PARTAKING AND TAKING PART

Possess to Participate  When Citizens Participate  Where Would We Be If Others Made the Decisions?  Equal Pay for Equal Work  Using Shares to Survive the Crisis  Micro-loans Help. Or Do They?  Bosses Put to the Test  Cooperatives in the Areas of Energy and Regionalisation
Participation – Sharing for a Bigger Share

Despots are losing their power, pirates are taking over, citizens who feel politically marginalised are protesting, and everyone is taking part in the energy transition. Participation is a rediscovered measure for more democracy in the second millennium. Whether it be Occupy Wall Street or the occupation of other public spaces, open data or individuals with their own rooftop systems: more and more people in affluent societies worldwide feel excluded from decisions that have a major influence on their lives and their future.

The gap between those making decisions and those not benefiting from these decisions is widening. The end of participatory capitalism, the welfare of all through continuous growth, is becoming more and more obvious to most people in the industrialised countries. Even those in the developing countries who are left behind see no basis for their future in the currently utilized model.
Instead of going on as before without considering alternatives, people are starting to resist. The right to participate, to have a bigger piece of the cake, to be able to determine the size and flavour of this piece of cake as well is what people are calling for. And they are beginning to increase the pressure on governments through public disobedience or initiatives. It is because history has been shaped by people striving for participation that conditions for participation are possible in the first place. And yet, these conditions fall short of securing the livelihood of everyone within the scope of the necessary sustainable development.

However, encouraging ecological, economic and social participation is actually the key to more equality between and across generations. After all, this was the approach at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. What has become of this approach is visible today. We, the publishers, authors, editors, and graphic designers hope that this magazine succeeds in outlining how we all can achieve more by participating.

Ralf Bindel,
Editor
B U C H T I P P:

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45 factor y – the Magazine for Sustainable Economics
The richest 1/5 of humanity, some 1.7 billion people, consume about 4/5 of all resources. But while the environmental damage is inflicted on the poor countries, affluent countries are enjoying the final products. (Worldwatch Institute, The State of Consumption Today, www.worldwatch.org/node/810)

According to the German Institute for Economic Research, one out of seven Germans lives below the poverty threshold. This amounts to 11.5 million people—about a third more than ten years ago. Those primarily affected are young people, migrants, East Germans and single parents. In 2009, about every third person at risk of poverty could not afford a nutritious meal every second day and every sixth German could not afford to properly heat their home. (Weekly report 7/2010 by the German Institute for Economic Research; Data Report 2011 of the Federal Statistical Office of Germany)

The gap between rich and poor affects mutual trust. In U.S. states, mistrust is growing with the rate of inequality. In 2004, the rate of trust was less than 40 per cent. According to surveys carried out by World Values Survey, the rate of trust is highest in Scandinavian countries: 66 per cent agreed with the statement: “Most people are trustworthy.” (Kate Pickett, Richard Wilkinson, The Spirit Level, 2009)

According to a report published by the UN in 2010, damage to the environment caused by the world’s 3,000 largest companies through greenhouse gases, air and water pollution amount to approximately USD 2trn per year. Economist Claudia Kemfert calculated that the costs for repairing the damage to the environment in Germany alone will amount to about EUR 50bn by 2015. (Hermann Scheer, The Energy Imperative: 100 Per Cent Renewable Now, 2011; Claudia Kemfert, Die andere Klima-Zukunft (The Other Future of the Climate), 2008)

The obligatory cutbacks are distributed unequally among the Greek population. A childless married couple with an annual income of EUR 100,000 now has to pay EUR 32,400 in taxes as opposed to EUR 31,600, a 2.6 per cent rise. A family with five children with an annual income of EUR 25,000 now has to pay EUR 3,000 instead of EUR 390 in income taxes, an increase of more than 660 per cent. (Gerd Höhler, „Szenen wie in einem Bürgerkrieg” (Like scenes from a civil war) from the German newspaper Der Tagesspiegel, 21 November 2011)

Countries spend approximately USD 10-12bn per year on the approximate 100,000 nature reserves worldwide. According to calculations made by The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB), they generate an annual profit of USD 5trn, more than the motor, computer and steel industry combined. (B. Jessel, O. Tschimpke, M. Walser, Produktivkraft Natur (Nature as a Productive Force), Bund Naturschutz in Bayern e.V. (Nature Conservation Union in Bavaria), 2009)
### 55%

The debate about Sarrazin’s theses has led to a spike in xenophobia in Germany. According to social researcher Wilhelm Heitmeyer, it had been 25 per cent for more than eight years, but had increased to 55 per cent after Sarrazin published his much-debated book. Most of the additional amount is attributable to high earners who developed fears of social decline during the economic crisis. According to a GfK study, 70 per cent of Sarrazin’s readers are male and very career-oriented. (Allensbach survey: Mehrheit der Deutschen halten Muslime für Last (The Majority of Germans Thinks Muslims Are a Burden), FTD 30 September 2010; Tobias Kniebe, Wer hat Angst vorm fremden Mann, Thilo Sarrazin und seine Leser (Who’s Afraid of Strangers – Thilo Sarrazin and his Readers), SZ 8 January 2011)

### 67%

In Switzerland, 67 per cent of the population is satisfied with their co-determination options. (Readers Digest, www.presseportal.de, 29 December 2010)

### 23%

In Germany, women get paid an average 23 per cent less than men. (www.equalpayday.de)

### 30%

A survey conducted in 2011 found that 81 per cent of the German population would like to become more involved in politics and important decisions. 78 per cent voiced their support for more petitions and referendums. 68 per cent would like to have a say in large-scale construction projects or infrastructure measures. 47 per cent favoured the idea of citizens budgets as a possibility to participate in decisions about spending the tax money of their municipality. However, only 30 per cent of the survey participants want to become a member of a political party. (Johannes Korge, Bürger drängen an die Macht (Citizens Press for More Power), Spiegel Online 13 June 2011)

### 10%

Worldwide, women produce 70 per cent of all foodstuffs, carry out 60 per cent of all work, but receive only 10 per cent of the global income. Approximately 3/4 of all women and girls suffer violence and/or sexual assaults in their life. (UN Women Facts, 2010)

### 5%

In Germany, 70 per cent of working mothers work part-time, as opposed to five per cent of working fathers. (Equality Report of the German Federal Government, 2011)
Possess to Participate

Some terms are like scalpels: cold, sharp, precise. Then there are terms like large handbags: you can put a lot of stuff into them. The terms ‘partaking’ and ‘taking part’ seem to resemble a Black Forest Cake: rich in tradition, complex and nutritious. This is to be considered when analysing the term.

By Bernd Draser

Translated from the German by Stefan Helwig and Simon Varga
To start our analysis, we have to go back in time. When people started to discuss the problematic consequences of industrial economics in the last third of the 20th century, the damaged environment was initially at the centre of attention at first. Social justice was a topic left to trade unions and corporate managers and the so-called welfare apparatus – the government. It was not until sustainability developed into one of the guiding concepts in the 1990’s that we understood how to think of ecological issues in a complex manner and in connection with social and economic issues. Today, ‘partaking and taking part’ is used to describe the social dimension of sustainability in its totality.

When talking about these concepts today, we talk about many things at once: about social and political involvement, safeguarding livelihoods and gender equality, integration and inclusion, education, and recently even liquid democracy and Internet policy.

Equality and Society

At first, talking about partaking and taking part was established as a strategy for normalising the conditions of life of disabled people, in particular under the heading of ‘integration.’ One example for this is the ninth book of the German Social Security Code (SGB IX), which demands “integration into social life” and self-determined life. When we take up the terms ‘partaking and taking part,’ we will notice that the words include both ‘part’ and ‘take,’ that is to say possessing a part, but also taking part, i.e. participate. What makes the term so attractive is that it also hints at the notion of a partaker, perhaps even at that of a stakeholder who, together with others, possesses or is involved in something in his role as an economic player. Other connotations that relate to ‘part’ are social sharing (communio), be it liturgically as communicating (communicatio), or in a socio-politic manner as redistributing. In this age of networks, partaking for the most part seems to be everything from the communication of one’s own position in the sense of political par-
plicitation to liquid democracy, but also blind and enraged in shit storms, botnet attacks, Occupy Everything, or the lynch flash mob.

This spectrum given by the term is hence broad and worth differentiating. At one end of this spectrum, we observe a discharge amongst the masses, eliminating the things non-identical, hoping to achieve equality with the destruction of everything unequal.

**Democracy and Delegating**

At the other end of this spectrum, liquid democracy tries to solve the paradox of direct democracy. In a society characterised by ever-growing complexity, the layman would have to become an expert in virtually everything. However, liquid democracy is not only about giving everybody equal opportunities to express their opinion, but also about enabling people to delegate their vote to a person, if they feel that this person does not only represent their interests but also has the necessary expertise. This includes the obligation to reflect on one’s competences and to responsibly delegate one’s vote in a continuous process. At this point, it is necessary to adopt the classic approach of looking to ancient Greece for inspiration for three reasons. First of all, the concept of liquid democracy is nothing but the old Socratic question of knowledge and non-knowledge. Socrates himself came to the conclusion that at least he realises that he knows nothing—which is far more than any of the experts he questioned. From this insight, one can derive the certainty that political participation can only be achieved through education, meaning the capacity to identify one’s own shortcomings and knowledge gaps rather than expert knowledge. From this point of view, education is not the objective of participation, but a necessary condition for its realisation.

**The Whole and the True**

Secondly, Athens had a mechanism that motivated its citizens to actively partake in political activities. People involved in democratic decision-making were rewarded with a coin, the proverbial obolós, thus providing an appropriate audience for the democratic process. This was a more pragmatic approach than today’s campaign finance system that allocates financial resources according to election results. The same applies to the idea of an unconditional basic income which is designed to create more liberty for social engagement by providing a comfortable livelihood instead of rewarding contributions to society only once they have been made.

Last of all, the term ‘partaking’ presupposes a whole of which one can partake. For Hegel, the whole is the true. And indeed, talking about the whole and the true is a necessary counterpart to talking about partaking in something as an ontologically deficient form of being. Plato describes participation (methexis) as the way things partake in ideas, ideas being the abstract and ever true archetypes of the concrete, ephemeral and imperfect things that surround us and that we are ourselves. Plato’s pupil Aristotle rejected his teacher’s definition of partaking as an opaque metaphor.
This should serve as a warning. There is a reason why Adorno objected to Hegel’s dictum by stating that the whole was the false. In Adorno’s terms, partaking usually appears to designate an act of entangling oneself in the false: by partaking in mass culture, the culture industry, and maybe in guilt. The elimination of the non-identical to better fit the part into the whole. From a societal point of view, this may well seem to be paternalistic care that meets expectations by satisfying needs.

Facets and differences

Partaking has to preserve its complexity, because it is only through these facets that partaking and taking part become one. Subsidiarity constitutes a vital aspect of this complexity, since things should be entrusted to the persons whom they concern. In a political, cultural or economic context, this principle encourages the people in charge to take a responsible attitude, which is crucial to the idea of partaking itself. By partaking in processes, ventures, and debates and thus enabling themselves, individuals become more simple cogs in the machinery, side-lined by welfare, and create political, cultural, and economic values by means of active participation. To sum it up, partaking designates the ability and the willingness to act productively within complex contexts.

Bernd Draser teaches philosophy at ecosign/Academy for Design, Cologne
»It is a matter of course in terms of democracy and content that people can plan and design the house they want to live in themselves.«

Bertolt Brecht

www.buergergesellschaft.de/politische-teilhabe/
Civic participation, dialogue forums and referendums have been widely discussed, at least since Stuttgart 21 (a public opposition movement against the redevelopment of the Stuttgart central station) and since the mayor of Duisburg was voted out of office. Under public pressure, parties, associations, and enterprises are more and more frequently involving citizens, neighbours or affected persons in decision-making processes. However, most politicians and businessmen still consider this form of participation an incalculable risk. Only few of them see it as an opportunity.

By Simon Wiggen
Translated from the German by Christin Brauer, Nadja Grüner and Lea Schiefen
After only a few months, German Chancellor Angela Merkel considered the ‘Dialogue on Germany’s Future’ a tremendous success. More than a million visitors to the homepage left about 65,000 comments on nearly 10,000 proposals for Germany’s future. At three civic dialogues in Erfurt, Heidelberg and Bielefeld, Chancellor Merkel met with 100 citizens of each city and discussed social, educational and economic issues. On the one hand, concrete proposals were discussed, for example the ACTA Agreement, the strengthening of the position of midwives or the legalisation of cannabis. On the other hand, fundamental proposals and suggestions were made, such as an unconditional basic income, a new education system and discussions about Islam.

The input is being evaluated by researchers and professionals and will be translated into concrete recommendations for action. Angela Merkel says that the dialogue is not considered a philosophical discussion, but an opportunity to find out which proposals can be implemented. She hopes that there will be a few results that would not have emerged without the dialogue.

How to Participate

Professor Hans J. Lietzman, political scientist and head of the research centre for civic participation at Wuppertal University, also considers civic participation a great opportunity. In fact, nothing will work without it, says Lietzman. According to him, the question should not be whether, but how citizens can get involved. It is no longer possible to serve up ready-made decisions to them; otherwise, situations like the one in Stuttgart with the construction of the new central railway station will occur. The citizens will resign themselves to the situation and only if they have no opportunity to participate or if they feel that their opinion does not have any influence on decisions will they become enraged.

Civic participation does not necessarily have to end in a vote. Sometimes it is enough to reach a consensus between all citizens involved, and sometimes it is...
even enough to have a dialogue to settle conflicts.

From the Beginning

When it comes to civic participation, it is important—as it is in stakeholder dialogues between companies and customers, people affected or neighbours—to consider all interests from the very beginning. Lietzmann says that a project might fail if citizens are only expected to rubber-stamp a decision. This happened at the end of March in Gladbeck when the city, together with the Federal German Government and the Land of North Rhine-Westphalia, had drawn up a plan for the extension of a federal highway into a motorway. In a referendum, the citizens rejected the plan, which has since been put on hold. The positions are hardened.

The risk that the citizens will decide ‘conservatively’ and therefore prevent progress is incurred in every form of civic participation. Democracy in individual projects, however, can also cause citizens to pursue serious interests that differ from those of their political representatives. Of course, citizens can have a different opinion than the administration or investors. Examples include the protests against the expansion of Frankfurt Airport, the enlargement of Marl Chemical Park, Bayer’s CO pipeline project and the selection of routes for new power lines. Yet citizens need to be especially involved in decisions directly affecting them, for example in transport projects, and all projects that cause emissions, such as aircraft noise or particulate matter. In Stuttgart, for example, urban planners learned about the population’s subjective noise pollution and their desires and expectations in workshops, in addition to objective noise measurements.

Expert Dialogues Versus Pub Chats

According to Hans Lietzmann, the opinion of citizens must also be considered when addressing more complex issues like sustainability and the energy transition, because the success of such projects depends considerably...
on the attitude of the citizens. Therefore, the participation of experts and an exchange with them are essential. Otherwise, the dialogue ends up becoming an exchange of pub slogans and in failure to reach a consensus. From the experience with his own research projects, Lietzmann reports that the more citizens know, the more they are willing to put their own interests aside. According to him, this applies to both political decisions and business investments because civic participation and dialogues with stakeholders offer many chances for enterprises, in spite of all the risks. Even initially unpopular projects might in the end become acceptable to affected persons if they are allowed to join the discussion and if a consensus can be achieved. The citizens accept the decisions taken and thus potential subsequent conflicts are avoided at an early stage. As a side effect, smaller businesses get a feel for what part of the population shares which interests and from which direction headwinds can be expected. The considerable, yet often underestimated know-how of some stakeholders can even be useful to the enterprises. This has been shown in the case of the city of Rottweil, where citizens and experts came together for nine months to discuss the future energy supply of one of the city’s districts. The result was a EUR 7.2m biomass CHP plant. The city’s public utility company benefited from civic participation because many citizens suddenly joined the district heating network. At the same time, the city’s public utility company enhanced its (eco)-image among the population.

Simon Wiggen is a journalist. He studied geography and works for gemeindemenschen.de.
Mr Prosser said:

»You were quite entitled to make any suggestions or protests at the appropriate time, you know.«

“Appropriate time?”, hooted Arthur. “Appropriate time? The first I knew about it was when a workman arrived at my home yesterday. I asked him if he’d come to clean the windows. But he said no, he’d come to demolish the house. He didn’t tell me straight away, of course. Oh no. First he wiped a couple of windows and charged me a fiver. Then he told me.”

“But Mr Dent, the plans have been available in the local planning office for the last nine months.”

Douglas Adams

From Douglas Adams’ novel The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy. It was used on leaflets against the Stuttgart 21 project.
Where Would We Be If Others Made the Decisions?

Clocks tick differently at Komm-Bau. There is no boss there and everybody works independently. At Komm-Bau, ‘partaking and taking part’ is a principle that belongs to the corporate culture.

By Christine Ax
Translated from the German by Nadja Grüner, Christin Brauer and Lea Schiefen
“Sharing assets and income offers us a high level of security and freedom. Regardless of the different personal situations we live in, all of us have the right to a place to live, clothing, food, and mobility, but also to a basic income that can be spent outside of the cohousing residence. [...] Each one of us is part of a cooperative effort that is based on solidarity.” This is the philosophy of the founders and shareholders of the Niederkaufungen cohousing project, which, having been established 26 years ago, is one of the oldest and best known projects of its kind in Germany.

In Niederkaufungen near Kassel, residents not only live but also work together, for example at Komm-Bau Ltd., a workshop comprising a craft business, a carpenter’s workshop and a construction company that was founded 10 years ago. Each craft business operates as an independent business under the aegis of a limited company. Yet, this does not preclude cooperation in larger projects.

The Ltd. has only one shareholder: the residence itself. There is no boss. Everybody works independently and yet all are shareholders. This is why Komm-Bau advertises on its website that clients can expect commitment and responsibility on the part of all employees.

Shared Responsibility

How is such a business organised? Otto Hensler, a master carpenter, is the first to pick up the phone and is therefore responsible for inquiries from the press. Mr Hensler has much to tell. He explains that the members of the residence do not play by the same rules as those used in a normal working environment. What is most important is that there is no boss and no clocking in. Everybody can decide whether and how much he or she wants to work in the workshop. Mr Hensler wonders where he would end up if others decided how much he had to work.

This, however, does not mean that the employees at Komm-Bau work less than others. They just work differently. Indeed, work has another meaning. On average, Mr Hensler spends 50 hours per week in the workshop and enjoys it very much.
much. He explains that the workshop is only 30 paces away from where he lives, whereas in the past he sometimes had to travel up to 30 kilometres to get to work. For him, it is fun to produce beautiful things. Every eight weeks, when it is his turn to do the dishes in his co-housing facility, he has to spend less time in the workshop for a few days.

Other colleagues of his work only 25 to 30 hours per week. They engage in other activities such as raising children, leisure activities, arts, cooking, shopping. Everything is equally important. The fact that his colleagues do less carpentry work than he does, but take the same amount of money out of the communal pot, is completely fine with Mr Hensler. He is of the opinion that there is much to be done and that he benefits greatly from others growing vegetables, cooking food and raising children. Although he does not have children himself, he loves living with them.

**Enough for Everybody**

Otto Hensler does not differentiate between work and life. If his work were not enjoyable, he would never spend 50 hours on it. Mr Hensler explains that he does not only work in order to earn money, but that he is happy when his hand-made products are used by the community or other people. They are the ones he enjoys being with. He is happy when he can earn money with his work and is therefore able to provide for the community. Furthermore, he says that the money is not only for him, but if he needed something, he could take it out of the communal pot.

The current revenue of the Niederkaufungen co-housing project is composed of the wages and earnings of the individual work areas, the salaries of the external employees, fees, unemployment pay, children’s allowances, presents etc. The money is spent on everyday and non-everyday necessities, ranging from cars to toothpaste. Currently, the average income is approximately EUR 935 per month and per person. This, however, is hardly an indicator for the actual standard of living because many things are shared among the members of the community, such as clothing, the library, the cars and the washing machines. Besides, most of these things are bought at wholesale prices and rents are low.

All rents, even those of the workshops, are put into the investment fund of the association owning the buildings and companies. With this fund, necessary investments are made. Each adult can decide on purchases of up to EUR 500 per person. Two adults can decide on EUR 1,000 and so on, up to a maximum of EUR 4,000.

Major investments have to be agreed upon with the shareholder, the co-housing project. Thus, everybody living in the residence has responsibility—which has not posed a problem yet. But a complete and fully automatic, multi-million euro CNC production centre has not been on the shopping list yet. However, the business is doing well. The carpenter’s workshop is a small craft business working for the village and the surrounding area. According to Hensler, the furniture they manufacture and their skills as carpenters are in demand. Most of the time, the order backlog is good, and sometimes they even have to turn down requests.
Work of Equal Rank

When talking about Komm-Bau, its members call it a ‘work area’ rather than a ‘business’. Mr Hensler regrets the lack of members who want to become entrepreneurs. He is the only one out of eight co-workers at Komm-Bau who works more than eight hours a day and who feels responsible for strategies and development. Additionally, Komm-Bau, on principle, only employs people living among them because ‘employees’ are problematic for this type of business that is completely self-governed. If the shareholders employed somebody, they would not only have to calculate differently but they would also have to pay normal wages. According to him, that means the employees would have to generate greater turnover, which would determine the wages. Furthermore, Hensler doubts that anybody would like to supervise their colleagues, at least not at Komm-Bau. The other work areas of the commune are also organised like Komm-Bau. There are ten altogether, from the day care centre, the planning office, the fruit manufactory, agriculture, and workshops to a day care for the elderly—every area is covered. The 60 adults and 20 children can live very well on the income. There are 13 residential groups; several people take care of the children. Domestic work and gainful employment are considered to be of equal value. The residents are covered by social security through the businesses or their own fund which pays a minimal annuity. The commune describes itself as economically stable. There are mediators to ensure a working social life and to settle emerging conflicts. Since the model works so well, it is catching on: a second residence is being established at the Lossehof in Oberkauften-gen, and new members are still wanted.

Christine Ax is an author and a consultant for sustainable development, craftsmanship, and regional economy in the office for sustainable development and communication in Berlin.
An OECD study demonstrates that the planned ‘stove bonus’ not only keeps women away from the job market but also impedes the integration of women with a migrant background.

... The money that the stove bonus consumes could rather be spent on expanding day care centres and on training day care teachers. Nobody could deny the positive impact on the integration of children with a migrant background if they can play and learn together with other kids.«

* Money granted to families, if one parent stays at home to raise children who do not go to a day care centre.

Caren Lay,
Member of the German Bundestag, Die Linke (left-wing political party) on the OECD criticising the German plans about a childcare supplement on 11 June 2012.
Equal Pay for Equal Work

Equal rights are a necessary precondition for determining one’s role in the economy and society. However, reality paints a sombre picture of gender justice: in Germany, women earn about 25 per cent less than men on average, a fact which is pointed out in the magazine factory by Henrike von Platen, President of Business and Professional Women of Germany.

Translated from the German by Kerstin Lisewski and Eunike Bawarska
Every year we are faced once more with terrifying figures: women earn 23 per cent less than men in Germany, which means that Germany trails in the European Union in comparison to the other EU members. How can this be 55 years after signing the principle of pay equity in the Treaty of Rome? Today’s women are more educated than ever before. However, female graduates earn less than their male counterparts. The reasons for the gender pay gap are diverse – women, for instance, work more frequently in the low-pay sector than men and cannot be found in top positions in German business. Traditional women’s jobs are usually accompanied by low pay.

Also, women interrupt their career more often than men, because of the lack of childcare facilities. The part-time working ratio is extremely high in Germany, meaning that women usually find themselves treading water professionally. In addition, income tax adjustments, health co-insurance and the proposed child-care subsidy provide incentives for women to stick to the role of secondary wage earners.

**Good Prospects**

The impact of the pay gap is disastrous: the pay discrepancy of 23 per cent increases to an unbelievable pension gap of 59 per cent during the course of a woman’s employment. Women acquire fewer assets during their lifetime and are especially threatened by old-age poverty. You cannot imagine the challenges, the social security benefits office will be faced with due to the fact that every fifth German woman needs to provide for her family nowadays and depends on a fair payment to provide a living as a pensioner.

**No Change Without a Quota**

Even next year the Equal Pay Day will take place in order to raise awareness of that issue, tackle the problems and make those responsible fulfil their obligations.
Moreover, we are calling for a quota for women to make a move in big German enterprises with solely male dominated positions. There will be no change if there is no statutory rule; this has become apparent over the past ten years. As a co-founder of the Berlin Declaration, Henrike von Platen supports the implementation of the Equality Act on the basis of Article 3 (2) of the German Basic Law: “Men and women shall have equal rights. The state shall promote the actual implementation of equal rights for women and men and take steps to eliminate disadvantages that now exist.” That is exactly what we are calling for – no more and definitely no less.

Henrike von Platen is a self-employed management consultant and president of the organisation Business and Professional Women (BPW) Germany.

A Few Words on Equal Pay Day
Equal Pay Day in Germany was initiated by BPW Germany in 2008. Equal Pay Day originated in the USA. The initiative came from the American Business and Professional Women (BPW USA), which, in 1988, founded the Red Purse Campaign in order to point out the existing pay gap. During the Equal Pay Day in 2011, 90,000 women and men participated in approximately 370 events throughout Germany. Since 2009, the date of Equal Pay Day has been calculated on the basis of current figures from the Federal Statistical Office. According to the latter, Equal Pay Day is the day up to which women have to work longer on average in order to earn exactly the same amount of money men have already earned at the end of the previous year. The next Equal Pay Day is on 25 March 2013. www.equalpayday.de

On BPW Germany
With 42 clubs and approximately 1,800 members, the Business and Professional Women (BPW) Germany is one of the biggest and oldest professional networks for both employed and self-employed women in Germany.

The non-profit organization, founded in the 1930s and newly established in 1951 after its dissolution under the Nazis, supports professionally active women in various ways: Apart from individual exchange, presentations, conferences and mentoring, the network lobbies for political and social causes on a national and international scale as well as engages itself in humanitarian purposes. www.bpw-germany.de

She says that her economics lesson did”
The most prevalent approach to measuring quality of life in a nation used to be simply to ask about the GNP per capita. This approach tries to avoid making any cross-cultural claims about what has value – although it does assume that opulence has universal value. What the approach omits, however, is much more significant. We are not even told about the distribution of wealth and income, and countries with similar aggregate figures can exhibit great distributional variations. Circus girl Sissy Jupe, in Dickens’ novel Hard Times, already saw the problem with this absence of normative concern for distribution:

She says that her economics lesson did not tell her “who has got the money and whether any of it is mine.”

Martha Nussbaum (2003)
Women and Work. The Capabilities Approach, in: The Little Magazine 1, issue 1: 26-37
Using Shares to Survive the Crisis

In the days of a globalized economy and the euro crisis, investments are a nightmare for many people. Just recently, the German Institute for Economic Research insisted that the national Riester supplementary retirement plan should be abolished, as it made sense only for those who lived beyond the age of 90. Where is it possible today to invest reasonably and safely?

By Christine Ax

Translated from the German by Eunike Bawarska and Katarzyna Plaseka
Invest where it has always made sense: in your region! Today this is possible with no problem. The *Regionalwert AG* in Freiburg and the *Bürger AG für nachhaltiges Wirtschaften FrankfurtRheinMain* are such new holding companies. They collect money from citizens and invest it in regional value chains. However, traditional enterprises such as the *Sparkasse* savings bank system and the Bochum utility company also issue equity funds. With the so-called *KlimaBrief* (climate bond) small investors support the constructing of regional renewable energy plants, an example being *Regionalwert AG*. Christian Hiss, the chairman of the stock corporation founded the enterprise three years ago. Since then, 500 small investors have contributed EUR 2m, which later on were invested by the stock corporation in the property and the enterprise itself. All the businesses that are financed in this way have something to do with organic farming or the processing and marketing of organic products. Two young farmers are supported in their search for and operation of an organic farm, the *troki Manufaktur* enterprise produces dried fruit and vegetables and there is the so-called *Grüne Kiste* (organic box). The organic box will be filled among other things with vegetables from a market garden belonging to the *Regionalwert AG*, and with fruit from an organic farm in which the *Regionalwert AG* has invested.
The wholefood shop that also belongs to Regionalwert AG offers its services to producers as a second trade channel. Marlene Svedas works there and is enthusiastic about this idea, saying that people should be able to purchase foods that are grown locally.

Meanwhile, Regionalwert AG has caught on in other places. The Bürger AG für nachhaltiges Wirtschaften FrankfurtRheinMain was formed in October 2011. It also aims to make a contribution in the region and to the region. There are now two major projects being financed and run by this citizen-owned company.

One of these projects is the Fleckenbuehl farm in Cölbe near Marburg. Since 1984, the 260-hectare Demeter Farm has also admitted people in all kinds of life situations and has been helping them to live without addiction. More than 210 people work or go through training there. At Fleckenbuehl, bread specialties, cheese in countless variations as well as meat and sausages are produced. Using the capital of the citizen-owned company, there are plans to buy a herd of 30 suckler cows as well as to invest in meat processing and a bakery.

The second Regionalwert project is a family-run business called Ackerlei near Frankfurt. Organic vegetables are cultivated there on 35 hectares. Over the next few years, a further 40 hectares of conventionally farmed land will be added to the farm and adjusted to the Bioland organic guidelines. With this total area, not only organic farming in the region will grow, but also the existence of the family-run business will be secured for the long term.
Hence, 20 jobs in the cultivation sector as well as in direct marketing have become more stable – and further jobs have already been planned.

Another successful example is the *KlimaBrief* project run by the municipal utilities in Bochum and the local savings bank. The plans for this project were already developed before the reactor catastrophe in Fukushima. When the equity fund came out in April 2011, it was sold out within three hours, says Thomas Schoenberg, a press officer for the municipal utilities in Bochum. With a total value of shares ranging from a minimum of EUR 1,500 to EUR 10,000 per shareholder, there are approximately EUR 4m available for investments within the next five years.

The first project has already been finalized: 309 solar modules in the residential buildings of the municipal housing community generate more than 60,000 kilowatt hours of clean power annually. Public companies are apparently very trustworthy, according to Schoenberg, who says that for the clients, not only a solid interest payment of 3.7 per cent is important, but also a good regional cause. The participating citizens are spared being potentially harmed by investors, who are purely profit-oriented. At the same time, Schoenberg underlines that they had addressed Bochum citizens only.
»If you want to see which way a country is headed, look at the country‘s budget and how it allocates resources for women and children.«

Pregs Govender, South Africa
A feminist activist, author of "Love and Courage. The story of Insubordination" and a member of the South-African Parliament.

www.partizipation.at/part_budget_en.html www.partizipation.at/part_budget_en.html
One thing is certain: people need money in order to participate in social life and economic activities. Microloans are supposed to help wherever small entrepreneurs and especially women lack resources. In this way, they can not only alleviate poverty, but also increase dependence. Here are some of the pros and cons.

By Christa Wichterich and Martin Herrndorf
Microloans May Not Be a Panacea, but...

...they are an important part of comprehensive strategies in the fight against poverty.

A pro-position by Martin Herrndorf.

Translated from the German by Stefanie Scheu, Darinka Potsch, Caroline Hutter, Christine Kühn

Enthusiasm was great: By means of microloans, especially women in need of help in developing countries were expected to become active small businesswomen. The naïve illusion of the effects of microloans has given way to reality. Unquestionably, the excesses in the microloan business contributed to the end of this illusion: the rapid expansion, multiple loans granted to the same borrower, dubious practices when collecting debts and the temporary collapse of the sector, especially in the Indian state of Andra Pradesh. Still, microloans and the principle of a market-based fight against poverty behind them are important components of comprehensive strategies related to social and economic participation. Poor households with fluctuating earnings need to cope with everyday expenses, long-term investments, such as home construction and home expansion, weddings or business equipment and unforeseen expenses, such as hospital stays or funerals. ‘Financial diaries’ in, for example, South Africa or Bangladesh have demonstrated the varied and complex ways of dealing with these problems. The households save and borrow money from neighbours, colleagues and friends, from saving circles (so-called Roscas, rotating credit and saving clubs), moneylenders, traders and suppliers and, yes, from microfinance institutions.
Microloans have formal advantages and disadvantages. They are not only superior to informal mechanisms because of their predictability and their reliable accessibility, but also because of the possibility to finance a greater amount of money for the ‘missing middle’ between micro enterprises and actual business formation. There are also advantages related to the loan interest. The interest rate – often up to 45 per cent a year – is significantly lower than the interest rates imposed by moneylenders, who sometimes demand 50 per cent “by the end of the month”. Moreover, the interest rates on microloans reflect the tremendous costs for decentralised sales structures in developing countries and weekly redemption payments.

In order to develop their full potential, microloans need to be pooled more effectively with instruments such as microsaving, microinsurance and microtransactions. Furthermore, it is important to network programmes which promote employment of small businessmen and businesswomen to customers and exporters and emphasise the composition of market structures. Here, local governments are also needed to help establish public credit agencies, customer education and regulations since the microloan-market requires an infrastructure just as any other market.

Although in the end it is factors such as peace, security, education, health and good governance that reduce poverty, microloans can help to promote participation of previously excluded social groups in a general positive development – or at least help to partly compensate the negative effects of missing framework conditions.

Martin Herrndorf wrote his PhD thesis on microinsurance and works for the University of St. Gallen in Switzerland and the Endeva Institute in Berlin.
Small Loans and the Great Myth...

... of participation and fighting against poverty.

A contra-position by Christa Wichterich.

Women need to participate in and benefit from the economy, the market, added value, and prosperity. This especially applies to poor women. Microloans promise this kind of participation. They were considered to be a panacea with regard to development policy in order to empower women and to fight poverty. Nobel Prize winner Mohammed Yunus’ Grameen Bank in Bangladesh has been the driving force behind the concept of coupling microloans with income-generating activities to enable women to lift themselves out of poverty. The great repayment ethics of women, with 98% paying back the borrowed money, explain the programme’s triumphant success around the world. However, the assumption that poor women would invest the microloan productively turned out to be wrong. Most of the women used the credit to settle other unpaid debts, finance emergencies, such as surgeries, or to pay for commodities or weddings. The credit prevented women from descending further into poverty. Still, most women were unable to pay the money back. Wherever women had...
used the credit for business purposes, they usually had to wait a long time for positive returns.

However, since the first instalment is due quickly and the interest is high – between 20 and 40 per cent – women need positive returns.

When commercial financial service providers discovered microfinancing as a business domain, the pressure for repayment increased. In India, newly founded microfinance institutions pushed out the socially motivated women’s groups of the earlier years. These new institutions experienced high rates of growth and were able to rake in great profits. The agents competed with each other for clients to get bonuses. When lending is commercialised in this way, the focus is on return and not on women’s empowerment, self-organisation and solidarity. High repayment rates also indicate high levels of debt. To make repayments on time, women turned to other suppliers as well as local moneylenders. Although many women gained their family’s respect as well as negotiating power within their family and with authorities, the economic benefit or the share in the increased prosperity has been limited. In autumn 2010, the bubble burst in India. Repayment rates plummeted, more than 50 women committed suicide; the industry faced liquidity and legitimisation problems.

Conclusion: Microloans have deteriorated into a means of neoliberal poverty management. They do not affect the power structures that cause poverty. Furthermore, they do not motivate the poor to unite in order to fight for their rights. On the contrary: microloans encourage them to compete with each other on the market.

Sociologist Christa Wichterich focuses on globalisation and gender, women’s movements and international women’s policy.
The preamble of section III of the Agenda 21, which was adopted in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, refers to “genuine involvement of all social groups” and a “real social partnership in support of common efforts for sustainable development.

This is interesting. Can there be an ‘unreal’ partnership or ‘non-genuine’ involvement?

If, for example, urban or environmental planning took place first, and afterwards the plans were accessible to the public – would this be considered ‘real’ or ‘unreal’ participation? If the reformation of the welfare state had been left to a commission composed of experts – would this be ‘real’ participation because the expertise of the civil society has been included, or would it be ‘unreal’, if not ‘anti’ participation, because the commission’s work is not under parliamentary control?«

Bund für Umwelt und Naturschutz Deutschland (BUND)
Bosses
Put to the Test

A very different perspective on participation. Usually employers agree on targets with their employees. However, in the Dorfinstallateur enterprise, it works the other way around. Here, the employers are put on trial by the workers. At the end of a 360 degree feedback from all co-workers, the ‘employees’ agree on targets with the owners and check later as to whether they did a good job and kept their promises.

By Christine Ax

Translated from the German by Stefanie Scheu, Darinka Potsch, Caroline Hutter, Christine Kühn
At Dorfinstallateur, a company in the Austrian Vorarlberg region, the hierarchy is literally upside down. Not only do alternative working groups or grass-roots democratic associations not follow the principle that management is at the head of the hierarchy. Dorfinstallateur is just a normal but successful company with more than 100 employees, four locations and a turnover of almost EUR 18m. For many years now, they have applied a participation model that is in every respect unique and that involves transparency both on the inside and on the outside. A recent issue of the monthly employee newsletter Dorf-News reported that the teams of Dorfinstallateur generated EUR 2.1m over the previous month, and it also stated who contributed in what way to this achievement.

The main idea is to share responsibilities. The company consists of ten professional teams, each of them working independently. Each team acts as a ‘company within the company’ with a high level of autonomy. The head office, the so-called Proficenter, makes sure that the teams can focus on the clients and on handling their orders. There Proficenter also has a corporate planning department, which is responsible for the controlling, marketing, work scheduling, merchandise and warehouse management and supports the internal communication.

But at Dorfinstallateur it is not like in normal franchise companies where the ‘tail often wags the dog’. In fact, the team leaders and employees communicate their requests and demands based on their daily experience to their management and the Proficenter. And it is then the management that must meet the standards set by the employees’ expectations.

There are as many shareholders as there are individual teams. Whoever wants to be a team leader has to apply for the position and pass a kind of internal assessment. In the end, the whole community chooses a suitable candidate who is likely to perform this task successfully. The
same approach is adopted by Gore, the globally renowned manufacturer of Gore-tex and other Teflon®-based fabrics. At Gore, the individual teams decide on the team leaders, regardless of their training and titles (see factory, edition 1-2012).

Since 1983, Dorfinstallateur has paid exceptionally high salaries for outstanding performance. This is part of the corporate philosophy which incorporates social and ecological issues as a key element. Company founder Andreas Feuerstein has been one of the first Austrian entrepreneurs to consider the use of renewable energies. Employees also share their knowledge from advanced trainings. Some of them attend conferences on economic growth criticism and share their gained knowledge afterwards, either in a workshop or an article in the newsletter.

This summer, Dorfinstallateur will for the first time submit a ‘Common Good Review.’ According to Christian Felber’s concept of an ‘economy for the common good,’ the Austrian company wants to “ensure that everyone is satisfied, resources are conserved, the environment is protected, the economy is sustainable and that not just a small number of people rule the world by means of their money.” For this reason, Dorfinstallateur joined a movement that over 100 pioneer companies are already part of – sustainable, but different and involving participation.
Social development is characterised by two different paces: social change within a model of social and economic development, and periods of upheaval, in which the economy and lifestyle change fundamentally. German society is currently experiencing such a period of upheaval. Unstable labour participation, the rapid transformation of traditional gender roles, increasing social selectivity of the precautionary German social (security) state and growing educational inequalities question the mode of participation that is characteristic for the ‘German model’ of the post-war decades.

Social inequality and diversity, stability and turbulence throughout the life course are increasing equally.«

Excerpt from: “Teilhabe im Umbruch” (participation in turmoil), report on Social and Economic Development in Germany, second report, issued by the German Research Association “Sozioökonomische Berichterstattung,” published by VS 2012
The United Nations designate 2012 the International Year of Cooperatives. Shareholding communities favour a sustainable economy. In Germany, there has been a start-up boom in the fields of energy and regionalisation.

By Christine Ax

Translated from the German by Stefanie Scheu, Christine Kühn, Caroline Hutter and Darinka Potsch
The United Nations proclaimed 2012 as the International Year of Cooperatives. By doing so, they intended to call attention to the worldwide significance of cooperative enterprises and their contribution to the economic and social development in the world. “Cooperatives are a reminder to the international community that it is possible to pursue both economic viability and social responsibility,” stated United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

Both can only be pursued due to the structure of cooperatives: In cooperative enterprises, all members are also shareholders and their own capital increases according to the size of their shares. They make the most important decisions themselves at the annual meeting of members or cooperatives. Cooperatives are therefore ideal institutions for sustainable economics that aim to achieve long-term and resource-conserving goals instead of high profits.

In Germany, a country with a long tradition of cooperatives, this movement is currently gaining substantial support. Ecological and social issues often play an important role when new businesses are established. The German web page www.neue-genossenschaften.de provides a good overview of the development of cooperatives. In April of this year alone, 16 new companies were registered in the list of cooperatives. Ten of them collectively generate renewable energies or use them together. Four companies promote regionalisation.
Taking Part in Organising and Decision-making

In the last three decades, people belonging to numerous citizens’ groups, municipal councils or local commercial enterprises have come to the decision to participate in renewable energy projects in their regions. Energy cooperatives as a form of organisation are very popular, since they offer manifold opportunities for organising and taking action.

The most recent example is the Raiffeisenbank of Krumbach, which is in the process of founding a new cooperative. In September 2011, a referendum revealed that the majority voted for the construction of a solar power farm in the south of the district of Niederraunau. Some of the voters expressed the wish to purchase shares in the solar power system. Now, the Raiffeisenbank is going to offer the citizens to purchase shares in the cooperative PV-Park Niederraunau e.G. Thus, the cooperative’s members are able to take part in decision-making and organising.

Developed for Shared Responsibility

All cooperatives have one thing in common: their members are both owners and clients. The so-called identity principle clearly differentiates between a cooperative and all other forms of cooperative collaboration. The cooperative group has 20 million members, which is almost a quarter of the German population. More than 800,000 people work in this cooperative organisation. The approximate 7,500 German cooperatives – comprised of 1,138 cooperatives belonging to Volksbank and Raiffeisenbank, about 2,000 housing cooperatives, 2,604 agricultural cooperatives, 1,622 cooperatives for commercial commodities and services and 219 retail cooperatives – are a driving force for the economy and society. Cooperatives campaign for example for the topic “Living in Old Age,” promote the decentralised expansion of renewable energies, contribute to extensive health care particularly in rural areas, undertake communal tasks or organise local supply of commodities.
Although the word ‘factory’ is mostly associated with the manufacturing industry and industrial production, it can also refer to ‘factor Y’, the factor by which energy consumption needs to change so that future generations will find themselves living in similar conditions. Such an understanding of sustainability implies that all aspects of economic activity need to be addressed with sustainability in mind, including consumer practices as well as the manufacturing and services sectors.

factor Y highlights the role of businesses in sustainable development and aims to draw the drivers of the economy into the public debate. Such development entails resource efficient economic practices for both producers and consumers as well as educating and informing them about sustainability issues.

factor Y is a free magazine that is published four times a year in PDF format as well as on the magazine's website www.factory-magazin.de.

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FernwärmeKomfort

Ob Eigenheim oder Mehrfamilienhaus: Wärme ist nicht gleich Wärme. Wirtschaftlich sollte sie sein, einfach zu handhaben und so energieeffizient wie möglich. All das bietet Ihnen die Fernwärme der Stadtwerke Bochum. Sie ist kostengünstig, komfortabel und klimaschonend. Und wir erzeugen sie ganz in Ihrer Nähe.

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