Call for contributions

WORKSHOP

Transformative Transnational Governance in the EU and beyond: Democratic resilience and democratic innovations

2-3 May 2023 | European University Institute, Florence

Please submit your memo of a maximum of 1000 words to Andrea.Gaiba@ext.eui.eu by the updated deadline of 30 April 2023.

The world is stranded in a no-man's land between the post-cold war order imagined by the west and an as yet undefined post-western world in which big and middle-ranking powers from the global south claim a much bigger say. Russia's war against Ukraine has given rise to a surprising resilience and cohesion among advanced democracies in the face of Putin's threat. But the conflict has also highlighted the equivocal position of the global south where many states have refused to "side" with the west. Against this backdrop, the quasi-permanent crisis experienced by the EU during the last decade and a half has raised questions about its further sustenance which to a great extent relates to the nature and status of democratic resilience. Resilience is generally understood as the ability to maintain, or bounce back to, a stable equilibrium or status quo. But in a situation of external and internal challenges brought about by deep structural change, the question of what might constitute a stable equilibrium is part of the challenge.

One hypothesis is that such an equilibrium is key to the ongoing credibility of the EU in the world as is its contribution to what we refer to here as transformative transnational governance. But it is also possible to argue that the key to sustainable transformation lies with more radical democratic innovations and renovations which put in question entrenched structures of power. And on this count, the EU has much to learn from many places in the rest of the world.

What then is the relationship between a critical gaze on democratic developments in the EU's internal and external developments and the ways in which we may conceive of transformative transnational governance? Can the current crisis of democracy be a catalyst for progress? How do we achieve truly sustainable, long-term policy interventions towards new legal imaginaries, where democracy is the means to guarantee and empower ecosystems of social distributive justice? What role for institutions (the institutional infrastructure of democracy) versus societal actors? Is a transnational public sphere necessary for addressing these existential concerns and does organised civil society provide the most suitable platform for empowering these voices transnationally? And again, how could these ecosystems reconfigure the terms and conditions of the citizens' political life to generate appropriate political responses? How does transnational governance benefit from the collective intelligence beyond the diplomatic and technocratic worlds? What transformative power do democratic innovations hold?

As a collaboration between the Transnational Democracy in the 21st Century (TD21) Interdisciplinary Research Cluster and the EU3D network (itself part of EUI's DiCE network), this workshop will explore

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alternative conceptual frames for what we may call "Transformative Transnational Governance" in the 21st century. EU3D, which is concluding at the end of July, has analysed the conditions under which "differentiation" in the EU and beyond is politically acceptable, institutionally sustainable, and democratically legitimate, given the spectacle of dominance. The TD21 Cluster aims to examine the concurrent transformations of institutions, networks, societies and political actors at supranational, macroregional, national and subnational levels around the world. At all stages, the Cluster's activities aim to keep a clear view of the need and the capacity, for existing institutions to deliver the transformations expected of them as well as the potential for creating new democratic practices. As a site for interdisciplinary exchange and collaboration, the TD21 Cluster is committed to exploring its normative motivations and social obligations – given our remit to evaluate transnational democracy in all of its forms and to inform projects of democratising transnational governance, both at the European and global level.

The first day of workshop, on 2 May, will cover the following themes:

I. **From the EU to the global and back: Differentiated integration and transnational democracy**
How can we best address the democratic challenges associated with differentiation at the European and global level? We will ask normatively whether and how it is possible to ensure that the complex mosaic of cooperation beyond the state is conducive to democracy rather than dominance with emphasis on an EU inside-out perspective. We are interested in basic principles as well as the range of mechanisms available to the EU and what nature and type of relations among actors would ensure democracy in a highly differentiated context.

II. **Segmented or Plural: The EU's political order, prospects for 'bouncing back'**
The EU's poly-crises are associated with emergency politics and the question of how to return a political experiment to something resemblant of 'normality'. The problem is compounded by the EU's constitution as a segmented political order which can both exert dominance and be dominated due to its internal and external forms of vulnerability. This session examines the prospects for democratic 'bouncing back' and is particularly concerned with teasing out the possible mechanisms for turning a segmented political order democratic.

In the second day of this workshop, on 3 May, we will discuss democratic resilience, asking the questions:

III. What role for institutions versus civil society? How far do we get by borrowing democratic concepts from the world of states and adapting them to the transnational context?

IV. Is democratic experimentation or innovation the key to transformative transnational governance?

*This event is organised in the framework of **EU3D**, a 4-year research project looking at the future of European integration, in particular differentiated integration. EU3D will specify the conditions under which differentiation is politically acceptable, institutionally sustainable, and democratically legitimate; and provide important knowledge on the conditions under which EU reforms may fail or succeed.*

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