration and diaspora policies, interviews with EU nationals in Canada, and an online survey of EU nationals living outside of the EU. The author concludes that European citizenship as a set of rights and a symbolic membership exists inside the EU but is almost absent abroad. The EU engages little with its citizens abroad, leaving this task to member states. As a result, membership practices and identification with Europe among EU nationals abroad are relatively weak. The nation-state remains the most important political actor, while the value of European citizenship, even in terms of being able to study and work in the EU easier, is not acknowledged.

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Why have you started to investigate the issue of EU emigration in the first place? What sparked your interest – both personally and academically?

Agnieszka Weinar: My best friend left Poland when I was 10. Her family was a part of the Aussiedler[4] wave in the late 1980s. I kept close ties with her and visited her every year after 1989. I could observe the process of integration first-hand, the good and the bad sides of it. Then, I started going abroad myself and experienced a lifetime migration.

In Poland at that time (1990s to early 2000s), one could only study emigration from Poland, but I was interested in the reciprocal relationship of migration in countries of origin and destination. I focused on immigration studies in the context of the EU, hoping I could keep studying the two ends of migration phenomena. Unfortunately, this is not the way European migration studies work. Conceptually, in the EU, *migration* means immigration to the EU, and *diaspora* means non-EU communities in the EU. This rather colonial mindset does not acknowledge the wealth of experiences of all 27 member states, many of whom are now experiencing large-scale emigration to other EU member states and non-EU countries. There is something hierarchical in this: immigration occurs to countries higher up on the value ladder, while emigration is something to be ashamed of; it suggests that people *vote with their feet*. I wanted to change that perception.

During my stay at the European Commission, I pushed for an exploration of this topic by the Directorate General for External Relations in the context of the Transatlantic Dialogues.[5] This is when we got the first review paper on contemporary emigration from the EU to the US. The scale of highly skilled migration was striking. During the financial crisis in 2010, the topic of emigration (in particular from Ireland, Portugal, Spain, and Greece) finally got attention in the media. That was also when I decided to work on contemporary emigration from the EU to understand this phenomenon better. Interestingly, many traditional scholars were baffled by my research agenda. For them, the annual outflow of 200,000 Europeans from the EU was not worth the attention. The problem, in my view, is not the number but the quality.

It is important to understand that people who are moving to Canada, the USA, or Australia are usually highly skilled, which puts them in a different situation than

4 Aussiedler – a person recognized to have German ethnicity, usually from an Eastern European country, and therefore enjoys privileged resettlement regulations in the Federal Republic of Germany.

5 The Transatlantic Legislator's Dialogues are held between the US House of Representatives and the European Parliament on matters of common interest regularly since 1972.

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low-skilled migrants in low-wage occupations. They emigrate out of curiosity rather than economic need, and it is easier for them to move around – they have more options in other labor markets, financial means, and easier access to visas. In Canada, for example, a points-based immigration system, that also considers the level of education, language proficiency, and work experience already privileges highly skilled migrants. In contrast, low-skilled migrants may become illegal by overstaying their visas to earn more money in the country and then return to their state of origin. For them, it is much easier to stay in the EU, where they have freedom of movement rights.

Another problem is the issue of aging, as mostly young people go abroad. They will contribute to other countries' economies with the skills they often gain thanks to free European education. This is not bad per se, but I felt the EU needed to start building a diaspora engagement policy to keep the ties and bridges. And such a policy starts with knowing your target group.

During my time at the EU Commission's Directorate General for Migration and Home Affairs, we pursued a so-called Global Approach to Migration, which included supporting the partner countries in developing their diaspora policies. I remember sitting in a room full of Eastern Partnership[6] and EU member state civil servants discussing the topic. At one point, the question arose whether EU member states had any lessons learned and good practices to share with regard to approaching their diasporas, and that question was met with total silence and confusion. The leading member states confessed they did not really have a diaspora policy or that their lessons learnt were not applicable. Almost a decade after that event, when I wrote up the conclusions to my Marie Curie research project *Émigré*, I could finally assert that the EU member states' representatives at that meeting were ill-informed: almost all EU countries have a solid diaspora policy, many also focus on economic development ties. But these policies are rarely called *diaspora engagement policy* or *migration for development*. The EU prefers to frame such policies as business development or heritage support.

6 The Eastern Partnership (EaP) has been launched in 2009 and involves the EU member states as well as Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. It seeks to deepen political and economic relationships and to support sustainable development in the six partner countries.

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Social and political science researchers often use the terms *Europe* and *European Union* interchangeably, although they do not necessarily signify the same concept.[7] In your book, you refer to both terms. Interviewees in your study talked a lot about Europe and European identity, though the main focus of the study is on the European Union and citizens of the EU. How would you disentangle these two concepts, and how was this distinction relevant to your research?

Agnieszka Weinar: That was a tricky part. Although the research focuses on the European Union and interviewees were informed that we will talk about the EU, people still referred to the idea of Europe rather than actual relations with the EU as a political entity. The European Union is recognized as the European Union by those who have experienced its mobility instruments, such as Erasmus+[8] or free movement to another EU country. For example, Polish and Portuguese citizens who migrated to Canada after living in the United Kingdom would have such an understanding of the EU. Everyone else, such as descendants of Europeans in Canada, has this conception of Europe and the European Union primarily as *Western Europe*, usually France, the UK, and maybe Germany.

Here, we speak first of all about values, not about a geographical or political entity. On the one hand, when moving away from the EU, European migrants start to clearly see and appreciate the set of values that makes Europe European. On the other hand, some migrants left when the EU was not a political reality yet – think about pre-2004, pre-1995, pre-1978 – and they do not really recognize the EU as a political actor. They define it as a continental entity with a defined set of values that happen to be Western European values. In both cases, the EU is the principal representative of these specific European values, hence the shorthand.

You said that the European Union embodies only particular European values. What are those values?

Agnieszka Weinar: Typically, these values align with Western ideals perceived through a British lens and a British interpretation of principles such as liberalism, democracy, and the free market. Thus, these European values are seen as limited to a handful of

7 The term European Union is more exclusive and denotes the political and economic community and legal entity formed by the member states of the EU. "Europe", on the other hand, is much more diffuse and could refer to cultural, geographic, political or historical categories and imaginaries (including that of the EU).

8 With its Erasmus + program, the EU funds the promotion of education, training, youth, and sport in Europe.

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Western European countries. Notably, some of my respondents even go as far as to exclude countries like Romania or Poland from their understanding of Europe, even though their ancestors come from these very countries.

According to Eurobarometer results, young, skilled, and mobile people feel most attached to the EU. In contrast, according to your results, people with similar characteristics outside the EU do not meet this expectation. What could be a factor for feeling more or less European among the *European* diaspora? Is exercising EU citizenship rights a precondition for feelings of belonging to the EU?

Agnieszka Weinar: In my results, the young people were predominantly one-and-a-half-generation or even second-generation[9] migrants. Naturally, they did not experience the EU and have had literally no opportunity to get to know it living outside the EU. They were raised in their country of residence's culture and maybe in their parent's culture. The attachment comes from prolonged exposure. If there is no EU engagement with Europeans and their descendants abroad, there is no attachment. I remember I met a student whose parents came from Romania in the early 2000s. She did not have her Romanian passport because her parents renounced Romanian citizenship. It did not occur to them that that passport could bring their daughter the benefits of European citizenship, and there was no European body in Canada that would promote such a message.

Would you say that exposure to EU messaging is the only factor for sentiments of belonging?

Agnieszka Weinar: It is not only about messaging itself but also about building strong diaspora ties and engagement. In accordance with diaspora research, a country (or the EU) should offer thin and thick membership, as well as material and symbolic means to ensure attachment. And it also depends on how significant the symbolism is.

The UK is a good example: They have zero diaspora policy but they do not even need it. The British usually have a significant cultural influence in many of the countries where they reside, and symbols such as, for example, Harry Potter or the Queen make them proud to be British. People automatically relate to this, so British people do not need the EU; they are Brits.

9 The term 1,5 generation refers to first-generation migrants who immigrated to the new country before or during their early teens, age 6-12. Second-generation migrants are individuals who have at least one foreign-born parent.

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Poland also has a lot of symbolic relationships, but they primarily focus on history, World War II, and the resistance movement. This is explained by the vast emigration of Polish army members to the US in the 20th century. However, this historical symbolism does not work so well with younger generations. In contrast, Italy has positive symbolism – fine arts, Renaissance, food, modern design. That is why the Italian diaspora is very attached to and proud of their country's achievements.

On top of that you could give people political rights, which we see, for example, again in the case of Poland. Poles living abroad enjoy the right to vote in presidential and parliamentary elections as well as in referendums.

Therefore, the EU has to build pride and symbolism first. There needs to be a glue that sticks people together.

Symbolism and national identification are already inherent in the concept of national citizenship. Eurobarometer polls show that many EU citizens still identify with their member state of origin rather than with the EU. Is identification with the EU a predisposition to build successful diaspora relations?

Agnieszka Weinar: Yes. The EU already invests in identity-building, and surveys suggest that people do feel European in the EU, but the focus lies exclusively on intra-EU identity-building. Outside the EU, they offer only political rights, namely eligibility to vote in European elections. However, political rights only work well with the symbolic layer or spaces to discuss politics. An effect of the absence of European diaspora policies in the sense of shared public spaces and identification offers is that EU citizens abroad are exposed to national diaspora policy and socialize in national diaspora communities only. The EU diaspora strategy is thus precisely the opposite of member states, which usually attach diasporas through cultural engagement policies first and then grant political rights. The EU approach does not make much sense to me.

What is the role of different member states of origin in feeling more or less belonging to the EU?

Agnieszka Weinar: I have not delved into the different countries' discourses, as my sample was too small to draw any solid conclusions. However, I took the interviews during the post-referendum and pre-Brexit time when the EU suddenly became important for an average person. Each of us had to redefine our relationship with the EU on our own: re-examine what our state had been saying and what our life experience told us.

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Nevertheless, European diasporas rely on official narratives about the EU produced by their home country. In most cases in the North American context that I have researched, these narratives equal zero; there is seldom any mention of the EU in the diasporic media. I have encountered some absurd situations when the European diasporic businesses benefitting largely from no-tariff trade under the EU-Canada Comprehensive Economic Trade Agreement (CETA)[10] thought their nation-state had struck the deal. In some cases, references to the EU are very negative, for example, in the Polish diasporic media fueled by the current extreme governmental discourses[11]. I think only the French and German discourses abroad include some objective approach to portraying the EU, but they are limited. Objective knowledge about the EU cannot usually be obtained from mainstream media, as the EU has been largely absent from the news. Only when the war against Ukraine started did the EU begin to appear in the news on a regular basis.

Could you observe that the socio-economic position of the respective country of origin within the EU conditioned your respondents' perspective towards the EU? In other words, does a core-periphery "cleavage" extend to feelings of belonging throughout the interviews?

Agnieszka Weinar: The core-periphery cleavage was definitely present during my interviews, but it is always present even in the EU. However, I saw a clear difference in my "cosmopolitan" category of respondents: they were predominantly young people from the so-called periphery (Central-Eastern Europe, new EU member states), and maybe because of that, they could see Europe as a whole more easily.

To close the gap and create an opinion exchange, you need some common space where people can meet. In Canada, the EU is present only in Ottawa, where it organizes some events to attract Europeans and to show that diaspora groups of all member states are part of the EU community. Many diaspora members go there to explain to their children that they also belong to the EU. Other than that, through diaspora engagement activities, people can be attached only to their national diaspora. Moreover, when the UK exited the EU, many networks weakened between Brussels and Canada, as well as other countries where UK influence was traditionally high. If the EU wants to have global influence, it has to engage more.

10 The „Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement" (CETA) is a progressive trade agreement between the EU and Canada that was signed in 2016. Parts of the agreement have been in force since 2017, while the agreement still awaits ratification of some EU member states to become fully applicable.

11 It refers to the government ruled by the right-wing conservative party Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, PiS).

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Your research also raised a timely question about the perception of privileges and inequalities among EU citizens abroad. Several of your respondents reflected on their privileged status or recognized their unequal position in relation to other EU citizens. Does this experience impact the feeling towards the EU?

Agnieszka Weinar: That was rather an exception; people usually do not know their differences. An understanding of inequalities occurs when people get into dialogue, but EU emigrants do not talk to each other.

Therefore, I do not think that the EU comes to mind when emigrants struggle with unequal treatment in non-EU contexts. If someone perceives inequality, they blame their country of origin, the country they have a political allegiance to. This may change with time when more emigrants have already lived with the EU regime and can thus relate to it while abroad.

The EU does not go to the Canadian government to discuss the issues of Europeans in Canada; they leave it to the member states, with varied outcomes. The only area of coordination is in consular matters, but not in broader matters of education, work, or social rights: all areas that are not prerogatives of the EU on the EU territory. The EU has no real mandate to coordinate the member states abroad. And yet, in my opinion, it should, based on the requirements of the new generation of trade agreements, for example.

CETA is such a new trade agreement that regulates far more than just tariffs. It also has a dedicated chapter on the recognition of qualifications. But because it is a member state competence, they are supposed to solve the issue with Canada individually. That is why, six years on, little has happened. Only the UK and France, as past colonial powers, have managed to establish broad recognition schemes. The lack of automatic recognition limits the mobility of skilled workers, who could otherwise come and work on EU investment projects in Canada. Recognition of qualification happens, but it is a case-by-case rather than an institutionalized process, as in the case of the Quebec-France agreement[12].

12 The Québec-France Agreement allows a person with training and a license to practice a profession or regulated trade in Québec to work in France and anyone so qualified in France to work in Québec. "Québec-France Agreement."2021. Quebec. Retrieved 08 April 2024. https://www.quebec.ca/en/employment/working-outside-quebec/recognize-skills-work-abroad/quebec-france-agreement.

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Do we end up in a contradiction here? On the one hand, the EU should engage more in diaspora relations and return; on the other, it needs to create better conditions for people to emigrate. What is actually desirable?

Agnieszka Weinar: EU citizens usually tend to come back. They do not emigrate outside the EU because they have no other choice. They emigrate because they have networks, curiosity, and, more generally, a choice of whether to migrate. This is a different type of emigration than in countries with low living standards. For example, France even supports citizens' mobility: they ensure that when people emigrate, they receive as much support as possible to get the most from emigration. This is because studies in France show that people tend to return to the country or contribute from abroad.

The French emigration situation is very different from what we know about Eastern and Southern Europe, where significant migration rates pose problems to the sustainability of the welfare state and labor markets. In addition, in your book, you describe that diaspora policies of different EU member states generally vary a lot. For example, the UK has no comprehensive programs, while Poland has engaged quite extensively with its diaspora recently. Surprisingly, however, Polish citizens in Canada were the only group in your study that did not intend to return to their home state but only to another EU member state. Given this contradiction, would you say that state or EU engagement with the diaspora is effective? What, then, are the preconditions for *building* the diaspora?

Agnieszka Weinar: I would say that the results were biased: The Poles with whom I engaged were usually young, cosmopolitan people. Self-selection played its role: post-2004, typical economic migrants would not emigrate to Canada; they would go to the UK or Ireland. And this type of people is not the target of diaspora policies of the Polish government, which delivers on the political ties front (i.e., the right to vote or citizenship) but symbolically and ideologically has little to offer to the Europeanized generations of new emigrants. They might not be as sentimental as the previous waves; they are curious about the world and, usually, before coming to Canada, have had other migratory experiences. They do not participate in anything they might regard as *old diaspora* activities. The earlier migratory waves are different: these are people who escaped communism or harsh years of transformation. They do not know the EU, and thus, for them home means Poland. Interestingly enough, the Portuguese were much more into Portugal and sentimental about it.

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Thinking about it, there are no clear-cut preconditions for diaspora building. Diaspora engagement is essentially a communication activity. As such, it follows the same rules: you should shape your messaging to your audience, and if the audience changes, you adapt the message and your offer. In order to do this, you need to know your audience. Hence, you need to invest in *market studies*. That is an Achilles heel of all European diaspora policies. There is insufficient funding for non-European diaspora studies, and policies are built on the knowledge gained from national associations abroad or micro-studies. The image gets skewed, and the message engages the already existing audience.

Your book did not elaborate much on EU activities for EU emigrants. Could you tell us more about what the EU already does in this area or how this policy field develops? How can EU and national emigration/diaspora policies coexist? Why would you say diaspora outreach by the EU is desirable?

Agnieszka Weinar: I do not elaborate much because such a policy does not exist on the EU level. Even if some of the EU policies (like trade policy or Erasmus+) benefit diaspora members, they are not presented as diaspora policies, and the EU does not have a particular reach out to these communities. The only thing existing at the EU level is consular groups, where member states discuss the consular issues of their citizens and coordinate legal responses to them.

Member states are not necessarily critical of EU diaspora policy, but it depends on what the EU would do. If the EU would engage because people do not vote enough in the EP elections, this is fine. When the EU creates a research agenda, it will also be recognized positively. Member states might also not have enough money for engagement activities, and if the EU would finance them, that could also be an option, for example via the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). But its budget can be spent only inside the EU at the moment, and there are no other incentives nor intentions to build a diaspora from the side of the EU. And I see a missed opportunity there for two reasons.

First, the EU wants to be a Global Power Europe, which will shape the world by selling good policy ideas. It can only become this if it creates communities of its advocates and champions abroad. European diasporas could be the best ambassadors of the EU in their countries, but they are not equipped with any tools to achieve that status. We have recently seen how the Ukrainian diaspora has organized to achieve concrete political and policy gains here in Canada. Settled diaspora members are an influence to reckon with. If the EU wants to influence the discourse on the green transition, AI, data privacy, or public health, it needs to curate communities that could

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bring this message to the right places. Talking to the heads of state can get one only that far. From the EU-centric perspective, it is difficult to understand that the EU really has no presence in other powerful economies. From the perspective of North America, Australia, or New Zealand, the EU is an afterthought. As an example: Last week I spoke to a group of Canadians about geothermal developments in the North of Alberta. Most believed that technology was a new thing coming from the US and were surprised to know that the EU had supported its development in my home country, Poland, already twenty years ago. The recognition gap is enormous. It would not matter for a smaller country, but it could be an important tool for the EU's ambitious plan to be a leader. Well, it takes a lot of work to get recognition among countries with a similar economic income. It is much easier to get that recognition in low- and middle-income countries through so-called development work. The EU is great at that. But it really lacks understanding and the right tools to design and develop a strategy of engagement with other countries and their extensive markets.

Second, I am a bit confused with the idea of European citizenship, which has great political rights but is not applied evenly abroad. Voting rights in European elections outside the EU are inexistent for many Europeans. The EU should care unless, of course, it wants to remove these rights altogether from anyone who left its territory. I discussed the issue of disenfranchisement and several options here.[13] Transnational lists for temporary migrants, whose home countries do not allow them to vote outside of the EU, is one important element. Another element consists of the MEPs from the diaspora. We have very clear examples in France or Portugal on how to ensure equality for voters in the European elections everywhere, so nothing I propose is outlandish.

Where do you see the most need for further research in this area? What intrigues you most? How has this research changed your perception of your own experience as an EU emigrant?

Agnieszka Weinar: I learned many things about EU citizens in Canada. First, I learned that I might be among the very few who even think about the EU at all. It is sad, but the EU is a non-existent actor in everyday life. In the news, I can read more about the UK or China.

Second, European emigrants are ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse – the historic form of Europeanness as we imagine it looking at the pictures from Ellis

13 Weinar, Agnieszka. 2020 "European Citizenship Outside of the European Union: How to Make It Relevant to All Mobile Europeans." Centre for European Studies EU Policy Brief 4: 1-2. https://carleton.ca/ces/wp-content/uploads/Weinar-EU-Policy-Brief-Citizenship.pdf.

Island[14] is long gone. This diversity really drives my curiosity and passion. In a sense, this plays out as the decolonization of European immigration. This diversity drives my curiosity and passion. In a sense, this plays out as the decolonization of European immigration. The diversity opens a new chapter in our migration history and understanding of what *European* means outside Europe in the 21st century. In my sample, European citizens spoke 11 languages in their households, including non-EU languages, and were of different ethnicities and religions. Current emigration from Europe is a reproduction of what we witness in the EU, so we have to stop thinking about EU emigration as a white, Christian monolithic process. This also includes so-called "return migration" from the EU. After all, people with French or Austrian passports are European citizens. They should be treated as such, not as foreigners. And if they go to do business in Turkey or Morocco, it should be treated as an opportunity to claim their networks and their loyalty by the EU. But for this to happen, the EU would have to be far more welcoming and inclusive, which is an entirely different story.

Finally, after Brexit, it has become more challenging to raise a new generation of European citizens outside of the EU territory. Many young Canadians used to study in the UK using their inherited EU passports because of the language and real ties. Now that path has closed, and sadly, continental universities are not considered.

To finish, I think I have only scratched the surface of the vast topic of European diasporas. We need to learn more about Europeans outside of the EU in every aspect. This can only happen through an extensive, sustained research effort and cannot be achieved through microstudies like mine.

14 Ellis Island was an immigrant inspection and procession station in the USA from the end of the XIX century to the middle of the XX century.

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