

Deconcentration International Society for Political Economy

Larger concentrations of economic power increasingly endanger democracy, the constitutional state, as well as the ecological and social foundations of society. How we live – what we eat, how we work, what we learn and recognize, how we communicate, and which air we breathe – is determined more and more by large corporations.

It is said that this new unfreedom is unavoidable. "There is no alternative!" The growing power of worldwide conglomerates is justified today in the same way that; in former times, feudalism and state socialism were. Concentrations of economic power are seen as inevitable.

We are convinced: There are alternatives! The existing structures of economic power can be overcome. Social Science has to make its contribution to this cause, just as the thinkers in the Enlightenment worked against the economic and political-economic interests of their own age.

We founded Deconcentration International to develop a renaissance of "political economy." Deconcentration International works at creating concepts, which prevent and dismantle economic power. We address both the scientific and the general public.

The concentration of economic power is made possible by numerous power-supporting regulations in constitutions and in individual laws. What is created by politics can also be abolished by politics.

Deconcentration International advocates a different economic constitution

1. Deconcentration International is an interdisciplinary and international forum for work in the social sciences and for debates in economic and constitutional politics, critical of economic interests.
2. We join the intellectual and political tradition based on human rights. Despite the success in establishing liberal institutions – democracy and constitutional states – the concept of a free society, which dates from the great bourgeois revolutions, has only partially established itself. A corporate-free market economy – the economic system for which the radical-liberals fought – has never been realized, despite brief successes. The original concept of an economic order compatible with human rights is almost completely forgotten. Deconcentration International wants to revive, in the scientific as well as the political public, the tradition of minimizing power. The existing economic system, the oligopolistic market economy, cannot be reconciled with a liberal constitution. We need another economic order.

Deconcentration International works for concepts to minimize economic power

3. Although they come from different work contexts and countries, the members of Deconcentration International share a fundamental perspective: "It is not the misuse of economic power that is to be fought against, but the economic power itself."
(Walter Eucken)
4. How can power minimization be accomplished? In the different areas of law – corporate law, liability law, trademark law, patent law, tax law, and constitutional law – the prevailing legal circumstances have to be changed so that the impetus towards concentration of power can be transformed into a tendency towards deconcentration. For example, the copyright and patent law established by the government makes it possible for Microsoft to monopolize markets. What would happen if the states no longer protected the software monopolies? How would it be, if the principle of "open sources" – with the help of democratic laws and constitutional rules – were extended to large areas of the economy? What are the chances, and what are the problems? These are the questions asked by Deconcentration International.
5. Deconcentration International is an open forum: for city planners with ideas to minimize the influence of big investors, for biologists and farmers engaged against biopatents, and for constitutional lawyers who wish to develop constitutional proposals for a corporate-free European democracy. Today the concentration of economic power has become a global problem. At the same time, new chances for dissolving oligopolies are growing. If the legal framework is rearranged towards the minimization of power, the potential of technologies which have been neglected until now (for example, solar technology) can be expanded. What could be achieved if our ecological resources (for example, water and seed) and our infrastructure (for example, Internet and electricity) were withdrawn from the corporations and changed into "common ground" of the globalized economy.

Deconcentration International advocates the responsibility of free science

6. The constitutions of democratic states are based on the knowledge that human rights and their institutions, such as a free press or an independent judiciary, are incompatible with dictatorship. Deconcentration International works to develop this constitutional thinking. Not only the state can censor, but so too can private enterprise. For example, the Murdoch Corporation turned off the satellite transmission for BBC programs to China, not tolerating any critical reports on the regime in Peking, due to their interest in the enormous Chinese market. What applies to media groups is also true for the world-wide oligopoly of agrarian chemicals, for the financial corporations that are active on a global scale, or for the petroleum, and automobile enterprises which control their markets. The concentration of capital on a scale that was once inconceivable, brings about new types of human rights violations. Lawyers, economists, and other social scientists have to consider the new threats to freedom and the reasons for poverty, analyse them, and develop solutions. New questions have to be asked. Corporations, just like human beings, have their own basic rights and are thus inviolable in their existence. Can this be justified? Is the limited liability of joint-stock companies compatible with a free market economy? Are large corporations unconstitutional, or does the politics of deconcentration conflict with the basic law of property?

7. Since the beginning of the seventies, researchers have repeatedly warned of the "limits of growth." In 1992 most of the Nobel Prize winners demanded that the destruction of climate, water, ground, forest, and animal and plant species, be stopped. To this day however, the influence of the corporations that profit from the destruction of ecological resources has prevented the democracies from taking necessary measures. For this reason researchers today have to go one step farther. Democracy and the ecological foundations of life can only exist when limits are set to the growth of corporations. Economists, lawyers, political scientists, sociologists, engineers and natural scientists, all have to take positions in public on the reasons for the paralysis of democracy, with its far-reaching ecological and social consequences. In addition, journalists, pedagogues, editors, artists, open-source programmers, independent managers, farmers, and members of ecological groups and fair-trade organizations are invited to work with Deconcentration International. A political economy of deconcentration can only come about when theoretical thinking is joined with practical experience in economics, etc.

Deconcentration International advocates the independence of universities from the large corporations, and is against the destruction of a democratic public by the concentration of media power.

8. The freedom of thought is in danger: Obtaining research funds from large corporations is increasingly considered proof of productivity. At the same time, more and more often representatives of big industry are members of university boards. Thus questions that threaten the interests of corporations cannot even be formulated. Science that works in the interest of large corporations gives up its own scientific character. Science is only rational if it is critical of power. Corporate power destroys the power of free thinking, and the power of rational thought.

9. The so-called "Neoliberalism" has anti-liberal structures. The Neoliberals support the protection of large corporations by the state. This is the opposite of Liberalism, which originally opposed the concentration of economic power, state or private. What is presented today as a "modernization" of scientific activity is actually a relapse into mercantilistic thinking.

Deconcentration International and the Walter-Eucken-Archive

10. Deconcentration International wants to contribute to the rediscovery and the development of the political economy of human rights. This is why Deconcentration International works with the Walter-Eucken-Archive. The Walter-Eucken-Archive collects forgotten texts of radical liberalism in Europe, USA, and Latin America. The Walter-Eucken-Archive also publishes texts of Eucken, Böhm, and Rüstow (the founders of the German school of power-minimizing political economy, known as the "Freiburg School"), as well as texts – from Overton and Paine to Heinzen and Brandeis – from the more than 300 year old tradition of radical liberalism. On this intellectual base, Deconcentration International develops current perspectives for an economic constitution which is based on human rights.

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