



European
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Institute

DEPARTMENT
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Bottom-Up Workshop:

What is Social Democracy and what is it good for?

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Place and Date: 24.05.2019 (Friday), 27.05.2019 (Monday)

Course Description

In 1983, Ralf Dahrendorf declared the “end of the social-democratic century”. Social democracy, he argued, was a victim of its own success. Having transformed Western societies in its own image, it was simply no longer needed. The operation was successful, only the surgeon had died. Almost half a century later, the social democratic surgeon is indeed on its electoral deathbed, while the capitalist patient seems more alive than ever. In this workshop, we want to take a step back from this immediate crisis of social democracy, and ask ourselves: What is social democracy and what is it good for?

In the first section, we will look at how key protagonists of social democratic thought have answered this question. These thinkers have, in their own ways and in their own time, addressed a tension that, we argue, lies at the heart of social democracy: between a reformist and pragmatic strand on the one hand; and a radical and idealistic strand on the other. In the second section, we will look at how contemporary social scientists have analysed the current predicament of social democracy, and which solutions they suggest. Has social democracy abandoned its political radicalism in favour of a more technocratic reformism? Or does it need to develop better (and more radical) reform ideas again? In a third section, we will apply these insights from the past and present of social democracy to the challenges that await social democrats in the future. What does social democracy have to say about issues like immigration, inequality, digitalization? How can it strike a balance between universal rights and communitarian obligations? How does it shape change instead of just accepting or resisting it? And perhaps most importantly, what overarching narrative can social democrats stitch together to win back voters and win over new ones?

Learning Outcomes

The goal of this workshop is to provide participants with systematic and in-depth knowledge of the history of social democratic thought; a firm grasp of the political predicament of one of Europe’s most important party families; the ability to apply insights from political theory to some of the most pressing current policy problems.

Requirements

Participants (that want to obtain 10 credit points) are required to attend all sessions and to complete the required readings. In addition, they are required to write a short essay (no more than 5 pages) on one or several of the challenges (social) democrats are facing in the 21st century, applying insights and ideas from the readings (more details on form and substance of the essay will be given in due time). We advise participants to write their essay before the last session so as to make most of the discussion. Pdfs of the readings will be provided to the participants well before the seminar.

Sessions & Readings

Session 1 (24.05.2019, Seminar Room 2, 10:00-13:00): The History of Social Democratic Thought: Classic Statements

Required Readings:

Bernstein, Eduard (1993 [1899]): *The Preconditions of Socialism*. Edited by Henry Tudor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: chapter 4, pp. 98-188.

Kautsky, Karl (1909): *The Road to Power*: chapters 1, 2, 5, 9. Available online at: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/kautsky/1909/power/ch01.htm>.

Crosland, Anthony (1963 [1956]): *The Future of Socialism*. The Abridged and Revised Paperback Edition. London: Cape: Chapter 4: The Meaning of Socialism, pp. 61-80.

Giddens, Anthony (2003): Introduction. *Neoprogressivism: A New Agenda for Social Democracy*. In Anthony Giddens (Ed.): *The Progressive Manifesto*. New ideas for the centre-left. Malden: Polity Press, pp. 1–34.

Further Readings:

Wright, Anthony (1996): *Socialisms. Old and New*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge. [Good overview of central strands of socialist thought]

Radice, Giles (2010): *Crosland and The Future of Socialism*. Available online at www.policy-network.net/pno_detail.aspx?ID=3881&title=Crosland+and+The+Future+of+Socialism. [Short article on the legacy of Crosland's *The Future of Socialism*]

Cruddas, Jon; Nahles, Andrea (2009): *Building the Good Society – The Project of the Democratic Left*. Available online at https://editor2702.files.wordpress.com/2011/06/building_good_society.pdf

Berman, Sheri (2006): *The Primacy of Politics. Social Democracy and the Making of Europe's Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [Good overview of social democratic history that argues that social democracy crucially shaped modern institutions by solving the central challenge of modern politics: reconciling the competing needs of capitalism and democracy]

Session 2 (24.05.2019, Seminar Room 2: 14:00-18:00): The Current Predicament of Social Democracy: Scholarly Accounts

Required Readings:

Berman, Sheri (2011): Social Democracy's Past and Potential Future. In James E. Cronin, George Ross, James Shoch (Eds.): *What's Left of the Left. Democrats and Social Democrats in Challenging Times*. Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 29–49.

Judt, Tony (2009): What Is Living and What Is Dead in Social Democracy? Available online at <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2009/12/17/what-is-living-and-what-is-dead-in-social-democrac/>.

Streeck, Wolfgang (2016): Social Democracy's Last Rounds. An Interview with Wolfgang Streeck. Available online at <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/02/wolfgang-streeck-europe-eurozone-austerity-neoliberalism-social-democracy/>.

Collier, Paul (2017): How to Save Capitalism from Itself. Available online at <https://www.the-ils.co.uk/articles/public/how-to-save-capitalism/>.

Crouch, Colin (2012): As Much Market as Possible; as Much State as Necessary. In Henning Meyer, Jonathan Rutherford (Eds.): *The Future of European Social Democracy. Building the Good Society*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 74–89.

Further Readings:

Vössing, Konstantin (2017): *How Leaders Mobilize Workers: social democracy, revolution, and moderate syndicalism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [Library: LIB 322.2 VOS]

Bartolini, Stefano (2000): *The political mobilization of the European left, 1860-1980: the class cleavage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [Library: LIB 324.217094 BAR]

Lipset, Seymour Martin (1983): Radicalism or reformism: the sources of working-class politics. In *American Political Science Review* 77(1), pp. 1-18.

Lipset, Seymour Martin; Marks, Gary (2000): *It didn't happen here: why socialism failed in the United States*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co. [Library: LIB 324.2737 LIP]

Sombart, Werner (1976 [1906]): *Why is there no Socialism in the United States?*. London: Macmillan. [Library: LIB 309.1730911 SOM]

Marks, Gary; Mbye, Heather A. D.; Kim, Hyung Min (2009): Radicalism or Reformism? Socialist Parties before World War I. In *American Sociological Review*, 74(4), pp. 615–635.

Gingrich, Jane; Häusermann, Silja (2015): The decline of the working-class vote, the reconfiguration of the welfare support coalition and consequences for the welfare state. In *Journal of European Social Policy* 25 (1), pp. 50–75. [On the changing electoral support of social democratic parties]

Session 3 (27.05.2019, Seminar Room 4, 13:00-18:00): The Future of Social Democracy: Challenges to live up to

For this session, there are no required readings. Instead we will try to apply what we have learned to the challenges societies and social democrats face in the 21st century (e.g. immigration, digitalization, inequality, Europeanization, globalization). This discussion will be more policy-oriented than the first two sessions and will be partly based on the essays of participants.