

4. *Democratic Participation and Citizens Assemblies*

MICHELE FIORILLO

Title: *Transnational Deliberative Democracy*

Abstract: If the “raison d’Etat” is prevailing since longtime in the UN system what it appears to be necessary more than ever is to develop a “counterpower” of the citizens, who in a big part are already feeling the common destiny of humanity in front of the hard challenges of the millennium, beyond national egoism. That was showed laCerly by the squares full of young people in every corner of the world, demonstrating for the respect of Paris agreements, the climate emergency and a just ecological transition.

At that end, we need to exercise political imagination. The question of the involvement of citizens in the world stage turns in this other: how to experiment instruments of participative and deliberative democracy at a global level, to develop the building up of a grassroots cosmopolitanism?

Every rational and looking forward political actor could agree on the necessity to renovate the democratic legitimacy of UN System through a reform of the General Assembly and especially of the Security Council: for instance, focusing on the creation of a United Nation Parliamentary Assembly (UNPA), which could control through MPs delegates from the national Parliaments the work of the other two bodies - on the path towards the institution of a future World Parliament.

But even that big step could reveal to be not even enough, at a time where representative democracy is in a big lack of legitimation even at the national scale.

To overcome the crisis of representative democracy at the national level it appears to be necessary to focus more than in the past on the global level, looking to a new pillar of transnational deliberative-participative democracy which would have to integrate the representative one at the national level, and the intergovernmentalism at the international one. This last level is in fact the decisive one on many questions touching the life of citizens in all the part of the world, from climate change to financial unbalances: and a focus on new democratic instruments could help also to overcome progressively the gap between citizens and international institutions.

At that end, we propose with this contribution to research the possible experimentation of a set of deliberative mechanisms: a UN “World Citizens’ Initiative” instrument to propose issues to be deliberated by GA and SC (on the model of the ECI in EU system); global “citizens’ assemblies/ councils” organized as public consultations of the civil society – also with the participation of citizens randomly chosen by lot- one week before each GA and SC meeting, in the UN “capitals” (New York, Genève), and potentially in all the capital of UN Member States; a connected global digital platform for citizens’ deliberation.

Also in the light of the Covid19 crisis, which seems that constrained the people to collaborate and deliberate online for a while in many fields, from school and university to politics and institutions, a central role will play the development of innovative digital civic technologies and platforms –that will make use also of AI and blockchain- to be put at the service of a brand new global transnational deliberative democracy, and to be controlled democratically.

A renewed Global Strategy of the European Union could have a role in shaping this ambitious agenda.

BLEDAR KURTI

Title: *Proposals On Serious Issues Regarding The Civic Participation And Citizens’ Activism In Albania.*

Abstract: The legal framework on the civic participation, citizens’ activism, and citizens’ involvement in decision-making processes in Albania are stipulated in the Constitution and consist of a series of laws and normative acts, but most of them are vague and ineffective, requiring immediate legislative initiatives to make the appropriate amendments or the adoption of new laws.



The most serious issues on guaranteeing the right of citizens to express their will concern the holding of referendums on a central and local level; the deprivation of the voting right for certain marginalized categories; the right to organize spontaneous gatherings and counter-protests; and the lack of various mechanisms for the direct forms of exercising democracy and people's sovereignty.

Albania is a NATO member country and aspirant for the EU candidacy, yet, since in 1994 and 1997, there have been no referendums and the country experiences an alarming lack of participation in decision-making at a national and local level due to the legal framework and the political agenda.

This presentation will convey a thorough analysis by addressing these vital issues on civic participation and provide proposals that are feasible and that will strengthen democracy in the country, encourage citizen's participation and influence, and make the central and local government officials more accountable for their decisions.

Key words: Referendum, Civic Participation, Voting, Citizen's Decision-making, Democracy, Albania, Constitution, Government.

MARCO PASQUA

Title: The European Commission Proposal for a Directive on SLAPPs: A Tool for Civic Participation and Citizens' Activism

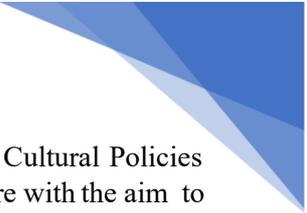
Abstract : Democracy is the foundation the European Union is based on and can only thrive in a climate where freedom of expression is upheld, in line with the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. For a healthy and prosperous democracy, people need to be able to actively participate in public debate without undue interference. In order to ensure meaningful participation, people need to have access to reliable information, enabling them to form their own ideas in a public space where different opinions can be freely expressed. Here, then, that activists play a fundamental role in facilitating public debate and in communicating information, opinions and ideas.

An obstacle to freedom of expression, and ultimately to democracy, is today represented by SLAPPs (Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation), i.e. judicial proceedings, initiated by powerful persons against activists regarding information or awareness-raising activities carried out by the latter in relation to matters of public interest. These are typically actions brought in civil proceedings where, due to the alleged defamatory nature of the journalistic writings or the awareness campaign at stake, the claimant claims for damages. These claims involve an imbalance of power between the parties: the claimant, indeed, invests considerable resources in these proceedings which assume an "abusive" element to the extent that the claim is unfounded and the claimant, by invoking the liability of the defendant, makes use of a legitimate instrument, the legal one, with the aim, in reality, to make the defendant withdraw from activities of public interest and to dissuade from carrying out similar ones, undermining at the end the public debate.

The seriousness of the detriment to democracy associated with these practices and the need to safeguard the freedom of expression require in the European Union a reconsideration of the substantial and procedural protection to be accorded to the persons victims of such proceedings. In this sense, the European

NATASA KRALJEVIC

Title: The Influence of the International knowledge exchange in the field of cultural policy making and democratic governance



Abstract: This paper will discuss the role of the transnational association the Compendium Cultural Policies and Trends initiated in 1998 by the Council of Europe's (CoE) Steering Committee for Culture with the aim to include all states cooperating within the context of the European Cultural Convention. At present, a community of practice of over 50 independent cultural policy researchers from 44 different countries collaborates on the Compendium, including Montenegro as of 2022.

The aim of this paper is to emphasize the importance of the existing models exercised in the field of cultural policies through the Compendium Cultural Policies and Trends platform and to examine to what extent this form of international exchange serves as an asset to small countries.

In order to explain the influence that this form of international knowledge exchange can create in the field of cultural policy, the paper will base its research on Montenegrin's recent membership in the association and the difference that the abovementioned membership makes in the Montenegrin cultural sector. Therefore, this paper will look at the international knowledge exchange exercised by the holder of the membership such as the University "Mediterranean" Podgorica, and the scope of the obligation and support this institution is receiving through the examined transnational platform, but also into the communication between the newly established membership holder's recognition by the policymakers and government officials in the field of cultural policy and cultural international exchange.

Furthermore, this paper will examine the adjustments that occurred in regional cooperation when it comes to cultural exchange and different forms of cultural diplomacy.

Keywords: Cultural policy, cultural exchange, small states, education, international knowledge

FEDERICA ANTONACCI

Title: *The impact of social media on democracy*

Abstract: The arrival of social media in our society has profoundly shaped not only our way of living and communicating but also democratic processes.

In the past political participation concerned only citizens and the institutions to which they addressed. Nowadays social media are no longer just a communication bridge between the two sides but have become protagonists of the process. Democracy lives in the digital sphere.

A perfect example of this profound change is what is happening in the war in Ukraine. Not only are political leaders using social media to its full potential but also activists have used the same tools to denounce, express themselves and in some cases influence the course of history.

Just think of the #freeleopards and #NAFOfellas movement and how they influenced Germany's decision to send weapons to Ukraine or how they fight propaganda. Or the million-dollar fundraisers of Saint Javelin and United24 for the Ukrainian army, all rigorously promoted on social media. The result has been goals that no institution has ever managed to achieve before.

Citizens of all ages and from all over the world have come together building communities, organizations and movements by speaking on Skype, Zoom and Google Room. Diplomats, journalists and spokesmen were able to confront their audience directly in DM. This phenomenon is still in its infancy and we have not yet fully understood its scope as well as its dangers and contradictions. Starting a conversation about this issue is essential to creating a free, safe and democratic future.