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CRITICAL INQUIRIES IN LAW, PHILOSOPHY AND GLOBALIZATION

Discussing Democracy, from Local to Global

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EDITORIAL NOTE

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On May 2-3, 2024, the sixth edition of the *Supranational Democracy Dialogue* organized by the University of Salento was held in Brindisi, Italy. It is an event aimed at gathering scholars from different backgrounds, international officials, representatives of civil society as well as innovative thinkers to discuss the most significant challenges that humanity is currently facing and, possibly, respond to these challenges offering democratic solutions.

It may seem like a topic too broad or too vague, and yet it is at the heart of the political and social evolution that all of us, willingly or not, are called to face. Humanity faces problems of planetary dimensions – the climate crisis, the loss of biodiversity, the migration waves, the water scarcity, the oceans' plastic pollution, not to mention the current wars and their excruciating toll in human lives – and yet the instinctive reaction is to seek refuge in the intimate and parochial dimension offered by one's own territory, in the reassuring protection offered by identity, in the shelter provided by one's roots. This is the story that recent elections, wherever, in the western world and beyond, seem to tell us.

Unfortunately, problems aren't solved by locking them out nor by building a nice sturdy wall around our space to keep them out. It is much more complex than that and at the same time more intellectually stimulating, it is the challenge of democracy which implies openness, confrontation, dialogue.

At different times in the history of mankind we had different levels of government that appeared to be the most relevant: cities, kingdoms and empires, nation states – and it has not been a linear nor a democratic process at all. Unfortunately, or fortunately, we now have – at the same time – at least four relevant levels of government: the local level, the national level, the regional level (especially in Europe, but not only, since there are other integrated regions of the world and cross-regional groupings like G7 or BRICS), and the global level.

For some of these governance levels we have democratic models to discuss upon: municipalities, states, the EU. For others, and especially for the global one, the solutions are largely to be invented. We have already learned that there are scalable democratic tools such as citizen consultations, randomly selected deliberative assemblies, multi-stakeholder dialogues, courts and tribunals. Others are perhaps less so, such as parliaments. We have learned that technology can do a lot to reproduce on a larger scale models that previously worked only at the townhall level.

And this is the first part of the governance dilemma.

The second part is how all these levels of government can and will interact with each other. How can citizens be at the same time holders of rights in their municipality and citizens of the world? How can local administrations interact with continental and global ones? How can states act as a transmission belt between these levels of government and how can they all be legitimate, accountable, inclusive?

If we have any hope to take up the global governance challenge successfully, we need at the meantime to address the people's need for belonging, for the protection of their cultural rights, for roots: the local dimension. The "global" without the "local" has no appeal for individuals.

The following two contributions are very different. The contribution by Matteo Fulgenzi is an analysis of the current trend in the glocal diplomacy from a legal perspective; the contribution by Oleksiy Kandyuk is about the evolution of the European Union because of the war in Ukraine, grounded in international relations studies. They are a perfect example of how big the interdisciplinary area of multilevel governance is and how heterogenous may be the relevant interactions among different institutional actors at different levels. And how interestingly diverse may be the contributions by scholars.

There is no claim to conclusiveness in a dialogue: the more numerous the voices, the more interesting the conversations, the possibilities for mutual learning and cross fertilizations in research and in practice, the better.

In terms of the evolution of societies, six years is a short time. This conversation has just begun.