

# Leo Šešerko

## Nuclear and Democracy

- There is a troubled relationship between nuclear and democracy because:
  - 1. Nuclear technology is of military origin and was developed under “secrecy/confidentiality” -- restricted public access conditions – not as a subject of public transparency. By definition, democratic procedures mean being subject to public transparency
  - 2. Nuclear technology is highly sensitive to terrorist attacks, industrial espionage etc. and has never lost its initial secretive/confidential character completely

# N & D

- Nuclear Power Plant Technology is a kind of pharaonic industry with a highly vertical and concentrated power organisational structure –a contrast to renewable energy sources
- This appearance is heightened by the difficulties the industry has with informing the public about extreme events and accidents in NPP's
- Ever since the beginning of the use of nuclear for industrial electric energy production, these problems have been exposed. This is in contrast to democratic rule principles /as Atomsstaat, nuclear state/

# N & D

- While these arguments were right, the supposition that the modern societies for sure are moving in direction of a deeper and more stable democracy with guaranteed human rights for every single citizen might be wrong or or at least naïve
- One has to look more closely at the concept of democracy to explain incompatibility of N & D: the concept of democracy was more a phantasy than a well defined social and political reality

# N & D

- “Democracy thrives when there are major opportunities for the mass of ordinary people actively to participate, through discussion and autonomous organisations, in shaping the agenda of public life, and when they are actively using these opportunities” (Colin Crouch, Post-Democracy)
- It is ambitious to expect very large numbers of people to participate in a lively way in serious political discussion and in framing the agenda, rather than simply being passive respondents to opinion polls; people have to be motivated to participate. If they are demotivated, D can not function in a successful way

- It is common opinion that democracy is an ideal model, which can almost never be fully achieved, but, like all impossible ideals, it sets a marker
- This opinion should be put in question and instead a minimum of conditions should be defined, under which we can speak of a society as democratic or not: or we check how those who represent opposition to nuclear are treated/or immigrants, or women, or poor etc./ – fair or unfair or in between and we can realise the /un/democratic character of a society

# N& D

- One recalls the writings of US political scientists in the 1950 and early 1960s, who would adapt their definition of democracy so that it corresponded to actual practice in the USA and Britain rather than accept any defects in the political arrangements of those two countries
- This was Cold War ideology rather than scientific analysis
- A similar approach is dominating contemporary thinking. Again under US influence, but also that of dominant finance interests like the World Bank and World Monetary Fund, democracy is increasingly being defined as *liberal* democracy: an historically contingent form, not a normative last word defined by the principles of the French Revolution: equality, brotherhood, freedom

# N & D

- *Neoliberal democracy* is a form that stresses electoral participation as the main type of mass participation, extensive freedom for lobbying activities, which mainly means business lobbies, and a form of polity that avoids interfering with a capitalist economy
- It is a model that has little interest in widespread citizen involvement or the role of organizations outside the business sector

# N & D

- Under this model, while elections certainly exist and can change governments, public electoral debate is a tightly controlled spectacle, managed by rival teams of professionals expert in the techniques of persuasion, and considering a small range of issues selected by those teams
- The mass of citizens play only a passive, quiescent, even apathetic role, responding only to the signals given them
- Behind this spectacle of the electoral game, politics is really shaped in private by the interaction between elected officials and elites that overwhelmingly represent business interests

# N & D

- The market is often depicted in economic textbooks and in neoliberal approaches as a realm of consumer sovereignty. Public services differ fundamentally from this, in that they *must* be universal in their scope. Private-public partnership in such provision means allowing the private providers to choose the segments they want, while the public service guarantees provision for those in whom the private sector has no interest – residual public services become services of poor quality, because only the poor and politically ineffective have to make use of them
- Presumed perfect competition for oligopolistic sectors is often of unrealistic nature: they can in fact compete very keenly with each other but they prefer to take over each other and merge

# N & D

- Large corporations have developed a political capacity and influence far in excess of those small and medium-sized enterprises who remain under the political constraints of the true market
- For eighteenth-century political economists and philosophers, in particular Adam Smith, as well as such twentieth-century successors as Friedrich Hayek, the guarantee of anonymity and the incapacity of any individual producer to affect conditions by itself were important for these political reasons.
- Adam Smith would certainly not have regarded the political role of such companies as Enron, Microsoft or nuclear industry as consistent with his idea of the market economy

# N & D

- In the 1950s and 1960s the oligopolistic character of the nuclear industry was something exceptional, unusual and opposed to the principles of democratic transparency and democratic control. Today the model of corporate governance and economic regulation became dominant and nuclear just one of a multitude of corporative businesses with:
  - Externalisation of large amount of costs
  - a privileged relationship to politics in the market
  - lobby interests that are the moving force in shaping public debate in the media, governmental strategies and political parties

# N & D

- For these reasons Colin Crouch speaks of “Post-Democracy”: the marker of democracy as an ideal model was missed and distorted by corporate power
- What does it mean to have a privileged relationship to politicians?:
  - Josef Göppel – CDU/CSU: According to a study of the M of Econ. the costs of a nuclear accident could reach 5.500 billion Euro. The insurance coverage of a nuclear plant is, however, only 2.5 Billion. Requiring a matching level of insurance coverage would make nuclear un-economic.

# N & D

- There are several paradoxes:
- half of the population of many countries is opposed to nuclear but it is not reflected in the programmes of the political parties and politicians, who are in favor of Nuclear: examples: USA, Slovenia, France, Japan?
- The big majority of anti-nuclear-movement activistist are jobless. I tried to find out reasons for this: is it that their right to free speech and expression /and several other fundamental human/democratic rights/ are in reality limited?

# N & D

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# N & D

- There were officialy no expelings from job due to civil society engagement against nuclear. Nuclear industry opponents are of a wide range of different professions. They are obviously treated in a different way as members of the bird watcher society, who are in Slovenia in favor of nuclear power, because they find it is no harm for birds
- One answer to this question could be a comparaison with working conditions of other civil society groups and of different countries.
- The question is related to the actual status of state of law: is it suspended in relation to nuclear power under global corporate power?
- And is it related to the amount of procentage of nuclear power in respective country?

