



# A Cosmopolitan Democrat

David Held (1951–2019)

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David Held, one of the most creative and prolific political sociologists of our times, died suddenly of cancer in March, 2019. Born in London and the son of German refugees escaping Nazism, he studied at Manchester, MIT, and Cambridge. Held then obtained teaching posts at Cardiff and York, and a chair in Politics and Sociology at the Open University, the UK's innovative distance-learning university established in the 1960s by Prime Minister Harold Wilson and which became a centre of critical thought in the social sciences. In 1980, Held published the first substantial book on Frankfurt critical theory<sup>1</sup> in English. In 1982, with John Thompson, another Cambridge sociologist, Held published an edited book of essays on Habermas by leading scholars from across the world including the editors themselves, and is a publication which remains a fundamental resource on Habermas's early work.<sup>2</sup> Held continued to be deeply influenced by Habermasian critical theory as he began a vast series of authored, co-authored, and edited books on democratic theory and practice. In 1984, he co-founded Polity Press with Anthony Giddens and John Thompson. Polity rapidly became, and remains, one of the leading UK publishers in the social sciences and cultural studies, including a very active translation programme of books from Europe and elsewhere.

At the end of the 1980s, the theme of globalization (*mondialisation* in French) broke over the world, and was reflected in Giddens' published lectures titled *Consequences of Modernity*<sup>3</sup> and a growing number of other works.<sup>4</sup> In disciplinary terms, the ground had been prepared by a rapprochement between sociology and the newer discipline of inter-

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1. Held D. (1980). Introduction to Critical Theory: Horkheimer to Habermas. London: Hutchinson.

2. Thompson J. B., David H. D. (eds.). (1982). Habermas: Critical Debates. London: Macmillan. See my chapter in: Corchia L., Müller-Dooch S., Outhwaite W. (eds.). (2019). Habermas Global: Wirkungsgeschichte eines Werks. Berlin: Suhrkamp (in press).

3. Giddens A. (1990). The Consequences of Modernity. Cambridge: Polity. In 1999, Giddens delivered the BBC Reith Lectures on the theme of "A Runaway World" at a variety of locations around the world, performatively illustrating his topic (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/reith1999/lectures.shtml>).

4. Albrow M., King E. (eds.). (1990). Globalization, Knowledge and Society. London: SAGE; Sklair L. (1991). Sociology of the Global System. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf; Archer M. (1991). Sociology for One World // International Sociology. Vol. 6. № 2. P. 131–147. Archer's title was also the one she gave, as President of the International Sociological Association, to the Twelfth World Congress of Sociology in Madrid in 1990.

national relations that was grounded in diplomatic history and war studies. Sociology had been mired for some time in what Hermínio Martins in 1974<sup>5</sup> and, much later, Ulrich Beck, called “methodological nationalism,” an assumption that the national state was the natural frame of reference. From now on, the global was a reference-point for much of sociology, even for those who disputed the novelty or extent of globalization.<sup>6</sup>

By then, David Held’s disciplinary identification was more with politics, and one of his first responses to globalization appeared in a special issue he edited for *Political Studies*, and then as a book in the following year. In his introductory chapter, “From City-States to a Cosmopolitan Order?,” he presented what he now called “the cosmopolitan model of democracy,” still in quotation marks.<sup>7</sup> As a result of globalisation,

... the meaning and place of democratic politics, and of the contending models of democracy, have to be rethought in relation to a series of overlapping local, regional and global processes and structures ...

Three distinct requirements arise: first, that the territorial boundaries of systems of accountability be recast so that those issues which escape the control of a nation-state — aspects of monetary management, environmental questions, elements of security, new forms of communication — can be brought under better democratic control; secondly, that the role and place of regional and global regulatory and functional agencies be rethought so that they might provide a more coherent and useful part in public affairs; and thirdly, that the articulation of political institutions with the key groups, agencies, associations and organizations of international civil society be reconsidered to allow the latter to become part of a democratic process — adopting, within their very *modus operandi*, a structure of rules and principles compatible with those of democracy.<sup>8</sup>

In subsequent work, notably in a book co-edited with Daniele Archibugi and his own *Democracy and the Global Order*, Held developed this model of cosmopolitan democracy, which in my (fairly uncontroversial) view, is the second great innovation in democratic theory and practice after the development of social democracy a century earlier.<sup>9</sup>

In 1999, Held followed Giddens to the London School of Economics and to the Graham Wallis Chair. In the same year, Mary Kaldor, another leading theorist of cosmopolitan democracy and a veteran of the European peace movement, also arrived there from the University of Sussex. Held directed the Centre for Global Governance and, in the words of a former colleague at the LSE, “almost single-handedly ... built a subject of enquiry and a sub-discipline.” Held resigned from the LSE in 2011 following a controversy

5. Martins H. (1974). Time and Theory in Sociology // Rex J. (ed.). Approaches to Sociology: An Introduction to Major Trends in British Sociology. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul. P. 246–294.

6. Among the sceptics were P. Hirst and G. Thompson: Hirst P., Thompson G. (1996). Globalization in Question. Cambridge: Polity.

7. Held D. (1993). From City-States to a Cosmopolitan Order? // Held D. (ed.). Prospects for Democracy. North, South, East, West. Cambridge: Polity. P. 40. He notes that in earlier discussions in 1991 he had used the term ‘federalism’, but now wished to avoid confusion with debates around the European Union.

8. Ibid. P. 39–40.

9. Held D., Archibugi D. (eds.). (1995). Cosmopolitan Democracy: An Agenda for a New World Order. Cambridge: Polity; Held D. (1995) Democracy and the Global Order. Cambridge: Polity.

over the School's links with Libya, and, in particular, with Muammar Gaddafi's son Saif, a former student at LSE, a controversy which would become the subject of a public inquiry. I saw David for the last time when he came to Newcastle in 2013 to address a seminar audience where he spoke very frankly about what he had intended to achieve in pursuing these links with a former student who, at the time, had strong reforming intentions. As Lord Woolf declared in his report, "I recognise that had Saif proved to be the reformer he was predicted to become, the LSE may (*sic*) well have been lauded as having contributed to a positive change on the world stage."<sup>10</sup>

David moved to Durham in 2012 to a chair in Politics and International Relations and the Mastership of University College where he continued to edit the leading journal *Global Policy* which he had founded at LSE. In 2013, he and his co-authors opened up a new and very productive line of analysis with the publication of *Gridlock: Why Global Cooperation is Failing When We Need it Most*.<sup>11</sup> The argument, which he presented at the seminar I attended, is that transnational initiatives tend to stall because, among many other reasons, "existing institutions have created vested interests that 'lock in' increasingly dysfunctional arrangements."<sup>12</sup> Working on Europe and increasingly on the European Union, I was immediately struck by the relevance of this enormously insightful analysis and the parallels with Georg Vobruba's diagnosis of the way in which incomplete solutions to, for example, the management of the Eurozone lead to a series of bolted-on modifications which may make matters worse rather than better. (There are further parallels with economic analyses of sub-optimal equilibria and with the way in which learners of a foreign language can reach a plateau from which they fail to improve.) I do not need to stress here the importance of an approach of this kind in relation to the post-communist transition.

There can be no doubt that David, had he lived, would have continued to pursue this enormously creative line of analysis. When Pierre Bourdieu died in 2002, a cartoon in *Le Monde* pointed out that this was the time he was most needed. This is certainly also true of David, as the world confronts what Colin Crouch has aptly termed a "globalization backlash"<sup>13</sup> in which a justified critique of the consequences of uncontrolled globalization spills over into a nationalistic revolt, often in the name of "sovereignty," against *any* transnational institution and the very idea of cosmopolitanism.

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10. The Woolf Inquiry. "An inquiry into the LSE's links with Libya and the lessons to be learned". October, 2011. P. 22, para 1.12 (<http://www.lse.ac.uk/News/News-Assets/PDFs/The-Woolf-Inquiry-Report-An-inquiry-into-LSEs-links-with-Libya-and-lessons-to-be-learned-London-School-of-Economics-and-Political-Sciences.pdf>).

11. Hale T., Held D., Young K. (2013). *Gridlock: Why Global Cooperation is Failing when We Need It Most*. Cambridge: Polity.

12. Hale T., Held D. (2012). *Gridlock and Innovation in Global Governance: The Partial Transnational Solution // Global Policy*. Vol. 3. № 2. P. 170.

13. Crouch C. (2018). *The Globalization Backlash*. Cambridge: Polity.

## Космополит и демократ. Дэвид Хелд (1951–2019)

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