

„Disenchanted“ Democracy at the Crossroads of Late Modernity

(Two German Concepts)

Abstract

The Thesis introduces two descriptions of democracy which represent recent contribution of German social science to the international academic discourse on the crisis of democratic governance in changing conditions of contemporary modernity. Specifically, these are the concepts of "simulative democracy" by Ingolfur Blühdorn and "decentered democracy" by Helmut Willke. Within the German academia, both social theorists are respected personalities; meanwhile in the Czech environment, their conceptualizations reaching beyond the normative borders of liberal democracy have not yet been reflected.

The question whether liberal democracy is an adequate form of political self-organization of a society at its current stage of development is approached by each of the authors from a different analytical perspective: Blühdorn critically analyzes traditional intentions of the post-enlightenment democratization and its ambition towards the formation of emancipated and responsible citizen. He considers the evaluation of modern emancipatory processes as a necessary step before assessing prospects for an authentic and environmentally sustainable democratic order.

The starting point for Willke's reflections on democratic forms of government is his notion of their inability to face the fundamental challenges posed by rapid development towards hypercomplexity. According to him, knowledge management has become the most important resource for collective action. In order to even consider sustainable models of governance, it is necessary to shift from formal (democratic or hierarchic) competence to superior expertise. Regular rationalizing of the outputs throughout the decision-making processes is an integrated part of his concept from which Willke derives his innovative design for decentered parliamentary architecture.

Keywords: Democracy, Modernity, Sustainability