Introduction: Social Democracy in the 21st Century

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What has become of social democracy? Or, directly relating the question to the present collection of articles on the topic, where is it heading? Social Democrats in the Western world can look back on a century where growth and expansion of centre-left values seemed, during certain periods, to be a law of nature. During its so-called golden era (from the 1940s to the 1970s), the fortunes of the centre-left spiralled, with its legacy everywhere to be seen. Fifty years on from the end of that era, that period in time maintains, for understandable reasons, a particular status within the social democratic movement. It holds an equally elevated position in much of the academic work on social democracy in Europe and beyond. In this volume, an analysis of this brighter history, alongside analyses of challenges of the centre-left today, is presented.

There is ample reason to romanticise previous times. As of 2020, the French *Parti Socialiste* risks irrelevance in the squeeze between liberal, conservative and national-populist rivals. In Germany, the *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* has fallen in electoral support to a level not experienced since the years of the Weimar Republic. The picture across Europe is not altogether bleak, but it is clear from present evidence that social democratic parties are no more a 'natural' party of government than other party families. Since the turn of the century, the electoral base of social democratic parties has been transformed as well as reduced in most countries. In policy terms, social democratic parties have strived to adapt to an era that is separated by class yet diversified in terms of minorities, individualised and transitional yet characterised by collective yearning; and typified by postmaterialistic values yet oriented towards bread and butter policies when push comes to shove.

Paradoxes abound for social democratic parties, whose chief characteristic may be that they are workers' parties no more. As new identities must be forged, different agendas developed and issues resolved, Social Democrats must take stock of not only where they are coming from but also where they are heading. The academic contributions in this volume shed light

on some of the choices to be made for Social Democrats in the Western world two decades into the 21st century. This chapter begins with a brief historical backdrop, before taking on a conceptual clarification of social democracy. Finally, the chapter addresses a set of challenges the social democratic movement must grapple with and relates these to individual chapters in the volume.

The mixed fortunes of social democracy since 1989

After the end of the Cold War, social democratic parties in Western Europe especially, but also elsewhere around the world, started experiencing increasing volatility in terms of both electoral support and membership numbers. Initially, the future seemed bright for a 'modernised' or centrist type of social democracy. This was especially the case after Tony Blair in 1997 and Gerhard Schröder in 1998 became heads of government in the United Kingdom and Germany, respectively. At the same time, the mood in conservative and other centre-right parties across the region grew ever more dismal and desperate.

Since the turn of the century, however, the political fortunes have shifted, at least in Western Europe but also to varying degrees in other parts of the world (Keating & McCrone, 2013; Manwaring & Kennedy, 2018). The electoral support for social democratic parties has dropped significantly in both Germany and Scandinavia or collapsed altogether in other countries – such as Greece, France and the Netherlands. In these countries, a number of recent and interrelated developments seem to challenge the ideational and electoral basis for social democratic parties and policies such as economic globalisation, European integration, demographic change, international migration, the automatisation of the economy and climate change.

This decline of social democratic parties has also coincided with other political trends, perhaps most notably the rise of right-wing populist politicians and political parties (which, since 1990, have managed to become political forces to be reckoned with in several countries, both inside and outside of Western Europe) (Berman & Snegovaya, 2019). Another broad trend is the rise of new and nontraditional parties on the left-hand side of the political spectrum – parties that might be broadly construed as left-wing populists, green

parties, New Left parties (along with regionalist catch-all parties) and centrist parties without an easily identifiable ideology or economic policy at their core.

Both these trends have led to the bloodletting of older parties, perhaps especially among the social democratic parties of Western Europe. This bloodletting has taken place directly in the form of voters migrating from older centre-left parties to new and more exciting alternatives – left, right and centre. There is, however, a more subtle and indirect way of grinding down in play whenever new parties have succeeded in setting the political agenda, exposing a perceived shortage of new ideas or relevant solutions to new problems among the older parties. Such developments have, in many instances, led to demobilisation among supporters of the older parties. Both voters changing their allegiances to new parties and voters becoming disenchanted with their old party and simply refusing to continue voting as before will contribute to a decline in relative support at the polls for a traditional party. For many social democratic parties in Western Europe, both defections and disenchantment may have happened at the same time, and to varying degrees, after the turn of the century.

There are, however, some counterexamples of parties resisting this trend. In Portugal and Spain, social democratic minority governments were formed in 2015 and 2018, respectively. Here, it seems the Social Democrats have adapted quite well to a changing political environment or at least adapted much better than their traditional antagonists in the centre-right. The same goes for Denmark, where the Social Democrats formed a minority government after the parliamentary elections of 2019. Interestingly, this did not happen after a landslide in their favour but rather happened because *other* centre-left and left-wing parties made significant gains, as the right-wing populists quite resoundingly lost much of their support at the polls.

The Labour Party in Britain was also an example of a social democratic party doing fairly well or, at any rate, not as bad as the most pessimistic forecasters would have it, at least for a long time. After 2010, it experienced not only a considerable growth in membership numbers but also quite divisive and unfriendly debates about where the party should go next. In the general elections of December 2019, the British Labour Party, under the flagging leadership of Jeremy Corbyn, was completely unable to give Boris Johnson and his

Conservative Party any type of serious competition. Instead, the party ended up with its worst result at a general election since 1935, without a shred of hope of returning to a position in government any time soon.

Throughout Western Europe, it appears, however, that there is at least room for social democratic parties to come back from being the opposition if they manage to attract enough support from their traditional electorate and, at the same time, gather enough support from other parties on the left-hand side of the political spectrum. And yet it seems many social democratic parties in Europe suffer from lingering self-doubt and hesitation and fail to be sufficiently attractive to both once lost voters and potentially new voters or win working majorities together with allied parties. A collective depression has simultaneously affected many of these parties, making it harder for them to regain their former position as a leading force on the political scene in their respective countries.

In the context of the European Union as well, Social Democrats seem unable to build a common idea sufficiently different from the ideas coming from European conservatives and liberals of what the future of Europe should be. In other words, the centre-left of Europe is effectively unable to become a forceful alternative to the centre-right parties presently dominating European politics. Instead, many social democratic parties seem, for the most part, satisfied with being a mere partial corrective measure to the political agenda of conservative or liberal parties and leaders. Increasingly often, we even find Social Democrats in close cooperation with ever so slightly more intrepid parties of the centre-right, forming the so-called grand coalitions of older parties in government as a way of making sure that new movements and political currents – left, right and centre – are kept at bay.

Outside Europe, there is quite a considerable variation as well, far too much variation to describe thoroughly in the space of a single book and certainly not in a single introductory chapter. In many mature democracies around the world, but far from all, social democratic parties have for a long time been, and in most cases are still are, forces to be reckoned with in national politics. In other countries, perhaps especially countries that have only recently undergone a process of democratisation, it may be harder to identify political parties that, with some degree of justice, could be described as belonging to a social democratic tradition of thought or 'family' of political parties. This is perhaps especially the case in countries

more characterised by conflicts between different ethnic or religious groups instead of economic cleavages and class-based voting patterns.

In the 21st century, however, it has gradually become clear that many of the political problems or challenges we are all faced with are truly global in scope and consequence. There is simply less room for local or national politics and policy-making set completely apart from the global issues of the day. Hitherto unexpected existential threats or armed conflicts caused by environmental degradation and relative deprivation, as well as a practically unfettered type of international financial capitalism leading to a more brutal brand of exploitation of workers and their families around the world, are all inescapable parts of the political agenda of this century. But so are also global solutions to many of the problems facing mankind. Technological development in, for instance, energy, robotics, medicine and genetic engineering may radically alter what problems we have and will have and which solutions to these problems are available to us.

This also means that it will be exceedingly difficult for all political parties and movements, not only those that claim to be Social Democrats, to restrict themselves to faciliatating political improvements behind the increasingly imaginary borders between states and peoples. While the last century created a setting in which individual states could form their own destiny and national politics could be the principal factor shaping the lives of individual citizens in a country, that may no longer be the case, at least not everywhere and not all of the time. For Social Democrats, this may mean that they must return to being the kind of *vaterlandslose Gesellen* ('unpatriotic journeymen'), which conservatives and nationalists once claimed they were. Social Democrats, if they are to remain a relevant political force in *our* century, need to find their own solutions to the problems of an increasingly global age. It would be a death trap for them to become increasingly nationalistic or conservative in an age marked by globalisation and rapid social and technological changes.

What is social democracy?

Different observers and analysts have defined the term 'social democracy', found in the title of this book, in different ways. This volume contains contributions with slightly different notions of what social democracy actually is and how it compares to related terms such as 'socialism', 'democratic socialism' and 'social liberalism' and usually more encompassing

terms – for instance, 'the left' or 'the centre-left'. There is simply 'no single binding definition' (Gombert et al., 2009, p. 9). That being said, there seems to be no serious disagreement in the relevant research literature about what social democracy actually is, except perhaps at the very margins of the phenomenon.

In political science or political sociology, it is quite often taken for granted that social democracy is an umbrella term for the ideas and policies of political parties that in some way or another think of themselves as Social Democrats and as belonging to the social democratic 'family of political parties' (Escalona, Vieira, & De Waele, 2013). This understanding will however lead us quite easily to the rather vacuous notion that social democracy is whatever Social Democrats say or do, not entirely unlike what Herbert Morrison at one point allegedly said, 'Socialism is whatever a Labour government does'.

Another problem with this kind of conceptual descriptivism is that it is not necessarily all that easy to identify a set of political ideas shared by all or at least most political parties and movements; individual politicians and thinkers at some point in time have found it useful to call themselves Social Democrats. Instead, people and organisations that either have been perceived of or perceived of themselves as belonging to a social democratic tradition of political thought might not share that many common characteristics at all. Therefore, one might perhaps profitably think of social democracy as 'a widely extended family' (Waldron, 1987, p. 127) under which, like for other ideologies or traditions of thought, the members share little more than a vague collective identity defined by social and political networks, slogans and empty generalities.

A more historical approach to the matter of what social democracy actually is or should be might therefore be in order. A quick survey of the actual use of the term reveals, however, that in the 19th century and up until the 1920s, terms such as 'communism', 'socialism' and 'social democracy' were habitually used as synonyms. Orthodox Marxists who wanted to install a 'revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat', under which a radicalised elite group was to assume absolute power, and then change practically everything all at once quite often called themselves 'Social Democrats'. Socialists believing in gradualism and working towards an incrementally more democratic and equitable society, on the other hand,

frequently belonged to the same organisations, political parties and trade unions as the revolutionaries, occasionally even calling themselves 'communists'. In addition, a cluttered crowd of different political sects and groupings self-identified as 'Socialists', sometimes even acknowledging that even others belonging to other factions could be part of a wider socialist family as well.

After the Russian Revolution of 1917, however, these three terms slowly became more distinct, so 'social democracy' became a term exclusively used for gradualist and reformist brands of socialism, while 'communism' developed into a term reserved for those revolutionary Socialists taking their cues from the Bolsheviks of revolutionary Russia and, to varying degrees, those who later followed the same path. The last concept, socialism, thus became a name for a very broad category of political thought, under which one would be hard-pressed to find an essential core belief which all Socialists share (Newman, 2005, pp. 1–5). All across the world, the often sharp divisions between gradualists and revolutionaries were also mirrored in an organisational split between communist and social democratic parties, often resulting in outright hostility between the two now increasingly different ideologies.

In our day, social democracy is the name for a set of political beliefs, or a political ideology, created from a socialist tradition for political thought. For this reason, many Social Democrats call themselves democratic Socialists or quite simply Socialists, while others insist there is a difference between 'social democracy' and 'democratic socialism'. Usage of these terms also varies between countries; the Social Democrats of Southern Europe, for instance, tend to call themselves and their political parties 'socialist'. In Northern Europe, however, it has steadily become less common for Social Democrats to describe themselves as Socialists – with or without the adjective 'democratic' in front, perhaps to avoid ambiguity and distance themselves from authoritarian ideologies and systems of government also called socialist. Thus, there is no clear-cut conceptual distinction between socialism and social democracy beyond the rather trivial observation that 'socialism' is a wider category compared to 'social democracy' and the relationship between these two categories varies with time and space.

Perhaps the most characteristic idea that sets social democracy apart from other variants of socialist thought is the idea of a 'mixed economy'. Social Democrats have traditionally, even before the final separation between them and the revolutionaries during the 1920s, wanted to build a broad coalition that could take over the reins of government to create a more democratic, equitable and egalitarian society. In so doing, they helped to build a mixed economic system, or a regulated and planned market economy combined with a relatively prolific welfare state. An economic system which is not one thing alone but rather characterised by its pluralism and its heterogeneity or by its multiple ways of organising work for the benefit of the community as a whole.

In such an economic system, both public and private ownership is part of the mix. Neither form of ownership is thought of as an end in and of itself but as a means to the end of creating a society truly governed by the people rather than a small elite, no matter how 'elite' may be defined. This perspective is also found in one of the more general definitions of 'social democracy' by the political philosopher Roger Scruton: '[T]he theoretical and practical attempt to reconcile democracy with social justice through the use of state power' (Scruton, 2007, p. 642).

Indeed, in the social democratic conception of the mixed economy, ownership of resources, or what Marxists tend to call 'the means of production', is a less important issue. It does not really matter to a social democrat if a particular company or enterprise is owned by the state if it is cooperatively owned by the workers of the company or the participants in a collective enterprise or if it is owned by rich people who have inherited their financial stakes in the company. What matters to a social democrat is that the economic system as a whole is organised to the benefit of the community. This sets Social Democrats apart from other Socialists on the left, as well as from liberals and conservatives on the right-hand side of the political spectrum – who both, for very different reasons, tend to think of a particular way of organising the economy as an end in and of itself.

Two recurring catchphrases among Social Democrats, especially in Scandinavia, are 'The market is an excellent servant but a poor master' and 'Results are what matter'. If a regulated market economy with a high degree of private ownership of capital is better than

the alternatives at providing the community and all of its members with material comfort, then we should have such a mixed economy. If, on the other hand, experience shows us that a larger measure of public or cooperative ownership is preferable to create a more prosperous, equitable and egalitarian society, then we should have this kind of mixed economy instead. This is what the editors of this volume said about the matter some years ago in the book *The Nordic Model of Social Democracy:*

> In a mixed economy, the state can ensure that the consumption of resources is sustainable and that the distribution of welfare and opportunities is fair, while a large proportion of goods and services can be produced in the private sector, reflecting the economic laws of supply and demand. This pragmatic approach to the question of public or private ownership is coupled with a firm belief that democratically elected governments should intervene in the economy whenever necessary in order to defend the interests of the whole of society. And the reduction of inequality, in order to create a society in which opportunity and individual liberty is more evenly distributed, is perhaps the most basic and important of these interests. (Brandal, Bratberg, & Thorsen, 2013, p. 9)

Another idea characteristic of social democracy is the still quite radical notion that the entirety of *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) should matter and be the basis for political action and reform all over the world (Meyer & Hinchman, 2007, pp. 20–24). The articles of the UDHR, proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, contributed significantly as the inspiration behind the more recent *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs) affirmed by the same body in 2015 (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2020). Both the UDHR and the SDGs set out a very ambitious political agenda on a global scale as well as within the confines of individual countries.

Of course, lots of people who do not consider themselves Social Democrats will claim to support the concept of human rights or sustainable development as described by the United Nations. But they will often claim that some of the articles of the UDHR or some of the SDGs are more 'fundamental' than others and even some of the rights and SDGs 'may be right in theory, but they won't work in practice'.

From the left wing of the political spectrum, for instance, one occasionally hears the idea that economic rights are more important than civil and political rights. Freedom of speech and assembly is, according to this view, a luxury or a lofty goal that should become a primary concern only when a society has successfully combated poverty, hunger and environmental degradation. From the centre-right, on the other hand, one can often see arguments claiming property rights are more fundamental than the right to, for instance, earn a living wage in return for one's work or get access to basic education and health care or the right to live in a safe and healthy environment. Sometimes, more principled liberals and conservatives even claim inequality, poverty and hunger may be the price we would have to pay for living in a so-called free society in which people are free to own stuff and compete with each other for control over scarce resources.

The social democratic conception of human rights is more all-encompassing, claiming instead that both the civil rights and the political rights associated with being a citizen of a functioning democracy – as well as economic rights such as access to work, health and education – are all fundamental rights that matter, and equally so. There really is no way, according to this conception of human rights, to have democracy or personal freedom without the level of material comfort needed to enjoy these things. It is also not feasible or practical, at least not in the long run, to sacrifice democracy or personal freedom in order to achieve greater levels of material comfort or vice versa. Poverty, hunger, unemployment, disease and ignorance are evils and sources of inhibition which experience has shown us are much harder to combat without democracy, civil rights and personal freedom. And democracy or freedom is hardly sustainable without sufficient access for all citizens to a decent standard of living. All human rights matter; they are codependent and they are all 'fundamental'.

A third basic idea, or rather an important point of departure for Social Democrats, is the idea that human rights, democracy and personal freedom are fragile phenomena constantly under threat by some prominent characteristics of our world today. If we leave the global market economic system of the 21st century alone, without oversight and supervision from democratically elected legislators and the intergovernmental organisations in which they

choose to participate, then the result will easily become a more undemocratic world characterised by increasing levels of inequality and poverty. This is what the philosopher Karl Popper called 'the paradox of freedom' because freedom without restrictions would lead to unfreedom for most people: 'Unlimited freedom leads to its opposite, since without its protection and restriction by law, freedom must lead to a tyranny of the strong over the weak' (Popper, 1945/2002a, p. 296). If we believe that there is indeed a paradox here and more freedom for the strong might lead to more unfreedom for the weak, we could connect some of the dots in a social democratic frame of mind: The fight for more democracy, as well as the fight for a more generous welfare state ensuring access for everyone to a sufficient level of material comfort, is also representative of a struggle for more individual freedom and a more egalitarian distribution of freedom.

> The social democratic view is thus that liberty for the individual is intimately related to freedom and security for all. Most importantly, liberty for the individual requires that fundamental civil liberties such as the right to vote in free and fair elections and the right to free speech be bestowed on all. However, liberty also means that everyone should have the opportunity to influence decisions which decide the fate of their own existence. From this position, it is obvious that civil liberties and political rights are not sufficient – unless accompanied by guarantees about basic education, health and freedom from poverty and squalor. Accompanying individual liberty is a shared responsibility for the wellbeing of others and of the community as a whole. The social democratic perspective thus not only implies a very high level of ambition on behalf of modern society; it also contains an appeal to the benevolence and generosity of us all. (Brandal et al., 2013, p. 4)

What problems lie ahead?

The rest of this century has not been mapped out in detail, and the longer we look into the future, the less we know about what the world will look like. Of course, in principle, it is impossible to know in the present what the future will hold (Popper, 1957/2002, pp. xi–xiii). It is, nevertheless, possible to imagine what scenarios are more likely than others to occur, at least if we build our imagination on what we think we know about the world today (de Jouvenel, 1964, pp. 14–17; cf. de Jouvenel, 1967/2017, pp. 3–6) or what happened to

human civilisations and communities that adapted to changing fortunes and circumstances in the past (Diamond, 2005/2011, pp. 419–440).

Given what we know about past attempts to predict what the world would be like at the beginning of the 21st century, however, it is not difficult to imagine that our forecasts will most likely be widely off the mark. We might nevertheless be able to come up with some of the right questions, questions which might help us to understand which problems may arise in both the near and the distant future. For instance, are fast-paced technological developments about to change the very face of society? What will happen if cheap automatisation technologies lead to chronic underemployment on a global scale? And what about future breakthroughs in medicine or energy? What will happen to society if the average life expectancy continues to increase significantly, at least in the more affluent parts of the world, or if cheaper and more abundant energy becomes readily available to us? These are questions we cannot answer with a reasonable amount of certainty even if we tried.

We do know, however, that some of the problems we know and face today will in all likelihood accompany us into the foreseeable future. Global warming is one of these problems – with potentially catastrophic consequences around the world, especially perhaps in more densely populated and poorer parts of the world. It is unlikely, even under the most optimistic scenarios for climate change, there will be parts of the world completely untouched by the consequences (Masson-Delmotte et al., 2019). Even in the mature democracies of the world, global warming is set to become a 'game changer' that will transform the possibilities for political action and development. It is, for instance, not unlikely that changes in climate around the world will act as a disruptive force, bringing poverty and the mass displacement of people or even armed conflict in some regions and opportunities for economic growth in other more fortunate corners of the world.

Another set of problems we are likely to continue to battle is poverty and economic inequality, both domestically and on a global scale. While the so-called extreme poverty has been drastically reduced over the last 40 years, at least outside of sub-Saharan Africa, it is still the case that most people – slightly less than two-thirds of the world's population in

2015 – live in poverty, albeit mostly of the less severe kind. In 1981, over 40 percent of the world's population, almost two billion people, lived in extreme poverty (Roser & Ortiz-Ospina, 2019). Thirty-four years later, in 2015, almost exactly 10 percent, or only 730 million people, could be counted among the extremely poor (World Bank, 2018).

In spite of the overall reduction in global extreme poverty, there are some potentially concerning developments as well, especially rising levels of income inequality in some of the world's largest economies (most notably China, India and the United States). Also, in most of the advanced industrial economies of the world, inequality is and has been on the rise, making it more challenging to sustain some of the world's most ambitious welfare states. And then there were other countries with lower levels of inequality in 2015 compared to 1990, especially in Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa (Hassel, 2018). All in all, it may not be all that easy to see how income and wealth will be distributed in the near or distant future and how that may affect the political state of affairs in individual countries or around the world. It seems, however, that politics does matter and different types of political action may reduce poverty and inequality, but political *inaction* may exacerbate the situation yet again both locally and globally.

The 21st century is not set to become a repetition of the 20th century, even if there will be some similarities between them. The two centuries will perhaps not even be dominated by the same political movements, ideas or problems. The remainder of this century may be dominated by geopolitical events, economic developments or technological advances of which we know very little today. Instead, we are now only barely able to trace out 'the shape of things to come' over the next few decades and generations. There will always be some unknowns in such an equation – for instance, the sometimes pivotal role of individuals and pure accidents in the shaping of world history.

Some trends are, however, likely to continue. One of these trends is the slowing down of population growth – which, at some point, will turn into a slow decline in the total number of people on earth. Accompanying this trend will be the ageing of humankind, as people will live longer lives and fewer children will be born. Another trend is the spread of industrial modes of production to new regions of the world – especially in the global South, which in all

likelihood will lead to unprecedented economic growth in areas that so far have been economically deprived. This has already begun in Asia and may continue in Africa later on in this century. At the same time, the more affluent parts of the world may have to cope with chronic underemployment and the slowing down of economic growth, leading to new and very different political conflicts around the world.

A third trend is constituted by global warming – which may lead to mass migration and conflicts over scarce and perhaps dwindling resources, as well as new kinds of armed conflicts around the globe, perhaps at a hitherto unprecedented scale. A fourth and final trend is new patterns of economic and social inequality on a global scale as well as within individual countries. Experiences garnered from the 20th century have at least shown us that inequality will often lead to conflict and violent conflicts and social upheaval may lead to the formation of more equal societies, at least in passing (Piketty, 2013, 2019). Will the world be able to keep the peace in this century, or will inequality or environmental degradation lead to more armed conflicts internationally and the so-called civil wars within the borders of one country?

And then there was the coronavirus. The drama generated by the spread of COVID-19 and the public strategies to suppress it has dominated 2020 and ran in parallel with the completion of this volume. In a world characterised by international trade and migration, the concept of national borders has returned with full strength. In societies dominated by ever-increasing markets and corporate power, the strong state has re-entered the scene to regulate and compensate. It is safe to say that the twists and turns in the world of politics and current affairs have been more rapid of late – much faster than we anticipated when we started work on this volume, as it often does in times of global crises.

In the background hovers the question of what kind of community the nation state should become and what sort of solidarity and mutual commitment should be anticipated – from the care worker with their life at risk and the office manager working from home to the furloughed construction worker or hairdresser who has been furloughed for months, waiting for the lockdown to be lifted. The experience of a global pandemic exemplifies the uncertainty linked to future developments. It also gives perspective to so many of the

current debates about social democracy – be it related to economic management (set in sharp relief by the need to bounce back from the slump), how to sustain public support for redistribution, how to renew working life and relink work and welfare (e.g. through a basic income), how to pull together the different worlds of urbanity and countryside, and where to find a balance between local autonomy and a strong central government.

Social democratic responses and debates

What should social democratic parties and politicians do in such a world and in such a century? Should they become conservative defenders of past triumphs, as recommended by the historian Tony Judt (2009) in his essay on the future of social democracy? Or should Social Democrats instead, as recommended by Roy Jenkins (1953 as cited in Campbell, 2015), strive to become 'radical in the context of the moment' whatever that context might turn out to be? The answers given by Social Democrats to these questions may influence the eventual fate of their movement in the 21st century.

For Social Democrats especially, there are several more difficult questions to answer. For instance, are the welfare states developed in the last part of the 20th century sustainable in the long run, or will they eventually buckle under the pressure of, for instance, fast-paced technological change or increased international migration? What should the ideals of social democratic labour movements and political parties – such as 'freedom', 'equality', 'solidarity', 'social justice' and 'income security' – mean to people born in the 21st century? What will such terms mean to future generations of Social Democrats in the context of increasingly postindustrial societies, where conflicts between capital and labour might not be as easy to disentangle as they once were? These are only some of the problems facing Social Democrats in our day and will be facing them in the years to come.

There is also the question of how, and to what extent, social democratic labour movements and political parties themselves will be able to adapt to such changing circumstances. Will they be able to form new alliances, attract new supporters and build stronger organisations? Will they be able to provide answers to the most pressing questions of the future and mobilise for political action and change in light of those answers? The first two decades of the 21st century have not provided any clear answers to questions such as these. Will the

future perhaps belong to other movements, with other ideals and answers to the questions and problems facing humankind? Or maybe it is rather the case that our century needs social democratic ideals and values more than ever before?

In the rest of this volume, these and many other questions are addressed from a wide variety of angles and perspectives. We start with a few geographically oriented articles about social democracy in the global South and the Visegrád countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Then we move on to a handful of articles discussing future prospects and opportunities for social democratic policy developments. One of these articles deals with the role of trade unions in the postindustrial knowledge economy, and another looks closer at the idea of a universal basic income, a rarely well-understood proposal for the future development of the welfare state. A third article examines a peculiar trait of the social democratic welfare state – namely, the role of experts and the so-called hybrid advisory committees, especially in Scandinavia.

Two other articles discuss some aspects of European integration that we believe should be of particular interest for social democratic parties – namely, the European social model and the role of decentralisation in some European countries. From a more Scandinavian perspective, two more articles discuss the difficult problem of how Social Democrats could and should handle mass immigration and increased ethnic diversity in mature democracies with a prolific welfare state. We end this volume on a more ideological note, asking in the final articles what the ideological twists and turns represented by 'Corbynism' and 'Macronism' will mean for the Social Democrats of the future.

In this volume, we have not been able to cover all the bases we would have liked to include in our discussions, perhaps setting the stage for another volume to follow and complement this book. We would, for instance, have liked to have more articles on social democracy around the world and in particular regions – for instance, North and South America, Australasia and the Middle East. We would also have preferred it if we had had the time and space to further explore the role of women and ethnic minorities in the social democratic movement of the future and discuss what equality and fairness should mean in the world of politics further into this century.

Future political problems, now only barely visible to us (for instance, the role of climate change, technological developments, and the automatisation of advanced industrial and postindustrial economies), should also have been given more consideration in separate discussions. It is the hope of the editors, however, that we, in this volume, have given its readers some points for discussions about the future of social democracy and social democratic movements and political parties, even if it is not the case that the last words of this discussion have been spoken. For better or worse, we do live in interesting and exciting times, in a world which, far from the end of history, might still be quite young.

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