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of scientific and policy approaches of social issues.
(An interdisciplinary and integrated approach)

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Keywords:
critical social science, epistemology, ideological framing, conceptualization, objectivity,
institutional change, modernity, citizenship, welfare theory, welfare economics, civic rights,
political economy and philosophy

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Abstract

Ongoing long-term debates on the issue of *objectivity and neutrality* of values in scientific research that marginalize the importance of normative positioning seem to underestimate the role of ambiguous *ideologies* in today's dominating theories in various fields of science-practising (moreover in social science, sociology, political philosophy and welfare economics). This has serious consequences for the outcome of such research, as well as for the creation of a general representation and conceptualization of the status quo, whereby a presumed ('undebatable') general consent or 'consensus' is implied. Closer study of the issue shows that such notions can be linked to the way arguments are *semantically and rhetorically framed*. In this respect we can observe a rather *reductional* process in the way social issues are addressed. Important but case-sensitive political issues such as inequality, life chances, well-being, social mobility, consequences of austerity policies and issues of the welfare state (and so on) are regularly framed with conformistic *neoliberal* concepts and settings, whereby political and historical contexts often are chosen unilateral and ideological dimensions are considered to be 'obsolete' or even 'irrelevant'. In various scientific approaches there seems to be a general shift from the political(-ideological) towards the *individual and local* domain. Counterpositions are rare and often criticized as 'propagandistic'. It is argued here that this process can be considered as undermining for open, transparent and meaningful practising of scientific research. As humans as well as societies are complex, we propose in this discussion paper a call to promote a more *unbiased* scientific mind and attitude, and a more critical -

¹ Anglo-Dutch senior researcher Van der Kooij was former faculty member of the department of Social Science (ASW) of Utrecht University the Netherlands and is the founder and chairman of Independent Social Science Research (ISSR). He has completed an analytic sociological and political overview of the conceptual origins and social consequences of the transformation of the (Dutch) welfare state: *Burgers op drift. De Staat van vertwijfeling. Pathologie van een gedesoriënteerde samenleving*, Vols. 1-3, ISSR, Blacklabel Publishing, The Netherlands, 2020 (*Drifting Citizens. The state of desperation. Pathology of a disoriented society*, Vols 1-3 Forthcoming 2021). This article is a conceptual introduction to the complete works.

particularly less scrupulous - approach towards ideological-based science and policy-making in general.

1 | Outline

It seems increasingly *en vogue* – while referring to Popper² – to speak about '*open societies*' as if such a ideal-typical model of society is already generally accepted, and as if citizens of democratic societies can freely participate in public political debates in order to influence and exert substantial pressure on decision-making processes. In this way Michael Ignatieff of the Central European University in Budapest addressed a lecture to the Scientific Council for Government Policy of the Netherlands (WRR), in which he stated that "the state is, thanks to the neoliberal revolution [sic], less strong and interventionist than it was since 1945."³ Nevertheless Ignatieff advocates a 'strong state', meaning "a state that creates equal conditions for all citizens" and "which is built on strong institutions."⁴ The confusing contradiction about the question what the state is or should be can hardly be more entangling. This appears also to be the case with civil society-concepts and evolving notions about citizenship that are advocated in many contemporary policy proposals. Constitutional and political citizenship seems to be submerged by local community-concepts with keywords such as 'empowerment', 'capabilities', 'innovation' and 'sustainability'. A myriad of policy-concepts and recommendations point in this direction.⁵ In spite of the loss of state-intervention, declination of constructed institutions (such as the welfare state) and constitutional political citizenship, it is supposed that such developments could counterbalance growing globalisation and concentration of (economic) power. This conceptual shift in both policy and scientific orientations indicates that a more fundamental question about the importance, function and position of independent science-practising in general is at stake, which needs to be addressed. It is predominantly the *absence* of an open and free debate on the ideological foundations of the social order, which seems to constitute and maintain a *relative silence* that hardly benefits an open society, but conversely produces democratic obscurity. Therefore open societies are less 'open' than they seem to be at first sight. As in academic as well as in political debates ideological assumptions hardly seem to be (fully) questioned any longer. Enemies of the open society unfortunately should also (or particularly) be located in academic and political fields where neoliberal and corporatist protagonists frame their orientations as 'non-normative' and 'non-ideological' and who consider these notions euphemistically as 'modern' and 'pragmatic'. We will point out and argue that such notions obstruct and undermine a free and independent practising of science which can be threatening to democratic values and principles. Therefore a shift of such attitudes and orientations seems urgently needed.

² Popper, K. *The open society and its enemies*, Routledge ed. vol. 1-2, 1995 [1945]

³ M. Ignatieff, WRR-lecture *Open society: its old enemies and its new friends*, WRR The Hague, Nov. 28, 2017

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ See for example the given policy-advice in the framework of the *bEUCitizen*-project in the context of the European Union (*Scenarios for EU-citizenship in 2030*, on beucitizen.eu)

Firstly we will outline and explicate in what way the Popperian concept of the open society nowadays is often wrongly connected to actual policy developments that undermine this basic concept (section 2 - *enemies from within: contemporary applications of the 'open society' as a veiled (concealing) and ambiguous normative concept*). This is argued in the context of the neoliberal transformation of welfare states. We will point out that, in contrast to non-normative claims, normative and ideological assumptions play an important part in contemporary scientific and policy-views as advocated by neoliberal and civil society-protagonists (section 3 - *questionable and alleged 'neutrality' of contemporary polity-concepts contested*).⁶ Finally we will argue why this calls for a thorough re-evaluation of the way (social) science generally seems to be practised and why it is important that politically sensitive, as well as controversial ideological issues are fully addressed (section 4 - *fortitudo: towards an ideological turn in science and policy-making*). We consider epistemological scepticism to be a fundamental condition for true and meaningful acquirement of knowledge, but on the other hand we will dissociate ourselves from relativistic post-modernists (such as Lyotard, Foucault and others) who mainly seem to abandon the ambition to accumulate objective (universal) knowledge and to whom the context in which knowledge is obtained is foremost 'determinative'. Although fair contextual analyses are undoubtedly important, refutation of myths and questionable premisses remains essential in various fields of academic scholarship, as 'critical means with the intention to enlighten' (Habermas)⁷

2 | *Enemies from within: contemporary applications of the 'open society' as a veiled (concealing) and ambiguous normative concept*

In many contemporary views on open societies as referred to in our introduction, a considerable amount of issues is tangled up, whereas in addition many an issue can be questioned on reasonable grounds. However the crucial question is how 'open' societies that are predominantly *assumed* to be open really are. Not only demonstrated ('double dutch') *wishful thinking* (for which there is usually little justification) seems to be questionable, but also ideological bias when euphemistically covered up with dubious open society-concepts obscures this question. There are three major arguments to underpin our position.

Firstly it is rather disputable to assume that the neoliberal oriented ideology that has become dominant in policy and governance in many western societies has had a *overall beneficial effect* on living-conditions and certainties for citizens. Since the eighties and nineties of the 20th century numerous austerity and retrenchment-based reform-programs have been implemented in a number of Western European countries – such as the Netherlands – which has transformed constructed 'welfare state'- (rather: *social security state*-⁸) institutions in such a

⁶ Our extensive longitudinal case-study of the transformation of the (Dutch) welfare state provides the empirical data and arguments for our position (Van der Kooij, H. *Drifting citizens*, as mentioned).

⁷ J. Habermas, *Critique and communication*, in: Eurozine, 16 oct. 2015 (Orig. in: Esprit, nr. 417, 2015 *Habermas le dernier philosophe; Critique et communication: les tâches de la philosophie*).

⁸ Although this doesn't refer to *identical* concepts. Notions of the welfare state are linked to various systems

way, that it is very doubtful to what extent citizens still can rely on the same institutional and existential certainties as they generally had before these transformation-programs were started off. Anyhow, the availability and quality of social and welfare-provisions, as well as the civilians's *lawful entitlements* on which these provisions were founded, seem to have become severely under pressure.⁹

Secondly, in line with the foregoing, one ought to ask oneself to what extent citizens really have equal chances and opportunities, when precarious developments on the labour market as well as in the field of health and medical care are fully taken into account. A receding government that leaves markets free play doesn't seem to be the right way to continue and optimize living-conditions, so Nachtwey (2016) argues.¹⁰ This may lead to a loss of legitimacy of the state and government (*Legitimationskrisen*)¹¹ and a further rise of populist neo-nationalistic movements.¹²

Thirdly it seems rather questionable whether pleadings for a strong state and legally based institutions can justfully be combined with a corporatistic plea for 'community-building' in order to promote a civil society of illusionary 'self-reliance'.

Analizing Dutch government policy over the foregoing decades since the eighties shows that as a result of ongoing governmental orientation towards marketdomination based on technocratic efficiency and output-criteria, polity-questions of governmental and state-functions have risen on various social-economic domains - such as the labourmarket, social security and healthcare that are crucial for living conditions - which has led to a problematic relation between citizen(ship) and government in general at which the fundamental *social contract of reciprocity* is seriously at stake (Pessers 2014).

Therefore *enemies form within* cannot only be traced among nationalistic orientated populists, but moreover among imaginary 'progressive' neoliberals who prefer to veil themselves in fashionable gibberish of progressively framed rhetoric that is derived from rather questionable notions of modern management, whereby 'do-it-yourself' conceptions (selfreliance) are put forward and claimed to be a *panacea* for major problematic developments such as matters of inequality, unemployment, poverty and deprivation. This mental 'clearing' (disintegration and

where quite different provisions of social security and welfare-distribution – ranging from charity to insurance-based arrangements – exist. A welfare state is not merely a 'collection of social provisions', but embodies a complete system of state and societal regulation. The *social security state* (our definition) should therefore exclusively be qualified for those state-oriented systems in which social security and lawful entitlements are basically constitutionally founded as Dutch sociologist Thoenes already explained during the fifties, when welfare state models were implemented and especially the *Dutch* system was characterized by an intentional combination of system-relevant welfare institutions.

⁹ At least this was one of the major questions in which direction our research of welfare state-transformation strongly points. Dutch transformation and austerity-policy is a clear example of ideological framing of civil society-concepts, which is characterized by a *polity-shift* from the political and institutional to the personal and decentralized local domain.

¹⁰ Nachtwey, O. *Die Abstieggeseellschaft – Über das Aufbegehren in der regressiven Moderne*. Suhrkamp, 2016

¹¹ Brunkhorst, H. *Legitimationskrisen. Verfassungsprobleme der Weltgesellschaft*. Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2012

¹² Streeck, W. *Starke Märkte, schwacher Staat: Warum der Kapitalismus die Demokratie bedroht*.

(Radiobeitrag für SWR2 in zwei Teilen, gesendet am 15 und 22 Januar 2017, on wolfgangstreeck.com)

fragmentation) of thought, combined with a fundamental lack of intellectual scepticism towards a well-understood meaning of *progress* that is necessary for a required direction of governmental policies, will therefore not be able to grasp and handle the challenges and dilemmas that are connected with a problematic development of modernity (Eisenstadt 2000, Bauman 2000, 2003, 2007, Beck 1986 a.o. see section 3).

The 'rise, decline and fall' of European models of the welfare state

Although we are no supporters of historical 'inevitabilities', as such deterministic approaches generally appear to be inadequate to grasp and define multidimensional and multicausal phenomena and developments, it is clear that as long as political, economical and massmedia bulwarks remain firmly closed and parliamentary opposition remains almost powerless because of mechanisms of closed political and governmental (power)circuits (*monism*), there can be no question of adequate protection of public interests concerning general welfare and well-being as regulated with, and performed during the formerly institutionalized model of the *social security state*. In spite of the fact that the Netherlands have been praised for the way consultation of various social-economic actors, such as federations of employers and trade unions has been carried out ('poldermodel'), four decades of merely and predominantly austerity based welfare state reforms have proven to be *counterproductive* to meet necessary requirements concerning basic civic rights of the *entire* population. Therefore there are hardly any systems according to Esping Andersen's traditional typology (1990¹³) of welfare states left. This is not only the case with the 'enigmatic' model in the Netherlands, but virtually occurs in every country that has given birth to the Western- European model of social security within a mixed economy.

Where there is elaborate talk about 'sustainability' one has to bear in mind that without *institutional continuity* such notions remain rather noncommittal. A mixed, and particularly *well-balanced* economy in which a system of institutional social security was incorporated, was according to Keynes' basic concept of anticyclic budgeting-policy *just as* essential for economic stability as for economic growth on the whole. It proved to be an essential and effective remedy against devastating effects of marketcapitalism. Nevertheless technocratic neoliberal monetarists rigidly cut down state-based provisions while supposing that these provisions were 'outdated, obsolete and redundant' as the more than illustrative casestudy of Dutch welfare state transformation which we have executed and to which we referred before shows. The burden of collective expenses was said to be too high to sustain. Even for highly rich and prosperous countries like the Netherlands. Citizens had to be 'activated' [sic] towards the labour market, as if they were the *cause* of the rising (structural) unemployment of the seventies that emerged mainly and principally as a result of *de-industrialisation* and globalisation of the marketeconomy and (cheaper) productionprocesses elsewhere (low labourcosts-countries). Dependent citizens were discriminatorially labeled as 'freeriders and freeloaders'.

¹³ Esping Andersen, G. *The three worlds of welfare capitalism*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990. Although Esping Andersen called the Dutch welfare state (verzorgingsstaat) a '*Dutch enigma*', his classification was already in some respects outdated since the rise of New Public Management (NPM) that was incorporated by expanding neoliberalism. This had severe impact on Dutch welfare state-arrangements and provisions, as it had in several other countries (especially in the UK and Germany).

According to Reaganomics and Thatcherism 'zero-tolerance' and major cut-downs were advocated broadly as 'just, justified, inevitable and effective' policy-devices. Grounded civil rights were threatened and violated and had to be 'adjusted' towards advocated requirements of modern public management. '*Roll back the State*' became the new anti-etatistic maxim (Gaebler & Osborne 1992). Mere 'nonsense upon stilts' no doubt (as Bentham probably would have put it, should he still be living), however an uncompromising reality with severe socio-economical and even *pathological* consequences not only for vulnerable citizens, but for society as a whole (Laitinen & Sarkelaa 2018 ¹⁴). Fromm refers to a 'deficient sense of reality' and 'political apathy', while Habermas mentions 'unsettling of collective identity, anomie and alienation as disturbances of social integration' together with 'rupture of tradition, withdrawal of motivation and psychopathologies as disturbances of socialization'. ¹⁵ No *optimus* therefore, but rather shortsighted and (so it appears) *costly* 'maximus'.

In short, the *American way of life* and characteristic *anti-etatistic* approach towards the relation between citizens and their government/state was blindly followed by advocats of *New Public Management* (NPM), while supposing that this would lead to prosperity and happiness in reach for everyone. This pursuit however came down to a blessing in disguise as it soon would become clear that it was a complete *reversal of the basic principles of state-intervention* on which social security institutions in European welfare states were based. A more impetuous and aberrational turning away from the balanced and intentional *progressive* direction emerging European welfare states had taken since the post-war era was hardly thinkable, for the United States had never implemented FDR's (Roosevelt's) outline for a *second Bill of Rights* (1944) with which this acclaimed president intended to establish decent civil rights and conditions for all American citizens alike. ¹⁶ Although this aim was completely in accordance with codified equality notions of the American Constitution, the American Congress never agreed on such a program, with devastating consequences for Americans, and consequently for many Europeans as well until the present day. ¹⁷

Although in the Netherlands collective expenditure was actually diminished, it was at the cost of many a progressive post-war attainment and mainly to the benefit of (foreign multinational) companies and corporations and their (greedy) stockholders. ¹⁸ Lobby-'rotaries' could emerge

¹⁴ Laitinen, A. and Särkelä, A. Analysing Conceptions of Social Pathology: Eight Questions, *Studies in Social & Political Thought*, Vol. 28, 2018, pp. 21-30. In this respect one should consider various psychosomatic phenomena like stress, burnout, drug-abuse, mental imbalances and derailment, combined with losses of self-esteem and symptoms of alienation, to which also Wilkinson's elaborate research refers and which Habermas had addressed earlier in a philosophical way (see note 15)

¹⁵ Fromm, E. (2002) [1955] *The sane society*. London: Routledge; Habermas, J. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009

See also: Hirvonen, O. and Pennanen, J. Populism as a pathological form of politics of recognition, *European Journal of Social Theory*, May 3, Vol. 22, Iss. 1, 2018: 27-44

¹⁶ Roosevelt, F.D. *State of the Union address to the Congress*, Jan 11, 1944

¹⁷ See Chomsky, N. *Requiem for the American Dream*. New York: Seven Stories Press, 2017. See also Bloom, A. *The closing of the American mind*, New York: Simon and Schuster, New York, 1987

¹⁸ On which the former Shell-president D. Kalff in 2004 declared in the aftermath of rising neoliberalism and booming stockmarkets during the eighties and nineties that the traditional continental-European business-model of stakeholderism had proven to be more sustainable for a long period of time and

and expand as never before. In this lobby-based *oligarchy* such companies could freely benefit from all kinds of (selectively subsidized) state-support, but financed by taxpayers. Many tax-rulings appeared discriminative towards home businesses though, as they could not benefit from, nor enforce such profitable rulings in any way. In addition these lobby-based policy-mechanisms are in contradiction with the democratic *one man-one vote* system and were therefore *sui generis* conflicting with the constitutional equality-principle. *Founding fathers* like Beveridge, Dutch economist Tinbergen, supported by American presidents-advisor Galbraith and others certainly would have shaken their heads knowing what all this meant for social security-conditions and the tackling of inequality and neglect. Along with a couple of kindred spirits in the field Krugman appears to be one of the few critical economists at the present day who *demystify* market-, business- and polity-concepts that promise illusive expectations. In this respect mainstream-science is mainly absent. Whereas there is critical silence however (see section 4), there are also distinguished researchers on the other hand who are able to reveal and explain that *window-dressed* presentations of problematic social realities are harmful for a just and fruitful understanding of fundamental questions involved. Not only the (traditional and new) lower ranks of society, but especially the *middle class* seems to be vulnerable for loss of position and social decline (*Abstieg* – i.e. downward social mobility) as Nachtwey has thoroughly analysed.¹⁹ Wilkinson has shown that the acclaimed '*pursuit of happiness*' turns out to be almost in vain in unequal countries. The more unequal societies are, the more problematic (upward) social mobility appears to be.²⁰ An eroding middle class becomes therefore a prolific breeding ground for profound reactionary sentiments. Especially in an expanding *mediacracy* where mainstream-media turn out to be rather selectively indignant towards social issues and/or where they promote uncritical but biased policy-abiding attitudes that don't meet citizen's rightful needs and claims, this is a clear recipe for mistrust and resentment. Sentiments though, that can easily and fruitfully be exploited by nationalistic populists in an electoral way (see the rising of *Trump-ism* and the *Brexit* phenomenon).

3 | Questionable and alleged 'neutrality' of contemporary polity-concepts contested

Although 'non-normative' policy-claims are widespread in the political as well as the academic field, it is clear that normative and ideological based assumptions and premisses are especially widely used by neoliberal and civil society-protagonists to promote governmental actions and the public acceptance of legislation. Therefore it can be laid down that in order to

therefore was to be preferred to the American approach of entrepreneurialship and business policies (which he called the downward '*shark-model*' which was considered to be undermining for trustworthiness and continuity). This in spite of the historical fact that the *stock-exchange* was an invention of the emerging Dutch Republic.

¹⁹ Nachtwey, O. *Abstiegsgesellschaft*, *ibid.*

²⁰ Wilkinson, R. & Pickett, K. *The spirit level. Why greater equality makes societies stronger*, London: Allen Lane, 2009. Revised, updated ed. New York: Bloomsbury 2011

be able to refute such claims, normative approaches that rely on worldwide accepted and codified basic principles of human rights and dignity (such as the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights 1948, the European Union Treaty for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms - EVRM 1950) can be very useful, as they are far from non-committal. Especially where citizens' interests are at stake. Budget-cuts and austerity-policies may *seem* 'unbiased', in reality they are not, as they usually appear closely related to normative perceptions concerning directions societies and their citizens should take and follow.

Citizens however have a lawful right to be served by a trustworthy and unbiased government. Not only as a citizen as such, but also and by no means least as law-abiding taxpayers. Conversely various advisory-boards and councils advocate and urge regularly the necessity of moralistic admonitions as far as civic behaviour is concerned, whereas the underlying aftermath-effects of *New Public Management* and austerity-policies are hardly addressed. Citizens are said to be too little inclined to commit themselves to 'the public cause', since they would be focusing too much on self-interests. A change of mentality and behaviour would therefore be needed. Meaning more willingness to conform to civic society-notions that is. Since 'self-reliance' and individualistic 'empowerment' is promoted widely, such an appeal on 'cooperation' is rather ambiguous (to say the least). This tendency points to a major influence of *behavioural economics* in policy-making, in which the politico-economic sphere is largely abandoned in favour of orientations towards the personal domain.

The combination of deconstructivism and the rise of *new public management* (Osborne & Gaebler), together with a domination of behavioural economics (Ariely) that is incorporated by the ideology of neoliberalism has proven to be disastrous for public government as a whole. This development has resulted in a receding -opt out- movement of the central government, institutional demolition, clearance sale of the public sector, a panopticum of (exchangeable) orientations, depolitization, a reduction of (political) economics to the personalistic micro-domain and an overstrained focus on 'do-it-yourself' concepts with notions such as 'capabilities', 'empowerment' and Schumpeterian 'creative destruction' which must pass for creativity and dynamics as mentioned before. This however comes down to illusory dynamics which patches up old concepts of rigid market-based economics once again. Already during the nineties there were serious indicators showing that as a result of massive privatization, a sell-out of the public sector led to ongoing '*quangocratization*' of state and governmental institutions that ran out of hand.²¹ This process was never stopped, nor contained. At least not in the Netherlands. On the contrary, market-policies were sustained as if they could provide an adequate remedy and 'better' solutions for citizen's basic needs and wants than relying on governmental provisions. The result was a complete loss of governmental and political autonomy and control over matters of essential living conditions, as the market took over according to its own (financial and procedural) standards. In spite of an advocated lesser bureaucracy and reduction of costs of living, citizens were confronted with a myriad of regulations and steadily rising payments and contributions. Unequality in living conditions together with an overall fragmentation of society therefore steadily expanded. Such nondescript 'blankety-blank policy' meant no progress, but pointed to drifting minds and

²¹ Van Thiel, S. *Quangocratization: trends, causes and consequences*. Erasmus University Rotterdam, 2000 (PhD- thesis)

orientations. An undercurrent that characterizes the problematic development of *modernity* as far as a firm positioning of identities and the question of *nation and state* is concerned. Therefore Tönnies pointed out that a clear distinguishment between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* is essential ²², to which can be added that to be able to cope with matters of *interdependency and globalization* such distinguishment is even more important at the present day. This is the context that appears to be crucial for understanding problematic issues concerning the legitimation of state and governmental functioning (*Legitimationskrisen* as mentioned before).

4 | *Fortitudo: towards an ideological turn in science and policy-making*

In our outline we referred to our position concerning a thorough re-evaluation of the way (social) science generally is being practised and that it is important that politically sensitive, as well as controversial ideological issues are fully addressed. Scepticism remains essential for the acquirement of knowledge, in spite of many inclinations to silence unwelcome orientations and positions. We support the (sociological) debate on articulating research-standards in relation to the fundamentals of social and institutional criticism, as layed out by Herzog (and who refers to formulations by Honneth, Jaeggi and Habermas a.o.). ²³ Contesting mechanisms of silencing hereby is evenly important as refutation of myths and debatable premisses, for challenging regressive developments and repressive state-mechanisms is the only way to protect the fundamentals upon which free and democratic states are based. A clear distinguishment between a *patronizing* and a *serving* state is essential.

Ideological silencing

Rejecting ideological dimensions addressing social questions concerning matters of societal lay-out and design, while holding on to a rigid technocratic neoliberal way of policy-making is double faced and therefore obscuring (not to say hypocritical). The result is a lack of opportunity concerning a fruitful debate on political orientation and positioning towards the ongoing fragmentation of social realities. In spite of all presumed and simulated 'dynamics' and 'pragmatism', an overall '*Stunde Null*'-condition turns out to be a leading tendency and orientation in politics. But when 'pragmatism' means without rendering account or clear justification for one's actions, then it is hardly surprising that right-wing parties that appeal to imaginary anxieties and nebulous solutions can be extremely and uncomfortably succesful. Among political and administrative bodies there seems to be hardly any inclination for a realistic adressing of ideological issues to the benefit of all, nor for change in this respect. As communism was receding, neoliberal euforia and post-ideological oriented sentiments took

²² Tönnies, F. *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft. Grundbegriffe der reinen Soziologie*, 1935 (originally: *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft. Abhandlung des Communismus und Socialismus als empirischer Culturformen*, 1887, translated in English as *Community and civil society*, J. Harris (ed.) Cambridge University Press, 2001

²³ Herzog, B. *Invisibilization and silencing as an ethical and sociological challenge*. *Social Epistemology*, 32 (1): 13-23, 2018

over from thoughtful approaches, viewpoints and positioning, as it had done earlier during the cold-war era.²⁴ To consider the emerging welfare state as a result of victorious (albeit 'modified') liberal capitalism was premature and misleading, as it appeared later on when the *very few social security state-systems* that had been organised were mostly dismantled under the same banner. Holding on firmly to a obsolete dichotomy of free market 'capitalism' and state-regulated 'communism' was and still is futile and ineffective, as almost every government has to deal with a *mixed economic order* in which state-functions and positions are at stake. Although there is a strong worldwide tendency towards *state-capitalism*, this does not mean that questions concerning economic structures and regulation are no longer relevant. On the contrary. Idealism may lead to illusive orientations and positioning, pretended neutrality on the other hand often creates a false image of reality and is therefore not only relativistic, but principally misleading. Drifting relativism (as in deconstructivism) is disastrous for any adequate positioning of opinions. It leads to a Babylonian confusion, as can be seen in many a debate on social justice, life chances, opportunities, progress, and security in general. Cynicism is an admission of weakness and frustration about a loss of faith in the possibilities of change for the better. It leads merely to a languid adaptation of the status quo. Holding on to the status quo may however be plausible, *providing that* the current situation is balanced, meaning that the lawful interests of citizens, such as living-conditions and certainties as well as their human dignity as such, are not being violated. Anti-etatistic civil society-concepts that are based on corporatistic notions about the societal institutional order cannot provide a counterweight against (global) concentration of financial and economical powers. Such positions are naïve, as they are merely designed to *appease* potential increasing civic dissatisfaction and unrest in respect to governmental behaviour and their shortcomings in rendering adequate public services to which citizens are entitled. Especially when one takes into account the numerous cumulative taxations which are imposed and for which citizens are held liable. Ultimately its the people themselves who after all provide for governmental existence and functioning. As citizens since the rising of democratic constitutional states are principally no longer subjects nor subordinated to feudal hierarchies and conditions, its important to underline that as true citizens (*polites; citoyens*) they are the embodiment of the *politeia* (cf

²⁴ 'End of ideology'-notions in which a dichotomy between communism and capitalism was merely the leading element were not only advocated by writers and scientists during the *Future of Freedom*-conference in Milan (1955), but also rather appeasingly 'questioned' by others like Raymond Aron who stated that although 'tensions still "arise" over equality, employment, wages and inflation in most Western societies [...] the ideological controversy is dying down [and that] the reasonable anxieties they evoke do not give rise to any fundamental conflict'. (Aron, R. *Nations and ideologies*, in: *The future of freedom*, Papers from the International Conference on the future on Freedom convened by the Congress for Cultural Freedom in Milan, 1955: 20-21. See also *The End of Ideology and the Renaissance of Ideas*, in *The Industrial Society. Three Essays on Ideology and Development*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967 [1966]. Sociologist and political philosopher Aron was as a liberal supporter of Atlantic-oriented politics one of the organizers of the conference. However It was Lefebvre who alongside with Wright Mills belonged to the few people who diagnosed such notions as being 'short-sighted, obfuscatory, and (ironically) ideological'. He posed that 'extreme ideologizing is accompanied by a certain conviction that the "end of ideology" has been reached.' (Lefebvre, H. *The sociology of Marx*, New York, 1968 as quoted in Jost, J. *The end of ideology*, *American Psychologist*, Vol. 61, No.7, 2006: 651-670; Mills, C.W. *The power elite*. Oxford University Press, 1956).

Arendt ²⁵). This means that there is only one 'community': *society as whole* (or mankind to that respect). Societies though, that consist of pluralistic notions about matters of administrative arrangement and social issues. In a truly *open society* such ungoing debates are no threat to cohesion, but they provide light on obscured anxieties and are therefore enriching. Social scepticism and criticism remain essential to this effect.

In this context (early) works of liberal oriented political scientist Dahrendorf is still important and relevant for he determined that a unilateral focus on *cohesion and integration* in 'social systems', i.e. social stability (as supported by sociological functionalists like Parsons c.s.), is mainly at the expense of more critical approaches of the *social conflict* that is characteristic for societies, and that such approaches therefore run the risk of disappearing out of sight altogether. ²⁶ One can observe this development to the present day – even in a increasing way. As (neo)liberals as well as many social and christian-democrats alike have chosen evidently for 'Parsonian' approaches and have embraced 'integration' as a keynote for their policies (as if social issues will be adressed and tackled sufficiently in this way), analyses and remedies among continuous commotion about various kinds of social resistance are getting stuck in rather noncommittal and less profound approaches that miss (or put aside) the political as well as the social-economical and cultural essence of conflicting interests. Veiling, or 'smuggling away' such conflicts as to suggest that there is 'consensus', amounts to illusory politics that keeps citizens away from managing and protecting their interests in an effective way. It merely *appeases* them, if need be in anticipation of rather faint prospects of 'progress'. That surely is no mature democracy, but pretty blunt (political) marketing.

Conclusion – *Pulling down walls*

Fourty years of neoliberal policy-making has left deep and severe marks in societies and did not turn out to be to the benefit of their citizens. At least not according to the advocated claims of progress and welfare-sharing. Many social-economic indicators support and point to a regressive direction as Piketty has analysed extensively in respect to surveyed income and wealth inequality-data among many countries. In spite of this, the afore mentioned Dutch Scientific Council for Government Policy took the opportunity to emphasize that such unequallites were not at stake in the Netherlands, or at least not to the extent Piketty presented his conclusions. Painful confrontation was welcomely avoided by pointing out that the Netherlands was excluded from the presented data and therefore there was according to council-spokesmen no serious reason to be alarmed. A more sheepishly opportunistic approach could hardly be imagined, as quite a number of prominent economic analysts had already warned

²⁵ Arendt, H. *Crises of the Republic*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1968/1972. See also Truth and Politics. In: *Between Past and Future: eight exercises in political thought*, 2nd ed., New York: Viking Compass, 1968 [1961] and *The Human Condition*, University of Chicago Press, 1958

²⁶ Dahrendorf, R. *Toward a theory of social conflict* (a concise adaptation a concise adaptation of a number of central conceptions taken from *Soziale Klassen und Klassenconflict in der industriellen Gesellschaft*, Stuttgart 1957). See also Aron, R. Social structure and the ruling class, in: Bendix, R. and Lipset, S. *Class status and power*, London 1954)

quite a long time for the structural negative effects of austerity-policies for societies that also occurred – and in certain aspects even more, as OECD-data show – in the Netherlands.²⁷

The fundamental question is *how the obligations of the social contract can fully be restored against a further institutional fragmentation of societies*. This question has to be addressed by politicians and social scientists alike, before immanent populist scenarios take over completely. Leaving this question unattained will undoubtedly mean more of the same in ideological respect. Citizens whose lawful entitlements are not adequately met cannot only become a potential threat to social stability, but also vulnerable victims in the hands of demagogues who care less for democratic and constitutional institutions (Hirvonen 2018). If there are legal shortcomings or omissions to fulfil such obligations, then there are no fair excuses for not seeing to it that these omissions are being removed, for the mere financial budget-argument is a matter of political priority as well as putting first citizen's rights to the full and without restrictions. Disambiguation of (monolithic) 'double-dutch treats' requires thorough disentanglement of all the claims and mystifications that are being put forward with the ideology of neoliberal marketcapitalism.

Therefore it is urgently needed to set out a new ideological course in order to shift away from the regressive direction governmental polities have taken. State functions need to be fully balanced according to civic rights and citizen's constitutional entitlements, as several outstanding experts of governmental law such as the former vice-president of the *Dutch State-Council* Tjeenk Willink have rightfully been advocating for a long period of time.

Secondly, the distorted balance between *labour and capital* has to be restored in such a way that *all* citizens can be sure of reasonable income-provisions, including unemployment and old age pension-benefits as well as income-provisions in case of sickness.

²⁷ OECD-research shows that after the United States inequality in the Netherlands is highest of all examined OECD-countries. This means inter alia that 60% of the lowest paid households have financial obligations that by and large exceed their income-capacities. 'Looking at the *concentration of wealth* at the other end of the distribution, *the share held by the bottom 60% of households is negative in both Denmark and the Netherlands*, meaning that, on average, these households have liabilities *exceeding the value of their assets*.' [italics vdK] (*Shares of household income and wealth held by units in the top 10 of the distribution* (2015 or latest available year), *OECD Wealth Distribution Database – WDD en OECD Income Distribution Database – IDD*, OECD, 2018: 25. See also Balestra, C. and Tonkin, R. *Inequalities in household wealth across OECD countries: Evidence from the OECD Wealth Distribution Database*. OECD Statistics Working Papers no.88, 2018/01: 15). OECD-data also show that the taxburden for only wage-earners as well as for dual earners is significantly higher than the EU-average and even appears to be a part of the highest taxburdens of all OECD countries. For only wage-earners with an average income (with or without children) though, the Netherlands has the highest taxburden of them all (Koot, P. et al. *De belastingdruk van een- en tweeverdieners vanaf 2005. Een intertemporele en internationale analyse van de belastingdruk voor paren in Nederland*, CPB Achtergronddocument, 15 feb 2018: 38; 36) [The taxburden of only wage and dual wage-earners from 2005 onward. A intertemporal and international analysis of the taxburden for couples in the Netherlands. Bureau of Central Planning].

However such a major policy-turn seems not very likely in the context of the present actual political culture, as even the recent financial crisis of 2008 apparently was no sound reason enough for policymakers to take up such a progressive shift. Clinging on to ambiguous civil society-concepts of 'self-reliance' by indistinct and undefined 'communities' under the pretext of 'participation' is as an admission of weakness second-best at the most, as such concepts cannot compensate for receding and failing basic governmental functioning, whereas citizens remain dependent of balanced executional performances and services. They should therefore be able to rely unconditionally on adequate state-provisions. In this respect Ignatieff could not have been more wrong with his statements. Consequently a substantial amount of changes is needed to see to it that the accumulated concentration of counterproductive financial-economic 'powerwalls of Jericho' effectively may be tumbled down. At least more is needed than a focus on paternalistic pointing to civilians' behaviour as far as their 'loyalty' to the state and nation is concerned, while leaving fundamental matters of state-functions and living conditions unattained. Fencing off open intellectual space and raising barriers turns out to be just as counterproductive as disorientated 'circling around walls'. In such way it will take a long time before neoliberal marks are wiped out and the road is clear for 'picking up the pieces'.

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Independent Social Science Research (ISSR)
Issued 17 February, 2021

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