

1. The Building of an Inclusive Public Sphere beyond Borders

VALÉRIE M. SAINTOT

Title: *Endless flow of mindless visual communication and how it can affect (D)emocracy*

Abstract: The intensification of the use of visuals in social media influences us in unprecedented magnitude. It directly shapes how we take and process (or not) visual input. This intensification of the use of visual communication has been a deep game changer for triggering untamed emotions. Not enough attention is being paid to this phenomenon. The study of ‘image politics’ can bring a lot of insights on how emotions pose challenges to democracy. Progressively, we glide in new forms of influencing masses, creating new subconscious collective biases. In turn this has many effects we are not aware of. Through the neologism of ‘Emocracy’, we propose the idea that we need to revisit how society gives importance and weight to emotions that arise from visual stimulation. We define ‘emocracy’ as the regime where unquestioned emotions dominate as sources of decision-making. Informed discourse (with oneself and others) has been replaced with oversimplified decorating visuals. In current times, more often than not, *pathos* (emotions, values, beliefs) dominates *ethos* (character, behaviours) and *logos* (reason, credibility, legitimacy). These new dynamics possibly blur the ability of citizens to search for information and enter in dialogue to inform themselves ahead of exercising their rights. Visual communication plays a particular role in stimulating the above undercurrents. Part 1 of our exposé will remind the audience of the meaning of the key concepts - pathos, ethos, and logos. It will also briefly remind us about the impact of nudging to move the opinions of crowds, as established in behavioural economics. Part 2 will use two examples to illustrate the impact of the lack of balance between pathos, ethos, and logos, see figure 1 below. We are all victims of it without realising. Part 3 will propose concrete and applicable actions for public institutions, universities, NGOs, think tanks or business schools to stop contributing to the ‘disinformation’ confusion. Public actors and academic entities have a responsibility to become vectors promoting science communication. Citizens need to be exposed to sound knowledge and not mindless visual communication decorating discourses. Visual communication sharing reliable knowledge should be a priority to empower citizens and protect democracy.

Figure 1 – two examples – Infamous Brexit bus and misleading green finance visuals

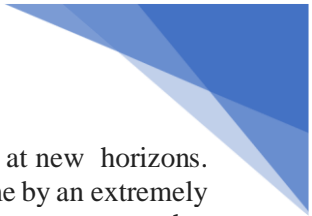


Valérie M. Saintot, LL.M., PhD - 2023 1

MAR INTROINI

Title: *How do we legitimate the globalisation system?*

Abstract: Even if we repeatedly establish that we are in a global world, is only on technological-economic terms, not politically or/and leadership. The latest pretend to be global but in fact they are only shadows from an ambitious and enlightening project to become “only-one” world. Leaders so-called “global” perform from an extremely centralised agenda, although from strict and no written rules. Is indeed a global agenda that leads, however out from a real global system, unfortunately fully controlled by the Media and their perverse goals. As a result parts of the planet are submitted -political-economic- to the rest prevent them to be including in a real global political system that makes of national sovereignties a goal on conciliation, and global institutions a catalyser of the needed changes. Is it only then that we may achieve a global system democratically shaped.



The collapse from global institutions in terms of building stability exposes the need to look at new horizons. The legitimation from a new system comes from strong rules framework, and at the same time by an extremely open, and inclusive decision-making processes. Tolerance for ideological differences is that great asset that eventually helps on the road to overcome financial contradictory interests.

Technology has brought a positive impact in terms of communications but also is building a citizens' system of reduced engagement based on marketing not on true critical thinking. Examples of this we see it in Ukraine-Russia conflict that are leading by Massive Media cancelling any attempt to use critical thinking and boost diverse opinions, such as analysing the historical-regional conflict within Russian citizens living in Ukraine, far right movements in Ukraine, or/and latest referendum. Instead Media and leaders presented as a only-one direction that in the end is a zero-sum game of escalating violence.

Legitimation of the current global system would come from a responsible engagement from the citizens and committed regional and global institutions that make of neutrality transparency and conflict resolution a tool to unite, not to centralise a powerful political agenda.

TIZIANA STELLA

Title: *A Global Public Sphere: Good Intentions and Factions vs the Interdependence of Democracy and Truth.*


Abstract: My contribution will explore what are the epistemological and practical roadblocks in building a political public sphere beyond borders. Accepting that the existence of a political public sphere is necessary for democracy, and that there exists a direct correlation between truth and democracy, it is important to address why, and assess the way truth is altered when "networks and hubs," and public participation via stakeholders, are today the two prevailing and quasi-uncontested approaches, to the creation of a global public sphere. However, from Socrates, to Madison, through the Lippmann-Dewey debate and that between the League and the Press delineating a clear epistemological gap between the journalists accredited at the League of Nations and the League's bureaucracies, moving on to recent writings of Daniel Elazar, it appears that little attention has been given to the paradoxical claim that a democratic global public sphere can ultimately emerge without first eliminating the problem of "factions."

The presentation's aim is to generate discussion and raise awareness on the many layers of self-censorship and exclusion that affect, at times inadvertently under the guise of "good intentions," our own attempts to create a global democratic public sphere. It suggests that the scale of change ahead requires not only confronting censorship of the present structures and the claim of impossibility of certain required forms of change, but also an honest review of the many ways in which we may unknowingly partake at some degree in self-censorship while exploring the many methods that this gathering will discuss as paths toward supranational democracy.

JIAN BIERHOFF

Title: *A new role for Europe's regions*

Abstract: The institutional framework of the European Union will have to change as a response to a variety of crises it is confronted with. Growing complexity due to the accession of new member states, geopolitical pressures, uncontrolled migration streams, environmental threats, a series of conflict-laden challenges now forces Europe to unite and coordinate its actions. Although this strengthening of the central institutions potentially is a positive development and precondition for decisive governance, it also can become problematic. Already in its present status, the EU is struggling with a 'democratic deficit': the average European has little to say, let alone has direct control over the policies that are set in motion at the EU-level. There is a clear undercurrent of dissatisfaction with this condition, but that sentiment remains unspecified. And besides occurring reactionary, nationalistic exit-discourses, there is no beacon, no direction for a possible way out and forward. In this presentation, it is proposed to map the civic desire for a more democratic, connected Europe and to write out a feasible alternative, based on cross-border connections and cooperation in clusters of European regions. In a substantial amount of European regions one finds all sorts of cross-border initiatives, but these are mostly ad-hoc and once-off. They demonstrate however a broadly shared ambition to appropriate and take control over one's own destiny. The challenge now is to put these efforts in an



overarching perspective and relate them to the ongoing debate about European futures. This debate is already in place for years but predominantly focused on the claim for more meaningful citizen involvement. See for instance the dynamics around the Conference on the Future of Europe and civic initiatives like (online) platforms of European Alternatives, Citizens Take Over Europe, the Open Society Foundation and a range of European conferences. It is argued here that this debate should be taken one step further, from the scope of the individual citizen to the collective, regional level. Why this broadening of scope? Most principally, because citizen deliberation and civic involvement need a meaningful context to become effective. It will be easier to motivate citizens to participate once they express themselves about themes, measures and policies they recognise and relate to their direct living environment. The regions in which they thrive and work are such a known and trusted context. That will give a boost to the overall quality of civic deliberation. However, transposed to the European arena, regions so far do not have a prominent position. Too manyfold, too fragmented, too diverse in size and impact. Also their institutional representative, the Committee of the Regions, only acts in an advisory role. The foresight scenario presented here foresees a process of interregional clustering, capitalising on existing and prospective cross-border relations, in order to build a meaningful and politically relevant interregional infrastructure. These clustered regions, we will introduce the term ‘Serpentines’ for the concept, can become a solid power base and stepping stone to formal representation, for instance via European elections.

FEDERICO BONOMI


Title: *Fiscal regulation and fiscal capacity in Europe after the COVID-19 crisis.*

Abstract: This paper will look at the changing paradigms in the EU fiscal governance after the COVID-19 pandemic. The work lies on the classic distinction between the model of fiscal regulation, developed in the EU after the financial crisis, and the one of fiscal capacity in the United States, created from the very beginning. In order to explain such a puzzling difference, authors point at different aspects. For Hallerberg (2013) one of the key elements is the different relationship between the national and supranational level in the two systems. Schelkle, similarly, claims that the greater level of regulation in the EU case is because the EU is not a fully-fledged state that is competitive to the member state level, while in the US, federal government that could interfere directly in the budget policies of state governments would disrupt the balance of power between the two levels (2012). Wozniakowski, on the contrary, demonstrates that the US fiscal capacity was built in response to an internal threat, whose solution rested in the development of taxing powers at the federal level. The fiscalisation of the US was preceded by a wide debate and the states that would have lost from such a development were offered appropriate benefits which exceeded the costs (2022).

However, as response the COVID-19 crisis, the EU launched the Next Generation EU (NGEU), an almost revolutionary instrument which was even called by some observers a ‘Hamiltonian moment’. Despite the enthusiasm, the process was, in any case, different that the one of the US: the NGEU is temporary, with a clearly stated sunset clause, and resistances were won not by shaping a permanent central fiscal capacity that could be convenient to all member states, but by offering to the most reluctant – Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Austria, and Sweden – side-off payments in the form of lump-sum corrections reducing their annual Gross-National-Income-based contribution to the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) (European Council, 2020).

This paper will look at how different theories of European integration look at the evolution of the EU fiscal governance after the COVID-19 crisis, in particular the ones considering the EU a federation in the making and these reforms as progressive steps toward the completion of a process of fiscalisation, taking into account both the creation of the NGEU and the ongoing process of reform of the EU fiscal rules. The paper will also consider the theories which look at the factors that prevent a complete integration (e.g., postfunctionalism, veto player theories, and the “failing forward” approach). Such a theoretical insight is fundamental to answer the questions about how the EU is evolving, what we can expect for the future and what is desirable in terms of more integration of economic and fiscal policies.

LAZAR ZIVANIC




Title: Education as a Mechanism Toward Integration.

Abstract: The purpose of this presentation is to demonstrate the power and role of education in the process of constructing a political public sphere beyond borders. I will put focus on the European Union and its public policy in the domain of education, more precisely in the sphere of higher education. The European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students (Erasmus) has been considered one of the most successful public policies of the EU (Altbach, 2001, p 10), frequently underestimated by political actors on all levels. The Erasmus programme presents an exceptional case, from 1987 when it was adopted till the present. The program is gaining traction and is beginning to be used as a powerful political weapon in dealing with MS who act contrary to expected values. When the Erasmus programme was adopted the European Commission did not have a legal base in the Treaty of Rome explicitly as it has now. Everything has changed with the Gravier case in 1982-83 and the ECJ decision to recognise studying at the Académie Royale des Beaux-Arts in Liege, Belgium and strip cartoon art as vocational training (No. Case 293/83). At this juncture, the Commission started a fight to launch public policy in the sphere of education based on one decision. The program was immediately supported by various supranational actors such as the European Parliament, the Standing Conference of Rectors, Presidents, and Vice Chancellors of European Universities, and it was included in the report of the ad hoc Committee People's Europe with the goal of proposing a more determined involvement of European citizens in the construction of the Community (CRE-140, PSP-89). One may ask what the secret of the Erasmus' success is or how one project or education generally can contribute to the process of building a political community. The answer to the first question is that the EC took a bottom-up approach to develop the project from the ground, giving universities autonomy, and liberty to cooperate on their initiative. A method which should be practised more. Erasmus is already contributing to the process by connecting young people all over Europe, giving them the possibility to share, feel, meet, and exchange experiences and views with their generation and in the end giving them a stronger 'We-feeling' toward Europe, making their identity further multidimensional. This led to a new European generation (Norgaard, 2014, Oborune, 2013, Knott, 2015). Erasmus had a huge impact on EU public policies and cooperation, from the Bologna Declaration to the Lisbon Strategy and the European Education Area. All of these projects if not intentionally, then unintentionally, provide mechanisms for stronger and wider integration of generations to come; as well as an intention toward European identity. Be that as it may, it gives a solid base for forming a political community among young people which have common values, ideas and problems in these turbulent times. All this highlights the potential of education as a whole in the process of establishing a political community beyond borders.

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