DO WE TRUST DEMOCRACY?

A FUTURE AGENDA FOR EUROPE

Open Government Partnership

We sincerely thank the contributors for authoring thought-provoking essays articulating their vision on the health of democracy and trust in Europe.

Our special thanks goes out to Lotte Geunis for her help in editing our introductory essay.

This publication was conceptualised by Paul Maassen, Sandra Pernar, Helen Turek, and Peter Varga.

The publication was edited by Namita Kambli and Elisabeth Wiltshire from The Democratic Society, together with the OGP team.

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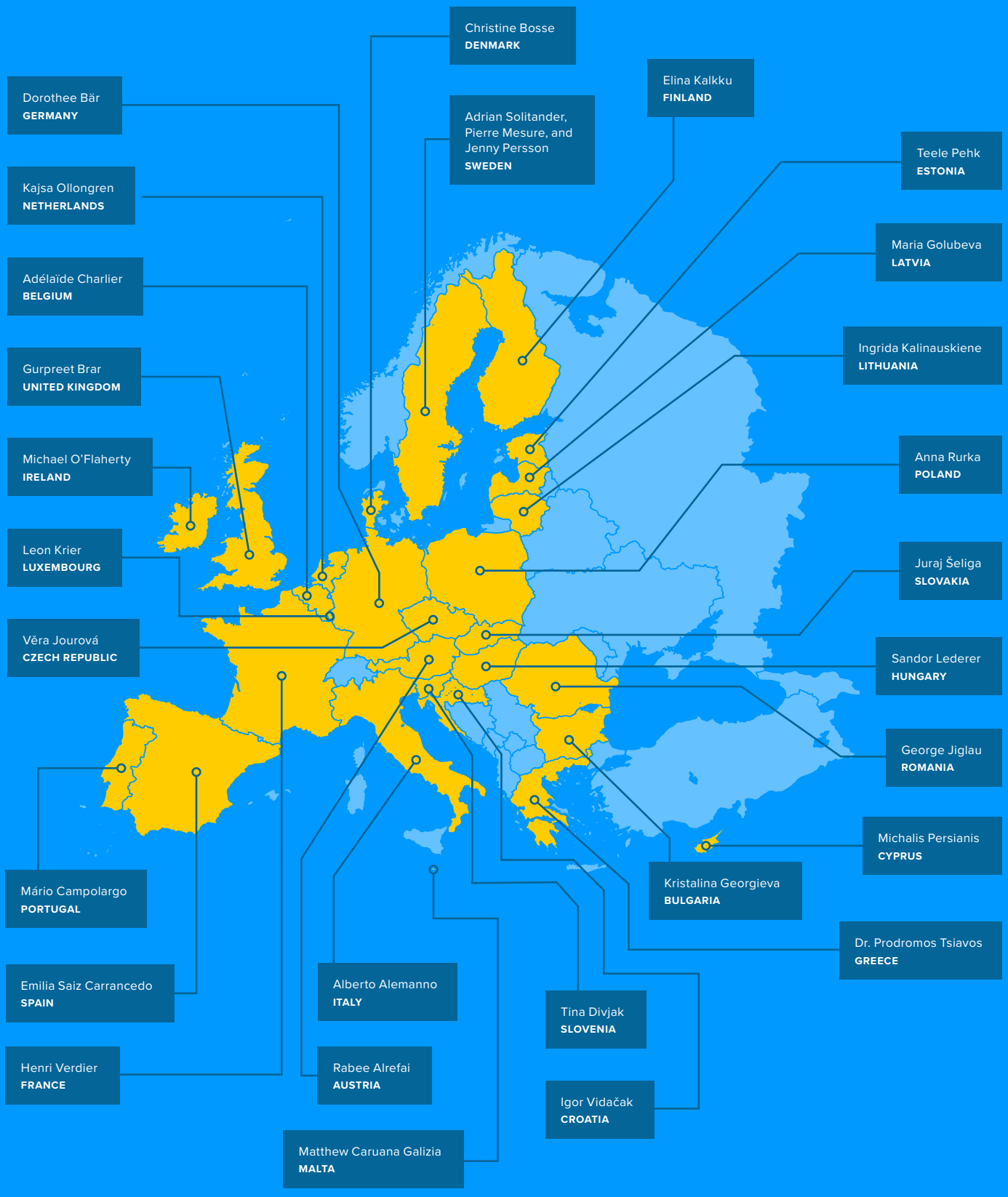
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EUROPE AND OPEN GOVERNMENT – A POWERFUL OPPORTUNITY

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The European election of 2019 is said to be a watershed moment that will ask voters to choose between more or less Europe, between inclusion and diversity or exclusion and nationalism, and between societies that are more open or more closed.

These are false dichotomies. The right question to ask is how Europeans can get a Europe that delivers better. For all. At European, national, and local level - and beyond.

We are well aware of what Europe needs to deliver on. The 2018 Eurobarometer[1] lists migration, jobs, terrorism, and climate change as people's biggest concerns. The 2019 Edelman survey[2] demonstrates that trust in institutions – media, government, and civil society – is still very low across the continent, although people trust the EU more than their national governments. Many people either feel left behind, worse off, or both. They fear for the future and worry about their cultural identity. And they perceive democratic institutions to be captured by elites whose actions benefit the powerful at the expense of the people they should be serving.

For these reasons, this election demands a reflection on the choices before us. Governments, businesses, civil society, and media alike are struggling to make sense of how they got here and where to go next. They are looking to understand how they can deliver whilst rebuilding trust and fostering healthy democracies along the way.

The Open Government Partnership (OGP) is publishing this thought-provoking collection of essays to breathe new life into this debate. The essays are written by a diversity of European voices from all Member States, including leading decision-makers, civil society activists, journalists, academics, and youth leaders, among others.

Three leading ideas for strengthening Europe in years to come emerge from the essays:

Better quality dialogue and participation on issues people care about – The authors ask 'Europe' to address the big topics of our time: migration (Alrefai), climate (Charlier), digital rights and governance (Bär; Campolargo; Verdier). They call for institutions based on transparency and participation (Georgieva; Lederer; Rurka). Several also want to see more dialogue and participation from the top down (Seliga; Golubeva) and to build a democratic Europe from the bottom up (Saiz; Kalinauskiene). In short, replace a 'Brussels' technocratic governance approach with a people-centred one.

Smarter use of technology, combined with 'European-style' regulation – Not surprisingly, four of the political pieces focus on the broader challenges of the digital age (Bär; Verdier; Ollongren; Jourova). They advocate working with and regulating tech companies, ultimately shaping a digital era that works for citizens and protects societies from manipulation.

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More collaboration and leadership inside the EU and across the globe – Some see room for more European collaboration on cross-border challenges, such as fighting financial crime (Caruana Galizia) or money, misinformation, and politics (Ollongren). Two-thirds of Europeans worry about false information and fake news being used negatively. Several essays ask for Europe to lead by example, to inspire and provide support to democracy outside Europe (Alrefai; Kalkku; Vidacak).

has been facing calls from citizens who want more of a say in the decisions that actually shape their lives; citizens who want governments that make them an active part of what they do – governments that invite feedback, consult, deliberate, and *co-create*.

This is exactly what open government is about. And it is happening. Across Europe, reformers from government and civil society are embracing inspiring approaches that empower citizens to shape the policies and services that affect their daily lives.

Paris and Madrid have introduced participatory budgeting programmes which give their citizens a direct say in how their city budgets are spent,while Madrid has shared its platform[12] with 100 other governments across the globe.

These are not technical fixes, and open governments cannot be built by bureaucrats alone. At the heart of it all sits a commitment to change the culture of government, the DNA of decision-making. When EU First Vice-President Frans Timmermans spoke at an OGP event in late 2017,

These are not technical fixes, and open governments cannot be built by bureaucrats alone. At the heart of it all sits a commitment to change the culture of government, the DNA of decision-making.

Without exception, the authors urge Europe to be brave and take the lead in defining the future (Brar; Bosse). All ideas combined sketch a way forward for reimagining and re-energising democracy beyond the ballot box.

Globally, the EU stands tall as a champion and custodian of good governance. Recent 'Better Regulation'[3] initiatives have delivered unprecedented openness and transparency, creating ample opportunities for those who want to engage. Other landmark initiatives include the Transparency Register,[4] the 5th Anti-Money Laundering Directive,[5] the recent introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation,[6] and the Whistleblower Protection rules.[7]

These results count. However, to really change the European narrative from one of elites and ivory towers to one of people and opportunities, we need leaders who dare to dream bigger. For too long now, 'Brussels'

OGP, for example, is already shaping **inspiring innovations** around the ideas captured in this collection of essays along the lines of:

Better dialogue and participation – Estonia[8] and Croatia[9] have delivered platforms for citizens to influence policy-making. Italy[10] has shaped opportunities for citizens to monitor and report on the billions of euros spent within the country through EU funding programmes. Germany[11] has created an innovative competition programme to strengthen the integration of migrants.

Smart tech the European way – France and the Netherlands are working to increase transparency of algorithms used by governments to make decisions and allocate resources.

Leadership and collaboration – The UK, Slovakia, and several other countries are collaborating around the introduction of beneficial ownership registries which tackle financial crime.

he emphasised "give-and-take" – the importance of recognising that trust is a two-way street. A government that truly wants to place citizens at the heart of its work can only do so by trusting them – with information, with opportunities for decision-making, with real choices (Pehk; OpenTeamGov).

And this is where the real opportunity for Europe lies. Political leaders should focus on building consensus rather than breeding conflict. They should steer us away from polarisation. Their focus should not be on how we are different, but on what we have in common (Krier). Where we do disagree, our leaders should create opportunities for dialogue and let the diversity of perspectives make our solutions stronger. In other words, we need a politics of dialogue, not of crowd-pleasing slogans.

Sharing space does not always come naturally to those in power. Trust is difficult to gain, and easy to lose. If Europe is looking to build a healthy

democracy, it cannot however cut corners. It has to invest.

From what OGP has learned over the years, the following immediate and important **opportunities for Europe** emerge.

Better dialogue and participation – The EU should select a handful of policy areas that are alive in the hearts and minds of European citizens today (e.g. the climate crisis; job security; education) and open these up to honest, meaningful, and responsive dialogue across the continent. The outgoing European Commission has put in place a strong foundation of transparent and evidence-based policy-making. The incoming one must build on that by infusing it with richer and deeper participation and through improved responsiveness. The backbone is there – it is time to invest in the muscle and soul of the EU's citizen engagement agenda.

Smart tech the European way – It is imperative to make technology work for people, and not the other way around. The EU should be unapologetic in learning from and adapting the inspiring innovations that OGP has helped pioneer. Why not experiment with tech-facilitated participatory budgeting for the regional funds or citizen monitoring of EU spending? There is without doubt an opportunity to team up with digital leaders to define digital governance 'the European way'.

Leadership and collaboration – The EU must continue to raise the bar on frontier issues such as lobby transparency, financial crime, data privacy, and whistleblower protection. Recent developments in these areas are praiseworthy, but there is room for improvement and there are loopholes to be closed. EU institutions must continue to work with, and listen closely to, citizens and civil society groups who have been championing these issues from the very beginning. Ambitious results are within Europe's grasp, and European norms have the potential to grow into global ones. It is this type of leadership that is needed to keep democracy healthy.

There is a golden opportunity to connect with citizens on how the EU delivers for them – how it shapes, protects, and changes their lived realities. No more roaming costs; increased social safeguards; extra income; better environmental protection and air quality; and more privacy safeguards, to name but a few. The EU reticence to communicate loudly and proudly for actions taken and impacts achieved is doing it a disservice (Brar).

These approaches demand a real change in mindset, a genuine commitment from the highest to the lowest levels of government to 'do government differently' – not just for, but with the people. Such an investment will help build a Europe that delivers better.

Open government can help rebuild citizen trust across the continent, connecting the needs and expectations of Europeans in the East and the West, of aspiring minorities and anxious majorities, of those inside the EU and those just outside. The 2019 elections and ensuing years present Europe with a powerful opportunity to pave an exciting future – one that is anchored firmly in the core foundations of open government.

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1 http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/ResultDoc/download/DocumentKy/86484.

2 https://www.edelman.com/trust-barometer.

3 https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/law-making-process/planning-and-proposing-law/better-regulation-why-and-how_en.

4 http://ec.europa.eu/transparencyregister/public/homePage.do.

5 https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32018L0843.

6 https://gdpr-info.eu/.

7 http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20190410IPR37529/protecting-whistle-blowers-new-eu-wide-rules-approved.

8 https://rahvaalgatus.ee/.

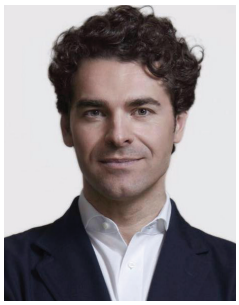
9 https://savjetovanja.gov.hr/.

10 https://opencoesione.gov.it/en/.

11 https://kommunalwettbewerb-zusammenleben.de/.

12 http://consulproject.org/.

DEMOCRACY BEYOND ELECTIONS IN EUROPE: THE CASE FOR PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY



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For almost two decades, there has been a widespread, intensifying belief that, without greater involvement of citizens, the European Union (EU) is condemned to fail. As time goes by, this prophecy is becoming self-fulfilling. Despite renewed, countless calls for the need to bring the voices of everyday citizens into public life, little is set to change ahead of and beyond the next European elections. The emergence of populist forces claiming to represent people as a whole has eclipsed and, as a result, reversed the EU's participatory agenda instead of accelerating it. The failure of the much-awaited European Citizens' Consultations – the first pan-European participatory project to involve citizens from all Member States of the European Union in a debate about the future of the continent – epitomises the limited commitment to, and imagination of, genuine participation in Europe. The EU needs to urgently move away from such ad-hoc participatory processes designed on a country-by-country basis as quick, unstructured, under-funded and often patronising fixes to an old, persistent problem. It must instead embrace an entire new participatory paradigm that puts citizens at the forefront of the EU integration process and empowers them to both set *and* monitor agendas, as long advocated by the Open Government Partnership.

Europe's original sin

Behind such a pressing move is a growing demand to render EU action intelligible and democratically legitimate. This entails making the EU accountable for its actions and better representative of its residents – not only as a sum of its nationals but also as a transnational community of European citizens. While accountability and political representation mechanisms are the bread-and-butter of any democratic state, these features are missing in the European Union due to a combination of institutional design and history. As a result, there are currently no political channels accessible to European citizens (or any other actors) to hold their member states and political representatives accountable within the EU. This is obviously deeply problematic as it invariably translates any criticism of the EU into a wholesale rejection of its underlying project and further aggravates abstention in the European parliamentary elections.

Between deep societal transformations and the technological revolution which are fostering greater expectations for participation, the time has come for the EU to become more participatory and collaborative in its decision-making.

Participatory democracy as the way forward

To compensate for this political accountability vacuum, the EU has over time decided to draw its democratic legitimacy not only from representative democracy, but also from participatory democracy. Yet, more recent avenues of participation unfortunately remain unknown to the many (e.g. EU citizens) and overused by the few (e.g. corporate lobbyists). As people increasingly feel the effects of EU policies on their lives, there exists a growing yet undetected demand for participation beyond elections within European societies. The challenge for the Union is to be able to capture such a popular fluid demand and accommodate it within its rigid institutional framework.

Building European civic capacity

Should they be built into existing decision-making procedures, existing participatory democracy practices could offer the EU a powerful and responsive accountability system capable of making the EU more responsive, and ultimately restoring public faith in its political institutions and turning the EU into a people's project. For this to occur, the EU must create an enabling and collaborative political environment to foster citizen participation beyond elections. Such an environment may generate alternative, unconventional forms of participation that are capable of channelling citizens' pluralistic input into political conversation and bringing citizens closer to their representatives and vice-versa, both during and between elections.

It is only by getting the European institutional machinery exposed to the needs and preferences of its communities on the ground that it will be possible to realign the local with the EU day-to-day governance. As the migration crisis demonstrated, Europe cannot afford to appear passive apropos its citizens concerns of perceived danger. This requires a fundamental change in political as well as administrative and legal culture in Europe. Between deep societal transformations and the technological revolution which are fostering greater expectations for participation, the time has come for the EU to become more participatory and collaborative in its decision-making.

Towards a one-stop-shop participatory forum for Europe

Any meaningful attempt at making participatory democracy work in Europe requires an effort at simplifying its operations in the eyes of the public. In other words, Europe won't find its democratic soul in a large-scale, stand-alone, and pre-framed deliberation exercise, such as the European Citizens' Consultations or Dialogues. It is instead through the creation of an accessible, intuitive and safe space accommodating public input on a daily basis that the EU will reconcile itself to its own democratic and accountability challenge.

By centralising all participatory channels in a one-stop forum involving all EU institutions – who will also be in charge of addressing, reviewing, and filtering public input – the EU will become accessible and intelligible to the many and accordingly more responsive to their input. The ultimate aim of such a participatory and performative framework would be to have the most promising proposals, ideas, and complaints trickle down into the daily work of each institution. This day-to-day participatory framework would not magically fix the European accountability deficit. To thrive, it will require the adoption of a set of positive, supportive measures capable of levelling the playing field within and amongst the interests represented before the Union and paving the way for the setting up of a European 'civic grid'.

The clock is ticking: either the European Union starts providing meaningful participatory opportunities to its citizens capable of affecting their own decision-making, or Europe as we know it might soon be over.

DEMOCRACY AND IMMIGRATION – CULTURE OF FEAR

RABEE ALREFAI

Rabee Alrefai is originally from Daraa, Syria where he trained and worked as a doctor until 2014. Due to the civil war, Alrefai left Syria in 2015 and settled in Austria, earning recognition for his medical diploma at the University of Vienna. Alrefai has written a screenplay for the film 'When it Rains in Vienna', which begins production in 2019.

The impact of immigration and the recent refugee crisis have together contributed to the rise of far-right parties in Europe, which in turn poses a serious threat to the health of democracy on the continent.

Democracy depends on trust amongst citizens, enabling them to work collectively as part of a political system. In 2013, Europe and other countries in the world experienced an unprecedented increase in the number of refugees and asylum seekers. This consequently led to European citizens being politically divided in a manner previously unseen.

It is well-documented[1] that most migrants and refugees come from countries governed by dictators, and that the majority of them are Muslim. This fact has been exploited by right-wing parties to gain votes and reach positions of power in different countries across Europe. These parties routinely arouse public fear about the supposed threat posed by newcomers to EU culture, economy, and security.

Feeling threatened, people start to consider safety as an urgent priority. More importantly, they start to move away from long-championed European values of freedom and democracy. In my view, it can be argued that controlling migration will be good for democracy. At the same time, we cannot ignore the fact that migrants have the potential to positively influence the revival and development of democratic values not only in Europe, but also in their homelands if they return with the experience of having lived in democratic societies.

We can improve democracy by working on aspects that contribute to a positive future. A good future is one in which people feel safe again and embrace their values. A good future is also one that makes migrants believe that democracy is the solution to the very problems that forced them to leave their countries in the first place.

Promoting migrant participation in political life is of utmost importance. Enabling migrants and refugees to be part of decision-making is the first step

towards their integration. The chance to speak for themselves – a sentiment that most of them miss – will make this group believe that they are part of their new society. It will also motivate them to play their part in protecting the values and the safety of their new homelands, or that of their children.

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Schools that teach children that they have equal rights and duties in society, regardless of their race, gender, or religion will contribute to raising enlightened citizens. Teaching children how democracy led, in my opinion, to Europe being the most successful continent in the world will make them future guardians of democracy and freedom.

It is well-known that fascism, communism, and religious extremism are the enemies of democracy. In the digital age that we are living in, some politicians have become the most dangerous threats to the health of democracy. Social media allows these politicians to communicate directly with their voters. However, instead of using this opportunity to enhance citizen engagement, those very politicians use social media to undermine democracy by indulging in the politics of lies and fear, thereby arousing public anger.

Migrants and refugees together with politicians and political parties that believe in democracy should use social media to fight deception and fear by sharing with European citizens facts about who they are, what they want, why they migrated to their new countries, and how they perceive the future. This requires major effort and support, but it is undoubtedly a way of bringing together people from both sides and letting them discuss issues that they are worried about, instead of fueling the venomous rhetoric of right-wing politicians.

Migration has been and will always continue to be a momentous challenge. Europe should know that every human being in this world sees this continent as the birthplace and protector of human rights and democratic values. If European citizens are to move away from democracy, they will need to think of another name for Europe.

[1] For instance: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/society/20170629STO78630/eu-migrant-crisis-facts-and-figures.

A DIGITAL BACKBONE FOR A CITIZENS' EUROPE

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We find ourselves in the midst of a digital revolution and the rate of upheaval is accelerating. Technological progress is happening so quickly that political actors genuinely struggle to shape it or to even keep pace. Representatives of authoritarian regimes, in particular, have pitied the slowness of our political system, which – they claim – deprives us of many, if not all, avenues for remaining internationally competitive.

This discussion deals with two distinct issues. On the one hand, it is about economic and technological leadership in the digital age. On the other, it is about the political supremacy of rivalling systems. Of course, the two elements are linked: economic power brings political influence. A perfectly conceived political system that fails to prove or assert itself on the contested international stage will die a virtuous death.

Europe has a clear mission in this regard. We are committed to policies that revolve around the best interests of individuals, not those of large corporations or the state.

Europe must harness the possibilities of digitalisation. We must understand that digitalisation is a potent tool – it is neither inherently good nor bad. It all depends on why digital tools are being employed. We must harness the opportunities of digitalisation in order to bring out the best in our democratic constitutional states and to make them more efficient. And these are the very issues we must emphasise more strongly within the Open Government Partnership.

To start with, we must explore the areas in which digitalisation can help increase public trust in the state's capabilities. Currently, it is almost exclusively corporations that are building entire digital empires and setting the benchmark for the possibilities of digital technologies. Numerous goods and services can now be ordered in a single tap on a smartphone. The state is also a digital service provider: applying for child and parental benefits, registering a new business, or changing your home address are all possible online. These tasks ought to be as easy as ordering a toothbrush online. There is untapped potential to significantly improve efficiency and provide added value to citizens and businesses who would no longer need to wait for appointments in the long corridors of government agencies. We need a single digital gateway: a unified access point for administrative services. We need fully digitalised application processes. In Germany, we are working hard to achieve this. Studies show that a well-functioning digital administration improves citizens' perception of the state by a factor of ten.[1] We must use that to our advantage.

Secondly, we must ensure that digital technologies reinforce our values rather than undermine them. Take

artificial intelligence, for example. We cannot afford to lose control of decisions that affect our citizens. Principles such as protection for minorities, gender equality, advocacy for the socially disadvantaged, and equal consideration for urban and rural areas must be imprinted in the DNA of any artificial intelligence. That is precisely what "AI made in Europe" ought to stand for. This is also why Germany appointed a Data Ethics Commission to examine the ethical scope and constraints of digital data management. Digitalisation does not mean betraying our values in favour of technical possibilities. On the contrary, technology must be deployed to reinforce European values in the digital age.

Thirdly, we must harness the potential of Open Data even more extensively. Data is the raw material of digitalisation. In the global playing field, we should make it much easier for our companies to draw on data that has already been compiled by the state and develop business models and applications that benefit citizens. Take, for example, state-gathered weather data. This is now publicly available and is used pro-actively by winter gritting and salting services and

Europe must now also be a pioneer for the digital age, not only in terms of economy and technology, but also in protecting the rights and interests of citizens. Europe must be a role model and a force for unity.

by storm early warning systems. When dealing with personal data, a person's sovereignty over their own data inevitably takes priority. In many cases, however, it suffices to use completely anonymised data. Consider the possibilities for AI-assisted medical diagnostics via millions of radiological scans to identify the tell-tale symptoms of diseases. The benefit to individual patient health care would be staggering.

At the same time, however, we must not let corporations dominate political discourse or let them set the standards. An important step in the right direction is a more transparent policy-making process. It is crucial for draft legislation and trade associations' opinions, for example, to be publicly available. In so doing, we can strengthen trust in the democratic processes that shape public opinion. Whenever possible, we must pre-emptively deflate fake news and conspiracy theories.

These examples demonstrate that the pressure on our rule-of-law-based democratic states within the competitive international landscape has not been caused by digitalisation itself, but by our slowness to take its tools into our own hands.

Europe has always been ahead of the curve. Europe must now also be a pioneer for the digital age, not only in terms of economy and technology, but also in protecting the rights and interests of citizens. Europe must be a role model and a force for unity. In the digital age, more so than ever, size matters. To that end, we will need new global alliances. The EU is only the start. The tools for "digitalisation made in Europe" have long been in place. Let us come together and take them into our own hands! A virtuous death is not an option.

[1] McKinsey (June 2018) „Der Bürger im Mittelpunkt: Mehr Vertrauen in Behörden durch ein besseres Bürgererlebnisitel". https://www.mckinsey.de/publikationen/buergerzufriedenheit-zufriedenheit-schafft-vertrauen.

DEMOCRACY IS A COSTLY GIFT, ONE THAT MUST BE CONSTANTLY DEVELOPED

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Only through bloodshed and numerous conflicts have we come to a point where we, within the European Union (EU), can live in peaceful democracies in which we are allowed, even encouraged, to speak freely. This point is in fact laid out in Article Two of the Lisbon Treaty.[1]

Never before have people enjoyed as much freedom. On average, Europe is also as rich as it has ever been. What is new and what remains to be fixed?

First and foremost, social media constantly bombards us with news and opinions, whilst providing us with a sense of proximity to our decision makers. At the same time, however, it feels as if the same decision makers do not care about the challenges people face. The problem lies in the fact that everything moves very quickly and that politicians cannot provide us with a sense of security nor the knowledge to solve our problems. Worse yet, there is less time for debate or the involvement of citizens in troubleshooting our democracies.

The 'slow cooking' model of democratic processes, as we have known it, simply no longer meets the current needs and expectations of citizens with their problems and worries. What can be done to remedy this?

To begin with, we need to identify the different layers of democracy within which these problems lie and reorganise some of our democratic processes. To successfully face the global challenges facing us – be them climate change, terrorism, migration, and other issues of similar magnitude – our decision-making processes must move beyond consensus to majority on the EU level. The same applies for all institutional bodies involved.

This does not mean that citizens will be left out of the decision-making process. On the contrary, we must ensure that there are channels available to citizens to become well-informed and get as involved in decision-making as possible. This can happen through openness and transparency in the debates leading up to major decisions and in the voting process itself. The Council of Ministers, for example, would be a good place to start. Fearing that this could lead to populism only results in more fake news and blame games, and further disillusionment about the value of democracy.

How can any of us decide on anything if we are not sure about the facts? This is where education and an independent media become crucial.

For good reasons, or maybe due to convention, the implementation processes of EU rules are very different in each member state. It would be interesting to see if any of the implementation models result in more or less citizen engagement, and, as a consequence, if changes can be made to incorporate learnings.

The traditional democratic model only makes sense if politicians remain involved, take the occasionally demanding democratic processes seriously, and if the motivation of far-right politicians to question these processes is scarce. It is sometimes convenient to blame others, with Brexit being the most serious and devastating example.

The demand, therefore, has to come from us: the people. We should be curious to know how our democracy works. We should also be curious enough to corroborate stories and make sure that we are not fooled by fake news – which is amongst the most serious threats – not letting us decide our own destiny. How can any of us decide on anything if we are not sure about the facts? This is where education and an independent media become crucial. Not only should we educate our children, but also ourselves as adults. We can take advantage of new technologies to facilitate life-long learning, and perhaps even make a "democracy driver's license" a mandatory feature for participating in democratic processes, all the while not leaving people with special needs behind.

Some of these ideas might seem bold. But let us not forget that we live in times where bold attempts to disrupt the people-driven democracy that we have developed are both numerous and well-funded. We need to be aware, alert, and on the offensive to protect our freedom and our democracies.

[1] The Treaty of Lisbon, Article 2: "The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail."

REBUILDING TRUST – BRICK BY BRICK

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Gurpreet Brar is General Manager of the Edelman Brussels office and bring together over fifteen years of UK and EU experience of politics, government affairs and regulation. Over the years, Brar has helped some of the world's largest companies establish lasting relationships with policymakers, has worked with clients to manage through political crisis and has developed innovative thought leadership and purpose advocacy platforms.

For 19 years now, Edelman has been measuring the currency of trust through the annual Trust Barometer Survey. This year our survey once again examined the state of trust in the four key institutions of state – government, NGOs, media, and business – in 27 different markets. In Europe, this meant undertaking research in the Netherlands, France, Germany, Italy, Ireland, and Spain – a representative sample of European Union (EU) member states. We also examined the U.K., but as a result of the ongoing debate around Brexit, our EU data excluded U.K.-specific data.

The clear output from our research shows that there continues to be a crisis of trust. Institutions, that were for many decades seen to be the answer to citizens' problems, are now struggling to establish the trust and credibility citizens are looking for. This trend is even more stark when we divide the population between the informed public[1] and the general population,[2] which shows a continued substantial trust gap (2019: 12 percent) in the average trust in NGOs, government, business and media.

This growing divide of trust across the EU is the result of a multitude of events at both macro and micro level. However, the reality of the financial crisis of the late 2000's and the challenges of dealing with it, coupled with the ease of access to information through social media and the availability of phones, has compounded the problem. Furthermore, a feeling of "not being listened to" and "being taken for granted" has, in some member states, become commonplace. According to the Edelman Trust Barometer, this has meant, that the number of EU workers who believe the system is therefore "failing them" has risen sharply (Informed public 41%; General population 57%) and has impacted trust across both our society and our institutions. The evidence for this can be seen in Brexit as well as in the rise in votes for those previously considered marginal political forces.

Against this backdrop, where are the opportunities for a fightback?

Making a difference in the lives of EU citizens, and then proactively claiming ownership for doing so, will be fundamental in ensuring trust is being rebuilt.

If the health of trust in EU countries is to be restored, or even reinvigorated, then I would say there are three areas of focus that should be taken extremely seriously by decision makers across the EU in business, NGOs, the institutions, and politics.

The first, simply put, is "communication, communication, communication." Until recently, there had been some reticence to communicate loudly and proudly for actions taken and impacts achieved. To rebuild trust, I would argue you need to do exactly this. In a world where information is currency, the need to communicate directly whether you are a business, an institution, an NGO, the media, or an individual has never been stronger. Be ready to tell your story or be ready for it to be told by others. However, communication alone will not be enough as you will also have to earn the right to be heard in a crowded landscape. Your content will therefore need to be creative, digital, digestible, engaging, and shareable – not an easy feat!

Second, there is a strong need to build consensus and bring together core constituencies. The need for co-creation has never been stronger. The 2019 Trust Barometer highlights the trust between employees and their employers – a relationship which has unparalleled levels of trust with 70% of respondents trusting their employer (NGOs 49%; business 50%; government 39%; media 42%). This necessitates that decision-making be inclusive. Creating shared value, action, and purpose will in turn drive better outcomes. Whether it be around policy, societal change, or business growth co-creation should be seen as a core element to rebuilding trust.

Finally, be brave in defining the future. At a time when the world is transforming around us, people are looking for leadership: leadership on the future of work/employment, the future of our planet/climate, the future of immigration/migration, and the future of what all of this means for us. Faced with such challenges, people now look to their leaders to tackle these future challenges and chart out a vision of what is to come and their role within it. To rebuild trust, we must therefore be brave enough to speak about the future, whilst also articulating how it will impact people's lives and those of their families. Making a difference in the lives of EU citizens, and then proactively claiming ownership for doing so, will be fundamental in ensuring trust is being rebuilt.

[1] Informed Public: Represents 16% of total global population and must meet 4 criteria: Ages 25-64; College-educated; In top 25% of household income per age group in each market; Report significant media consumption and engagement in public policy and business news.

[2] Mass Population: All population not including informed public and represents 84% of total global population.

DEMOCRACY AND DIGITAL: THE NEED FOR A NEW SOCIAL CONTRACT

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Today's world: in the midst of a digital revolution

Since the invention of the printing press, the relationship between governments, administrations, and citizens has been paper-based, characterised by static, standardised interfaces. Extraction and processing of data in print was cumbersome and error-prone. Sharing and reuse of information was virtually unheard of. Administrative 'silos' were the norm. When the first general purpose digital computers arrived seventy years ago, few predicted their impact on daily life.

Information and communication technologies – machines, networks, algorithms – have revolutionised the way we generate, manage, and share data. New information-based industries have emerged. Governments and citizens cooperate via digital 'forms' with dynamic, personalised two-way interfaces. We can now tackle previously unsolvable societal problems through information sharing and collaborative work practices. However, this digital revolution has only just begun!

Tomorrow's world: a digital society

Digital technologies are evolving at an accelerated rate. These technologies have become pervasive across society, disrupting both public and private sectors. This digital transformation of research, industry, and government is gathering pace. Digitalisation has become a common global political priority. In particular, there is a shared realisation that digital technologies will shape new governance structures facilitating citizen and business participation in policy making, adding value to interactions and influencing new patterns of coordination and cooperation within and across public administrations. In short, a digital society is being created.

The digital society will see increased digital disruption, the rise of the data economy, an evolution to data-driven administration, and an emphasis on data security. This fundamental role of data is now recognised as key to delivering better evidence-based policies and the next generation of trusted cross-border digital public

The transformative impact of digital technologies on our daily life implies the need for a new social charter between the state and its citizens.

services. These services should be user-centric, built on the principles of openness, transparency, reusability and designed for security, privacy, and interoperability.

Democracy and digital

This new digital society is also changing the way democracy functions. Issues that transcend the digital technologies *per se* now preoccupy politicians, legislators, policy makers, and the public. While existing digital platforms and a select number of companies dominating specific industries offer new and seductive opportunities for customers and third parties, they also have a disruptive dimension, which undermines the social cohesion of communities.

Issues relating to the ethics, transparency, openness, and inclusivity of these digital ecosystems need to be addressed. These include: the use of personal and sensitive data; dissemination of fake news; disinformation and hate propaganda; cyberattacks on critical cyber-physical infrastructures (electrical, water, health and government systems); and the role of artificial intelligence in new applications. Guidelines and technical best practices are necessary but insufficient. Legislation and regulations to curb the excessive power of some hegemonic players needs to be enacted and enforced.

A social contract for a digital Europe

Actions unleashing the potential of digital technologies for Europe's citizens whilst guaranteeing their rights have been initiated by the European Commission with its Digital Single Market flagship priority and legislative initiatives, including the adoption of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

These are, however, only the first steps on the journey to a digital Europe that involves nothing less than the digitalisation of democracy, together with democratic control of the digital industry without stifling innovation.

Frictionless interfaces mediated by digital technologies will add value to purpose-driven interactions between citizens, administrations, and governments and consolidate democracy in the digital age.

This transformative impact of digital technologies on our daily life implies the need for a new social charter between the state and its citizens – one that is fit for purpose for the digital age. Data should be central to such a social contract. Digital rights should cover the generation of data, its management, use and reuse, protection and preservation. Its adoption would ensure the trustworthiness of digital public services and increase trust in the digital ecosystems underpinning daily life.

An EU data policy and coordinated national data policies, both based on the European Interoperability Framework (EIF), should complement this social contract and become an EU-wide information management framework to address the information issues linked to the cross-border needs of citizens and businesses and the global multidisciplinary challenges of our time including climate change, trade, terrorism, and civil rights.

A shared challenge

The digital age calls for the reinvention of our democratic institutions and democratic processes; in Europe, we will do this as a tangible expression of our values. The involvement of civil society through more effective participatory processes needs to gain further traction by the adoption of Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) approaches. The public sector IT community across Europe is ready for this challenge. Now is the moment for the European institutions to reinforce their work with the member states and the innovative digital ecosystems towards a charter of social and ethical values that will shape a digital Europe and provide the impetus for a more just global digital society.

Disclaimer: *The views expressed in this text are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official views of the European Commission.*

THE WRONG INDICATOR

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Matthew Caruana Galizia is a journalist and software engineer. He has has worked with the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists on investigations into international corruption and on the technology used to fight it.

Underground rivers of money fed by corruption are one of our world's deadliest flaws. The same networks that allow us to move capital around Europe allow the produce and proceeds of crime to flow just as seamlessly. All the while, justice and law enforcement remain largely ineffective and are being steadily undermined and captured. Journalists attempting to document this are intimidated, locked up, and murdered.

If our institutions want to rebuild trust, they should fix this deadly flaw – a source of huge injustice and inequality. Populist leaders who explicitly target journalists are bad, but they are only degrees away from those leaders who do nothing to overhaul the system that facilitates global crime and corruption, and who ask journalists to continue running straight into the artillery fire. And yet, while making this unbearable sacrifice, these journalists have taught us powerful lessons about how to respond.

One of these journalists was our mother, Daphne Caruana Galizia. She was assassinated in Malta on October 16, 2017, when a bomb placed under the driver's seat of her car exploded as she rushed to the bank where her account had been frozen by the country's economy minister. It was the last in a string of attacks she endured for uncovering a web of corruption linking major multinational deals, passport sales, and a sophisticated global money-laundering operation. She tugged on the threads until they brought the full force of Malta's government crashing down on her.

Pockets of institutional independence in Malta that had survived four years of populism were quashed. A powerful donor to the governing Labour Party filed 19 lawsuits at one go against her, one for every sentence in an article she published about his holiday in the company of a senior tax official. The prime minister, Joseph Muscat, secretly plotted with the owner of a company that sells our country's passports to bankrupt her by suing for libel in English courts.[1] "They're trying to fry me alive", our mother said to us. And she, a beacon of hope and courage for hundreds of thousands, was executed in broad daylight.

Robbing Malta of its most trusted journalist has perversely centralised trust in the hands of the powerful people she wrote about. This is why, wherever liberal democracy and the rule of law are crumbling, trust is the wrong indicator to look at. In 2018, Malta fell the furthest in press-freedom rankings in Europe. The country also slipped in democracy rankings and rule of law indicators and leads the field in hate speech. Yet, people still rally behind, and trust, the political leaders who could be implicated in the murder of our mother. They still trust a police force that, on paper alone, is probably Europe's most ineffective, with an astonishing 90 per cent of all murders over the past decade not resulting in a conviction.[2]

How can we fight back against this theft of trust? Investigative journalists have banded together in global networks such as the Daphne Project.[3] They show just how

effective investigative journalism can be in forcing greater transparency, undermining criminal networks, and driving up the cost of political corruption for its perpetrators.

But while journalists increasingly cooperate across borders, national law-enforcement authorities are still living in the past. As a result, the impact of investigative journalism varies widely by country. Where law-enforcement authorities are independent from the central government and private interests, and where the public can channel grievances effectively through responsive political institutions, investigative reporting can have an immediate impact on preventing corruption and state capture. This builds trust in both reporting and the institutions of a liberal democracy.

When journalists come under attack, it usually means that the societies within which they operate are so corrupt that their principal law-enforcement institutions and democratic checks have already been fundamentally compromised. This makes investigative reporters the last people left standing between the rule of law and those who seek to violate it. It makes their work both more dangerous and less effective.

Worst of all, the message sent by powerful, populist politicians is this: these journalists are your enemies and we will destroy them on your behalf. When they achieve that goal, they then end up earning more trust from a brutalised public. This is what our mother meant when she said in a private interview 10 days before her murder, that she had been turned into a "national scapegoat", blamed for the effects of the very problems that she exposed.

The answer to their menace is not to identify ourselves in relation to populists. If we do that, we only become the enemies that they want. The answer lies instead in looking at what props them up: invariably, money laundering and corruption. These are the same tools that organised criminals and kleptocrats use to hoover up weaker jurisdictions like Malta into their service. The right response to this is to create new entities designed to address transnational crime. The launch of the European Public Prosecutor's Office is a start, but it must be coupled with a European anti-money laundering agency.

Unless we respond forcefully, our collective future will belong to an alliance of dark money, populism, and the sort of mistrust and division that robbed Europe of someone who did things that mattered.

Unless we respond forcefully, our collective future will belong to an alliance of dark money, populism, and the sort of mistrust and division that robbed Europe of someone who did things that mattered.

[1] https://daphnecaruanagalizia.com/2017/05/prime-minister-chief-staff-use-josephmuscat-com-addresses-deal-secretly-henley-partners-chairman-addresses-keith-joseph-order/ and http://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2017-06-01/local-news/Henley-confirms-emails-revealed-by-Daphne-Caruana-Galizia-denies-collusion-6736174975.

[2] https://lovinmalta.com/news/local/70-murder-victims-since-2008-just-7-people-have-been-found-guilty-of-homicide-in-malta-in-the-last-10-years.

[3] https://forbiddenstories.org/case/the-daphne-project/.

LOOKING FOR RESPONSIBLE LEADERS FOR CLIMATE CHANGE

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Adélaïde Charlier is currently studying at Notre Dame College in Namur, Belgium. Charlier is an active member of Amnesty International and the Youth Council of the City of Namur. Inspired by Greta Thunberg, Charlier created the Belgian 'Youth for Climate' movement along with Anuna De Wever in January 2019.

For the past six months, Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg has been striking in front of the house of representatives in Sweden. She is requesting political leaders to respect their international commitments to reduce CO2 emissions in order to limit the greenhouse effect warming our planet. Greta has inspired many youth in Belgium, Switzerland, the Netherlands, the UK, and Germany to start protesting for action against climate change. Her actions culminated in the March 15th global strike for climate which gathered 1,4 million people in 125 countries – the largest ever environmental protest.

In Belgium, students have been striking and demonstrating every Thursday since January 2019 to ask political leaders to take both scientists and climate change seriously. Indeed, scientists have constantly been repeating, with increasing certitude and precision over the past two decades, that global warming is real and that it is related to human activity.

There appears to be an important gap between scientists' warnings on climate change and the passivity and lack of action on the part of politicians. This is a source of worry for younger generations. According to the United Nations, we have a short window of opportunity of ten to twelve years before facing irreversible climate change. This is a very short period and we need to act now. However, we are very far from concrete action, and despite the latest IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) report re-emphasising the magnitude and the impact of global warming, we seem to be continuing with business as usual. My country, Belgium, is one of the worst European offenders in terms of the 2030 climate goals. According to a recent EU report,[1] without additional measures, Belgium will miss its 2020 and 2030 targets. If implemented, the current plans would reduce our emissions by 0.9 MT / year, but to achieve decarbonisation in 2050, we would need to reduce our emissions from 3.7 to 5.1 MT / year or at least quadruple the pace.

Democracy is not only about elections but also about elected leaders who listen to the voice of the people and are accountable to them. More citizen engagement in public policy and a reduction in the gap between elected leaders and their constituents is part of the solution.

While some actions are being taken, they are far from sufficient to meet our objectives. Rather than taking action, political leaders seem to be counting more on protest fatigue on the part of the youth than on addressing their demands. Why is that?

Firstly, a lot of European political leaders did not expect climate change to be at the centre of election campaigns. Most of the political parties are simply not technically prepared for that debate.

Secondly, moving towards a zero emission society is a long-term transition that goes beyond the usual political mandate (one or two legislatures). In our democratic system, quick wins or medium-term impact remains necessary to be re-elected.

Long-term benefits are not valued. Transitioning to a zero emission society might not be visible or tangible enough and may even entail risks that politicians might not be willing to take. Our democratic system is designed in a way that expects today's political leaders to take decisions which will impact the future generation at the cost of the current one. To address this issue, some suggest establishing a parliament of future generations. This second chamber would have to incorporate younger generations, who would in turn have a voice on any long-term decisions that a government takes.

A third possible reason that could render political action on climate change difficult is that actions have to be global in order to be efficient. Some argue Europe would have to act first. This is indeed one of the complexities of climate change. While Northern Hemisphere countries are responsible for about 80% of the CO^2 emissions in the atmosphere, the consequences of global warming (floods, typhoons, draughts, etc.) are disproportionately felt in the Southern Hemisphere which emits less CO^2. Additionally, the Southern Hemisphere will not be able to develop on cheap fossil fuels. This is clearly a matter of climate justice which cannot be easily sold to western constituencies.

Is this gap a question for our democratic system? I do not think so. The current gap between political leaders and youth protests for climate change is instead a symptom of too much distance between leaders and their constituents. We probably need more democracy than less. Indeed, democracy is not only about elections but also about elected leaders who listen to the voice of the people and are accountable to them. More citizen engagement in public policy and a reduction in the gap between elected leaders and their constituents is part of the solution.

[1] Cited in "Le Soir", 5/3/2019 Edition.

IS INCLUSIVE, RESPONSIVE, AND ACCOUNTABLE OPEN GOVERNMENT ENOUGH?

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Tina Divjak is the head of advocacy at CNVOS, a national CSO umbrella network in Slovenia. She has been working on different issues of NGO development since 2003. She has authored and co-authored several analyses, studies and manuals focusing on public participation in Slovenia and abroad. In 2018, she authored the study "The future evolution of civil society in the European Union by 2030."

How is it possible that, after two centuries of successfully fighting infectious diseases, many well-educated people question the usefulness of vaccines, asks Andrea Grignolio in his book *Vaccines: Are They Worth a Shot?*[1] The same applies to democracy: how is it possible that, after two centuries of building modern democratic institutions, so many well-educated people doubt its usefulness? This analogy is not a coincidence. Over the past 40 years, democracy and public health have shared similar trends. In the 1980s, right-wing populism and infectious diseases appeared to be eradicated. The rate of vaccination against measles, mumps, and rubella was over 95% while populist radical right parties were polling at about 1% in Europe. Today, the situation is both reversed and dangerous. The opposition to vaccination poses a serious threat to public health, whereas right-wing populism, which is in full swing since the refugee crisis of 2015, threatens our democracy.

The similarity does not end here. Specific to vaccination, Grignolio finds that there are three main reasons for doubting it: ideological – liberals avoid individual risks over collective rationality and accountability; informational – an abundance of information, albeit false, on the risks of vaccination; and social – (over) protective parenting on account of low and late fertility, with medical authorities losing their authority and not adapting their tactics to address people's fears. The descent of European democracies in turn has seen people becoming less of citizens and more of consumers. Bombarded with false information about migrants, nationalism has strengthened due to the feeling that those in power have betrayed their own people in favour of immigrants and Muslims. Wrongful, damaging decisions by social-democratic politicians during the 2008 economic crisis have further eroded trust in democracy.

Can our democracy be cured through inclusive, responsive, and accountable open government approaches? It goes without saying that transparent, inclusive policy making and governance are absolutely better than their non-transparent and non-inclusive counterparts. At the same time, open and inclusive approaches should not be overestimated. I often hear that if people were more involved in decision-making, they would trust it more, accordingly strengthening the authority of the institutions that implement those decisions. I am not entirely convinced that this is true. Do people feel alienated by public institutions because of their

However, we must not forget that procedures, no matter how rational, cannot ensure an equitable society; only collective political engagement can do so.

inaccessibility, or are they primarily dissatisfied with the decisions that are being taken? In Slovenia, opinion polls constantly show high levels of distrust in politics and its institutions. Only 14% of people trust politicians while 36% trust the parliament. Political alienation can be considered a matter of universal consensus. But is it justified? The Slovenian Parliament has 90 Members. In 2011, 55 newcomers sat in it, 64 in 2014, and 54 in 2018. The last five governments were led by five different prime ministers. The last three were newcomers in state-level politics, as were their newly-established parties. It would be difficult to claim for our politicians to be alienated from the people, when the majority of them are clearly "one of us".

This is why I believe that more inclusive and transparent approaches cannot in themselves restore trust in institutions. Unless we believe that open and inclusive decision-making necessarily leads to the right decisions. It is a premise which is somewhat inherent in the open government agenda. The problem is that this assumption can only hold true when power is a completely rational machine, capable of neutrally coordinating various social interests. Based on this assumption, power should be unideological, strictly pragmatic, and steeped in common sense. History, however, has taught us that the very power that claims to be unideological is always the most ideological one. Let us recall the third way style of politics. Outwardly the flagship of unideological post-politics, it is now clear that it was far more consequential in cementing the hold of neoliberalism than Thatcher's efforts.

Another problem is that the model of inclusive government inevitably lends to political lethargy: Why should we be politically engaged when wise governance can be provided by already appropriate processes? It is enough to communicate one's will from the comfort of the armchair and it will be taken into account. This is not only completely illusionary, but also in perfect harmony with neoliberal efforts to transform citizens into (individualist) consumers – an aspect that is linked to the vulnerability of democracies.

All of this of course does not mean that it is wrong to insist that governments be inclusive, transparent, and accountable. In fact, we need to be even more determined in this regard. However, we must not forget that procedures, no matter how rational, cannot ensure an equitable society; only collective political engagement can do so. Democracy will not be healed with less ideology and more evidence-based and inclusive decision making. On the contrary, it needs more evidence-based, inclusive approaches but also – more ideology! This is why, it is not enough to open up institutions and empower civil society. Collective (political) mobilisation and action on the part of people via the joining and establishing of political parties needs to be encouraged. Right-wing populism can only be defeated in elections – and this is possible only if people firmly support the ideas of egalitarianism, social justice, and liberal democracy.

[1] Grignolio, A. (2018). Vaccines: Are they Worth a Shot?. Springer.

WHAT IT TAKES TO REBUILD TRUST IN INSTITUTIONS

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Kristalina Georgieva is the Chief Executive Officer for the World Bank. Previously, Georgieva helped shape the agenda of the European Union, first as Commissioner for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response and later as Vice President for Budget and Human Resources.

As European Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid, I travelled to Haiti in the aftermath of the devastating 2010 earthquake. Over 200,000 people lost their lives and a large part of Haiti's vital infrastructure was destroyed along with homes and businesses. No matter where I went during my visit, the people of Haiti had the same message: they told me that the European Commission should not give any money to their government because it would be stolen.

At the end of my visit, I concluded that the destruction caused by the earthquake reflected a deeper problem. I was convinced that the legacy of misrule under Papa Doc and Baby Doc presented an even greater challenge for Haiti. Weak institutions and pervasive corruption meant that Haiti was more vulnerable when disaster struck, and ill-equipped to recover in the aftermath.

As CEO of the World Bank, I am committed to our goals of eliminating poverty and boosting shared prosperity. Achieving these goals is not just a matter of money, it also depends on human capital, policies for inclusive growth, and tapping into new ideas. Success meanwhile depends on effective institutions and broad-based governance.

While few countries endure conditions as tough as those in Haiti, many face a crisis of trust. We therefore need to consider how development goals can be achieved when faith in institutions is low.

Trust brings a development dividend. Countries that have low levels of trust also have lower levels of investment and, consequently, lower rates of growth. This should not surprise us. When trust in institutions is low, people are forced to find informal ways of settling disputes, women are less likely to report harassment or domestic violence, and firms are less likely to pay taxes or follow environmental regulations.

Conversely, when trust is higher, behaviour becomes more constructive. People are more willing to use financial intermediaries that help them save and leverage their money. These intermediaries are in turn more likely to do business with strangers and to set up firms, helping them specialise and achieve economies of scale. They are also more willing to invest in research and development, which in turn contributes to greater innovation.

The same applies to factors that contribute to poverty reduction. Gender equality, environmental protection, domestic revenue mobilisation – all of these depend on trust. Institutions and trust go hand in hand, each can either reinforce or undermine the other. Just as we need to understand how to strengthen institutions, we must also understand the factors that weaken trust.

Amongst the most harmful factors are corruption, inequality, lack of transparency, and exclusion. When corruption makes institutions unfair, people's belief in those institutions diminishes. Inequality weakens trust, especially when it is seen as the result of an uneven playing field. When people have no say in policy-making or do not find it transparent, they feel excluded and begin to question the fairness of the process.

Because institutions and trust are intertwined, a vicious circle can emerge. For example, a lack of faith in the process of developing public policies can lead to people losing trust and opting out, thereby robbing the resulting policy of the input which would have made it better.

Are there ways to strengthen trust in societies? And, if we find ways to halt corrosive processes, can we turn the vicious circle into a virtuous circle? At the World Bank Group, we believe the answer is yes.

Studies show that regulatory compliance goes up when there has been transparency during the process of developing regulations and when those most affected have had an opportunity to participate and provide input. Our project on measuring Global Indicators of Regulatory Governance is exploring how governments interact with the public when shaping regulations that affect businesses and people. It covers issues such as the publishing of draft regulations for comments and whether people can access all the laws and regulations currently in force.

Transparency is critical to building trust, both through expanding access to information and strengthening public participation. Transparency is the key objective of long-standing initiatives that the World Bank supports across several major sectors, including the Global Partnership for Social Accountability (GPSA), the Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability (PEFA) framework, and the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), as well as the Open Government Partnership (OGP).

Ensuring that countries can deliver core services is another key factor. The current *Innovations in Tax Compliance* project combines investments in enforcement, facilitation, and trust in tax systems, all conceived within a broader strategy to confront political barriers to reform and strengthen fiscal contracts. In focusing on fairness, equity, reciprocity, and accountability, this pragmatic approach aims to turn the vicious circle virtuous.

In these uncertain times, where there is concern about shrinking civic space and the future of fair participation in political and economic decision making, we at the World Bank Group see a need to focus on the fundamentals: building institutions based on transparency and participation, an agenda we hope Europe will continue to lead.

In these uncertain times, where there is concern about shrinking civic space and the future of fair participation in political and economic decision making, we at the World Bank Group see a need to focus on the fundamentals: building institutions based on transparency and participation, an agenda we hope Europe will continue to lead. These are the foundations for openness and multilateralism in Europe and across the broader international community.

RESTORING RESILIENCE: SOME THOUGHTS ON CURRENT CHALLENGES FACED BY EUROPEAN DEMOCRACIES AND POSSIBLE ANSWERS TO THEM

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Challenges undermining the resilience of our democracies: a European perspective

When speaking of the threats to our democracies in the 21st century, it is important to clearly identify which aspects of democracy are under attack. From a European perspective, the most threatened aspect of democracy is its liberal character. As pointed out a few decades ago by Giovanni Sartori,[1] what we call democracy in the western world is in reality *liberal* democracy, as its historic development has been inextricably linked to the understanding of individual rights that have to be protected by the state, to the separation of powers, and to the rule of law. When democratically elected politicians exhibit authoritarian leanings, or when the media calls for limiting the rights of persons holding minority views, be it on Brexit or on immigration, democracy is under threat, even if the majority of the population temporarily see no reason to worry.

Given that democratic countries all over the world are facing profound changes related to labour markets, demographics, and climate change, answers provided by mainstream politics are not always adequate and are often incomprehensible. Once again, our democracy is vulnerable to the lure of simple and aggressive answers to society's problems. Its resilience is undermined by authoritarian tendencies both inside and outside the European Union (EU). Authoritarians see robust multilateral systems, such as the EU, as an obstacle to consolidating their power around a national base. This in turn explains the increased frequency and vigour with which the EU is attacked as enfeebled, distant from the concerns of the masses, and decadently globalist.

Media reports concerning Russian state sponsorship of right-wing populist leaders in Europe suggest that Vladimir Putin's administration places considerable support with forces pitting the populations of EU countries against 'Brussels'. Within Europe, populists with a pronounced authoritarian bend – claiming to have mandate from the people that supersedes that of their opponents – capture the attention of the media by what is framed as bold and unconventional critique of the establishment or global elites. The word 'Brussels' itself is, in this context, an ideological shorthand for what is assumed to be the bureaucratic and inscrutable power of the EU institutions. While not all critique of EU bureaucracy should be dismissed out of hand, it is important

to identify manipulative strains in its use by politicians whose agenda is not necessarily compatible with liberal democracy. The European institutions are currently an obstacle in the way of some national leaders' quest to consolidate power by sidelining possible opposition in civil society, in the media, and in the judiciary. Their relevance is demonstrated by the vitriol of the attacks against them. Take Viktor Orban's anti-Juncker campaign, in which the Hungarian leader attacked the President of the European Commission while lobbying EU governments and parliaments at the same time to reduce support in the Council in favour of activating Article 7 against Hungary.

Ideas for the fightback

One of the answers to the threat faced by our democracies must lie in strengthening democratic multilateral actors – such as the EU – by adding life and conviction to the current technical functioning of their institutions. This is not an easy task given the complex nature of these institutions, but venues for more engaging communication exist. European election campaigns are a good starting point for arguing the case for a strong and vibrant European democracy. This does not go to say that such campaigns will always carry the day. The recent competition for the European People's Party *Spitzenkandidat* is a case in point. Despite a well-stated case for an open, competitive, globally connected, and modern Europe, Alexander Stubb of Finland lost to Germany's Manfred Weber – a less outspoken but more institutionally well-heeled candidate.[2] Nonetheless, Stubb's campaign inspired those who wish for an active, robust, and democratic Europe on the world stage.

> Maintaining the integrity of political parties is a boring but absolutely necessary element to regaining people's trust in democratic institutions.

Another answer, at the national level, is in re-invigorating mainstream party politics and parliamentary democracy. Political parties and parliaments do not enjoy particularly high levels of trust in most democratic countries.[3] One of the reasons may be their distance from the everyday lives of voters; another being their reputation as the cronies of lobbyists. Maintaining the integrity of political parties is a boring but absolutely necessary element to regaining people's trust in democratic institutions. One way of doing so is by reducing the influence of private donors and increasing public funding. Another way is via adequate and modern communication, which still remains puzzlingly difficult for many mainstream politicians, much to the delight of the Farages and Le Pens in our midst.

Yet, the strengthening of existing democratic institutions alone may not be enough to do the trick. Frighteningly for many, the shape as well as the content of public political debate has been irretrievably transformed by social media. Although critics of current political communication often point at its obvious failings, such as a lack of civility, fewer people dare to attack its deeper structural inequity. Due to the algorithms of commercial social media, we increasingly only see only opinions similar to our own.

This is a high-stakes issue since common debate with our opponents rather than habitually mocking or demonising them is a prerequisite for the survival of our liberal democracies.

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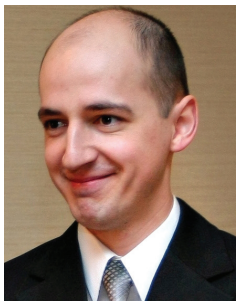
1 Giovanni Sartori (1987) Theory of Democracy Revisited (Book 2).

2 See e.g. Politico on 17.10.18, 'Alexander Stubb fires campaign starting gun' https://www.politico.eu/article/alexander-stubb-fires-campaign-starting-gun-president-european-commission-spitzenkandidat/.

3 See e.g. Inter-Parliamentary Union, Global Parliamentary Report 2017.

THE CRISIS OF REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY ASKS FOR EDUCATION-BASED SOLUTIONS



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Rarely has representative democracy come more under scrutiny than in current times. Both in Europe – where democracy took shape and evolved from a philosophical concept to an institutional type of arrangement – and in the United States – where, arguably, modern representative democracy acquired its grass-roots dimension – fundamental elements of democracy are being questioned, and even mocked, on a daily basis. It is, therefore, a challenge to draw a line between sound criticism of democracy (an intrinsic part of any regime based on civil liberties) and tolerance of anti-democratic rhetoric and actions. How did we get here? Why are populists thriving? And how can we fix this?

Politicians are rational actors. They pick up on societal cues and exploit them, sometimes cultivate them, in order to capitalise politically on the short and long term. It is a vicious circle. Populism thrives on the dissatisfaction of citizens – leading to either apathy or outright rage – with respect to the elites who receive an institutional face in key institutions and processes of representative democracy: political parties and parliaments.

The low level of trust in politicians is well-known and easy to document. Two distinct cross-national surveys on socio-political attitudes (European Social Survey [ESS] 2016; European Values Survey [EVS] 2018) paint a grim picture of how poorly citizens perceive these institutions. Both samples offer an East versus West perspective. Eastern Europeans consistently trust their national parliaments and parties less than Western Europeans, with dramatic cases such as Slovenia, Poland, and Croatia demonstrating less than 10% trust in parties and 20% trust in parliaments. Romania, which is in neither of the samples, has relatively similar scores. Western countries do not fare much better. Trust in parties is at approximately 50% in Northern-Western Europe, whereas Germany, Spain, and Austria feature well below this threshold. Generally, at least half of the citizens in Western European countries *do not* trust parties or parliaments. The problem therefore persists regardless of regional specificities. This offers huge room for manoeuvre to anti-democratic narratives and political movements everywhere.

This dissatisfaction with parties and parliaments is sometimes justified. The performance of politicians in public office is often poor and many of them

do not perceive the negative impact of their performance on citizens' perceptions of their institutions[1]. The key is to shift the focus from how we can replace parties and parliaments to how we can make these institutions function *better.*

Why should the crisis of trust in the key pillars of representative democracy scare us? Because we do not know any other kind of democracy that can function in practice. There is an encouraging, growing body of research being conducted on "democratic innovations," directing citizens towards e-tools or increasing the base and the frequency of citizens' participation, especially at the local level, through town hall meetings or participatory budgeting. However, the fact remains that representative democracy cannot function without the vehicles of representation: political parties and parliaments, connected through free and fair – *democratic* – elections. As scholars, policy-makers, or traditional and new media influencers, we must contribute to a wider understanding that the relevance of institutions and their role in the democratic architecture of a polity goes well beyond the politicians who temporarily – and often poorly – populate or lead them.

Education "on" and "for" democracy should be done consistently, from primary school through to university.

How do we do this? Through education.

The need for "open government" (with parties and parliaments) should be incorporated within political culture and values. In order for open government policies to function, we must significantly increase the level of knowledge and understanding of citizens on the roles and functions of open government in representative, democratic institutional setups. Education "on" and "for" democracy should be done consistently, from primary school through to university. Governments can be pushed to become "open" only when politically educated citizens feel government behaviour does not match their own values and expectations.

We must also add a layer of data skills to education. The current push for the use of data in policy-making can only lead to sustainable results and become successful when the level of data literacy increases for both policy-makers and media, with civil society providing oversight. What is data, how it is ethically collected, and how it is used to elaborate policies and evaluate them should be basic knowledge. Data visualisation and analysis skills should also be included in curriculum planning for all ages, building on the fact that computers and gadgets are now part of our lives from a very young age.

Trust is the foundation of democracy. Democracy requires institutions, power-sharing, checks and balances, and channels for every voice to have a chance at being heard. This in turn explains the complexity, and sometimes the difficulty, of understanding the usefulness of this construction. Without a solid foundation, this construction can easily collapse, in quite a "noisy" way, with consequences that might be foreseen owing to 20th century European history. Without a solid foundation, democracy can only be held together via a consensus of political and economic elites or through some inter-state arrangements – such as the European Union. Both have proved vulnerable or, at best, short-term solutions, often exploited by populists as being "undemocratic." In the long term, there is no other alternative to rebuilding trust at the grassroots level than through education.

[1] Tom W. G. van der Mee, Political Trust and Crisis of Democracy, https://oxfordre.com/politics/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228637-e-77.

A SHARED AMBITION IN DEFENCE OF DEMOCRACY

VĚRA JOUROVÁ

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As the 2019 European elections approach, with them comes the rejuvenation of Europe's political representation. Although I face the end of my time as Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, I look beyond the horizon with eagerness and hope, towards a time of pragmatic change for Europe. But caution prevails.

Given the recent history of election seasons around the world, I find myself concerned that we may be facing a pattern in the obstruction of democracy. Fresh examples tell us that deliberate, coordinated efforts to undermine our institutions and citizens' confidence remain a possibility via cyber-attacks, disinformation, and online manipulation by third countries or private interests.

The alarming rise of populism and backsliding in democracies around the world, the still vast gaps in equal political representation, and the technological threats by malicious groups to our dated electoral systems indicate that these upcoming elections will not be business as usual. We cannot be naïve and we have very little time to act.

There have been a few powerful wake-up calls in the past couple of years as to the need to protect elections in the digital era: the Facebook-Cambridge Analytica scandal showed how personal data can be weaponised for the profiling and targeting of voters. Social media certainly has a democratising effect on the levels of political participation, but instances of candidates' accounts being hacked and cyberattacks on elections around the world are not reassuring. This in turn has shed light on the topic of foreign interference and hybrid threats.

Of course, the digital age does not only present a threat, it also provides solutions. Online services can increase transparency and contextualise sources of election information that citizens can engage with. Initiatives supported directly by the Commission demonstrate that the best and most democratic solution to the challenges facing democracy today is an informed and aware citizenry.

Initiatives supported directly by the Commission demonstrate that the best and most democratic solution to the challenges facing democracy today is an informed and aware citizenry.

Given the very nature of our Union, endangering the integrity of the electoral process in one Member State, affects the EU as a whole. National authorities cannot address these threats by working in isolation, nor can private sector self-regulation solve it all. The Commission has, therefore, been supporting Member States with the Action Plan against Disinformation by helping them set up rapid alert systems to share information on threats to information in real time. The 2019 election to the European Parliament will be the first under the new data protection rules, covering all actors in the electoral context.

We have also been working with online platforms, which find themselves as key information engines in today's digital world, to ensure we can effectively address the disinformation threat together. Illegal online hate speech is not only a crime, it represents a threat to free speech and democratic engagement. However, this is something that can be overcome through the involvement of the platforms themselves.

European democracies are also threatened by the spread of hate speech, in particular in the online sphere. In May 2016, I initiated a Code of Conduct with major IT platforms to ensure a swift response to the proliferation of illegal hate speech. What is illegal offline should be illegal online. IT Companies have responded quickly to the challenge and two and half years on, a large majority of the flagged content has been swiftly reviewed and removed. Removing illegal hate speech and prosecuting offenders is key, yet it is not the last step. Hate speech does not only affect the safety of immediate victims, it also has a chilling effect on freedom of expression more broadly.

We cannot have faith in democracy if we do not see ourselves reflected in it. I ardently encourage Member States and political parties to increase the number of women candidates they put forward. Achieving gender equality is about making fundamental rights a reality for all. While movements are building and more attention is falling on women's rights globally, the situation in Europe is not yet near satisfactory.

When elections are free and fair, through resilient processes, openness, transparency, and engagement with citizens, we can ensure a pluralistic democratic debate free from hate speech and discrimination. The Member States and the European Union should take all actions necessary to defend their democratic processes against manipulation. In a democracy, citizens must be able to vote with the security that they are not being misled. It is our collective duty and responsibility to protect democratic processes and elections, and this is a legacy I want first for the European Union, and secondly for myself, to one day see it proudly displayed in our past.

MODERN CARAVELS: THREE ADVENTURES FROM LITHUANIA

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A few centuries ago, a caravel - a small, manoeuvrable sailing ship - was a game-changer. Crews would embark on explorations of the unknown, compelled to make new discoveries.

At Transparency International (TI) Lithuania, I often feel like a 'sociophysicist' in a modern caravel. We have to be flexible, listen to the needs of the organisations or the groups that we work with, and help them understand how they can create a good and sustainable example of transparency on their own.

It is my opinion that the low levels of trust in government and public institutions indicate that people do not believe these institutions are acting in their best interests. Being a young person myself, I often do not trust what I cannot understand. If you, like me, are interested in concrete measurable initiatives and love behavioural science, I hope these three stories will provide you with insights for your own adventures.

Our experience in Lithuania shows that maintaining a successful stance on transparency and accountability requires three key ingredients: a sense of ownership, realistic goals, and data. A proper combination of these ingredients can result in small victories that might spark a chain reaction leading towards greater improvements overall.

In the last few years, we have embarked on various expeditions: to one of the most corrupt sectors in Lithuania; to an institution with the lowest trust levels; and to communities with high potential for innovation. Our goal was to understand how small anti-corruption and transparency victories can be created together with patients, politicians, and pupils.

Would You Recommend Your Clinic to a Friend or Colleague?

Within the European Union, Lithuania has the second highest percentage of bribery in healthcare institutions. This suggests that patients do not trust the healthcare system as they believe they cannot receive good quality service without an additional payment. Given the lack of progress in tackling healthcare corruption through conventional instruments, TI Lithuania worked closely with an outpatient clinic in Lithuania to develop a measured bottom-up initiative called Vitamin Lab.[1] Vitamin Lab is a very simple and engaging interactive installation empowering patients to leave their feedback on the quality of service they receive.

Results show that patients who evaluated the clinic's service were less likely to believe that unofficial payments or gift-giving would have helped them receive better treatment. Moreover, patients who provided feedback felt more positively about the service at the clinic. This suggests that patients understand bribery as a service flaw. The more of such flaws they see, the less likely they are to recommend the service to others.[2] This initiative has also helped us start a discussion on the need for representative data and comparable indicators of the performance of healthcare institutions in Vilnius.

> Politicians increasingly understand that a good politician is a transparent politician.

Sunlight is the Best Disinfectant

One out of two Lithuanians do not trust the Parliament, while almost two thirds do not trust political parties.[3] In Lithuania, lobbying is not talked about; one might believe that our Members of Parliament (MPs) do not meet with any interest groups or lobbyists. At TI Lithuania, we decided to count the meetings with interest groups that parliamentarians had already registered. In doing so, we were trying to introduce a simple habit of transparency – encourage MPs to show which interest groups and ideas shape their political decisions.

After two years of tracking and four released reviews, the number of MPs declaring their meetings has doubled and 1.5 times more meetings have been published.[4] Politicians increasingly understand that a good politician is a transparent politician. Moreover, this small initiative has also contributed to the opening up of parliamentary data and a strong push for better lobbying regulation.

How Would You Spend 1,000 Euros?

In France, more than 80 percent of schools have introduced participatory budgeting by inviting pupils to allocate a small part of the school budget.[5] We wondered if similar initiatives in Lithuanian schools could increase the level of transparency and pupil participation in decision-making.

We are at the very beginning of two such initiatives. Yet, we can already see that pupils are actively engaging in this exercise. We have encouraged them to feel like the owners of their schools and allocate a part of the school budget (€1,000-1,500). As a result, they have come up with more than 100 ideas to improve school life: new door lockers, benches, volleyball equipment, extra-curricular classes, etc. It is very exciting to see that more and more schools in Lithuania are opening up to new ideas and decide to test innovative initiatives in their environment. This will hopefully set an example not only for other schools but also for our local politicians and inspire them to introduce participatory budgeting initiatives at the municipal level.

To sum up, if we as citizens were to better understand the inner workings of our institutions, get more involved in their activities, and engage in proper dialogue, we would have greater trust in our institutions and an increased sense of ownership when it comes to our cities.

Every summer we discuss similar adventures with the young captains of caravels from all over the world at the Transparency School in Vilnius. I believe that you too have similar stories of small victories from your country. Please feel free to share them with me at ingrida@transparency.lt.

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1 https://www.transparency.lt/en/pacientai-kurie-ivertina-savo-apsilankyma-pas-gydytoja-maziau-linke-duoti-kysius/.

2 https://www.transparency.lt/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Social-design-experiments-in-healthcare_2016.pdf.

3 http://www.vilmorus.lt/index.php?mact=News,cntnt01,detail,0&cntnt01articleid=2&cntnt01returnid=20.

4 https://www.transparency.lt/en/in-the-last-2-years-the-number-of-parliamentarians-who-declare-their-meetings-with-interest-groups-or-lobbyists-has-doubled/.

5 https://budgetparticipatif.paris.fr/bp/jsp/site/Portal.jsp?document_id=3158&portlet_id=171.

DEMOCRACY AND DEVELOPMENT, THINKING FORWARD

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The European Union (EU) together with its member states provides more than half of the official development assistance globally. Democracy, rule of law, and human rights are at the very heart of the development policy strategy laid out by the European Consensus on Development. The EU's work to strengthen democracy enjoys widespread support among EU citizens - 73% of them[1] believe that the EU should do more in this regard.

How can the EU contribute to democracy and to resilient societies in a meaningful, sustainable, and constructive way?

Firstly, the EU and its members should lead by example. We need to get our own house in order. Even when this is the case, democratic decision-making will not always bring about quick fixes to complicated problems. It may look messy, especially when profiled by social media or news outlets keen to entertain. However, in strong democracies, state institutions serve as cornerstones for stability and for corrective measures, when needed.

Gender equality is a cost-efficient way to promote sustainable development and democracy.

Democratic development, openness, and human rights are stagnating globally, with progress in some countries and deterioration in others. Half of those[2] who are on the move today as refugees or migrants leave authoritarian countries. The majority try to head towards liberal democracies with better levels of well-being. In our modern and united world, people share similar dreams: They want to live in peace, learn, earn a living for their families, and contribute to their societies in a meaningful way. They want to have a say in the decisions that affect their lives.

There is plenty of hard evidence on how democracy and openness foster peace and internal stability. Through democratic processes, people have a channel to express their grievances and influence the manner in which their problems are solved. Promoting local and regional democracy deserves more attention. The UN and the World Bank joint report on "Pathways to Peace"[3] underlines the central role of local and regional democracy in fostering peace and stability.

Another area where European experiences may help others is on the peaceful change of power after elections and the sharing of power in coalition governments. This can serve as well-meaning advice even if it is not always welcome. The Nordic Countries are among those who have tested coalitions for a long time. They all were originally poor. Finland was once a fragile and deeply divided country. At one point, a few wise politicians on both sides of the divide realised that the nation would not survive if power was not shared and the sense of inclusiveness among people strengthened. Finland's current international record, be it in economic competitiveness, stability, education, or happiness, speaks for itself.

Secondly, supporting democracy is not only about what we do, but also how we do it. Promoting democracy often requires strategic patience. The expression of the will of people in each country is key. The EU's external action and development policy can play a supportive role, but the EU must act efficiently and in a timely manner. In non-democratic countries, many have considered options on how to proceed towards more openness and change in an orderly manner. Collapse is not usually a desirable option, but reversing earlier development may also be a dangerous choice in our modern and integrated world. It does not create stability over the long term.

Thirdly, the EU already has excellent policies and instruments available today. Action should cross the different silos between development cooperation and other policy areas. Specific to development funding, about 13% goes to support government and civil society. EU delegations conduct regular political dialogue with partner governments whereby democratic values and principles are addressed. Support is given to the government's capacity to deliver, to democratic actors, as well as to democratic practices. Providing support for good governance, openness, and anti-corruption is essential. Election observation is an EU trademark.

The old saying "you cannot eat democracy" is also true. Democracy will function well only when jobs and livelihoods are available. Education and the role of a fact-based and free media are equally important. During elections, people need to be able to assess candidates so as to make rational choices. Politics and entertainment should not become one and the same anywhere.

In rare cases, the EU and its members need to be ready to use an unpleasant tool and ask the question: can tax-payers' money be disbursed to support a government that turns a country in a negative direction with its own deliberate decisions?

Fourth, in times of Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals, Europe has a special role to ensure that "no one is left behind". Deep divisions, inequality, and resentment undermine democracy both in Europe and around the world. Gender equality is a cost-efficient way to promote sustainable development and democracy. In humanitarian crises, the most vulnerable are the most in need. There are more people on the move[4] now than in the aftermath of the Second World War – and a significant number are forced to flee their homes within the developing world. Women, children, and people with disabilities deserve extra attention. This approach goes to the very core of the values which the EU represents.

To sum up, it is time to upgrade the EU development policy. The next EU development cooperation programming phase provides an important opportunity to safeguard democracy, human rights, and rule of law.

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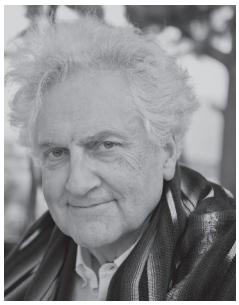
BUILDING THE COMMON GOOD



LEON KRIER

Leon Krier is an architect, urban planner and pioneering architectural theorist in promoting the technological, ecological and social rationality and modernity of traditional urbanism and architecture; he is considered the “Godfather” of the “New Urbanism” movement.

There is no doubt that the current parliamentary democratic system is facing a widening distrust amongst the electorate. Promises which are trumpeted during elections are rarely honoured on the national level, even less so on the level of the European Union (EU). What is broadly perceived is that, far from working for the common good, our democracies serve powerful partial interests. Here, it is not the form of government but the choices and goals which are disputed.

The question is whether more open democracy will necessarily build the common good. We are currently witnessing the opposite tendency. The European Leviathan is in permanent overdrive under pressure from powerful industrial lobbies. The Parliamentary machinery multiplies laws and edicts without a declared goal or limit to guide it. Ever-expanding bureaucracy is needed to police metastasising regulations. The premises of the permanent lobbies, marauding the Parliaments in the three EU Capitals, rival the surfaces occupied by the institutions. The beehive activities in parliamentary lobbies singularly contrast with the gaping abandon of the Parliamentary Hemicycles.

I limit my discourse to architecture and urbanism and their role in building the common good. My hypothesis is that the common good is not an inevitable product of democratic action. It is a project that must be the shared and declared goal of a society and transcend political, religious, social, racial, and linguistic differences.

Few people are conscious of the fact that the common good is given substance by the form of cities, their built fabric, streets, and squares. These have united Europe despite profound divisions of class and customs of religious believes, of ideological narratives, of spoken languages and idioms. The European public realm, a unique gift of the Greco-Roman Christian civilisation, is the neutral ground where the spectrum of human diversity mingles and interacts in a peaceful and constructive rivalry. Without that public space, democracy could not have developed, and without it democracy will not survive.

The model most fitted to the gregarious nature of humans – which no sophistication of circulation and communications technologies can supersede – is the polycentric city of independent communities: the aggregation of self-sufficient mixed-use, human scale urban quarters. Gated single-use developments of whatever covenant cannot replace the formative role of public space in maintaining democracy.

If unregulated by graceful manners, etiquette, and style, the expressions and exertions of power inevitably breath a coarse despotism. What holds true for human interaction is critical for buildings where political power is exerted and represented.

National parliaments in most democratic countries are still housed in beautiful classical palaces. Nevertheless, the buildings of the

European institutions in Brussels, Luxembourg, and Strasbourg stand out on account of their architectural muteness, their hostile anonymity, their massive size, their shallow symbolism, and above all a sovereign disregard for their urban and cultural contexts.

Instead of symbolising the democratic and aesthetic virtues championed by Europe for millennia, EU institutional buildings project the image of a faceless bureaucracy and dictatorial technocracy. For over 60 years, the un-loved EU palaces have demonstrated that those responsible for their form ignore the ethics and aesthetics that civilised power keepers – independent of beliefs and ideologies – employed through the ages to sustain their authority, to respect it, and, in the end, make it meaningful and legitimate.

The vast territorial restructuring and cultural revolution engineered by modern industrial democracies has eroded the fabric of the common good, which has been second nature for generations of Europeans. Despite its monumental failures, the electorate is made to believe that town planning and architecture continue to be in competent hands. They are not. Modernist planning, building industries, and administrations

A small new capital of Europe — heir to the Greco-Roman Christian polis — should be created on the Rhine as a model and symbol of Europe's perennial social, ethical, and aesthetic values.

are experts at routinely realising mono-functional, horizontal and vertical sprawl, suburban dilution, and central hyperconcentration. Territorial mono-functional zoning is what they practice and what they exclusively believe in and support. Dominated by global multi-nationals and criminal cartel interests, they legislate the anti-city and dismantle civil society. As a result, the traditional European built environment, a world of beautiful and durable objects of use, is being replaced by a disenchanted world of short-term objects of consumption. These policies are aesthetically and ecologically unsustainable.

The current tropes of "greening" single-use mega-structures, of "climate protection" and "*Energiewende*" of "freedom, security, progress" are not credible social narratives. The Marxian hypothesis that industrial progress would see the "reign of liberty" eventually triumph over the "reign of necessity" is belied by the trivial pursuits of an alienated, unemployable, and disoriented leisure society.

A global critique of capitalism/socialism without a global political, economic, technical, and cultural project amounts to a mere declaration of submission to fate.

The New Traditional Architecture and New Urbanism, based on long-term, millennial experience is the only coherent theory and practice of environmental design to this day. The many architects who practice it around the world do so despite their modernist architectural education, against overwhelming peer pressure, yet sustained by wide public support and market demand. Architects and planners have the choice to serve a futureless folly or to plan and build the common good.

The EU should embrace this project and lead the way. A small new capital of Europe – heir to the Greco-Roman Christian polis – should be created on the Rhine as a model and symbol of Europe's perennial social, ethical, and aesthetic values.

IT IS ABOUT BOTH SOCIAL AND POLITICAL TRUST

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Have our institutions and governments become much worse over the past few decades? Is trust higher in many authoritarian regimes because they perform better? Possibly not, but the manner in which political communication has evolved, news is produced, amplified, and consumed has changed dramatically. Citizens, especially in democracies, have more information than ever before about our decision makers, the mistakes they make, and the crimes they commit. People also see and feel the increasing inequality within countries and around the globe, which understandably leads to frustration at being left behind and feeling excluded. More information about our problems might make us more desperate and hopeless.

Still, I believe that the solution to distrust is not to lower the level of transparency or restrict the press. Rather, it is the inclusion of citizens into decision-making and oversight procedures that would enable them to have a say and take responsibility. Most of the global challenges the world faces today, such as poverty, inequality, environmental issues, migration, terrorism, violent conflicts, unemployment, and automation, require long-term, collective global efforts. This will arguably also need changes in our attitudes, thinking, and even our way of life. Both political and social trust is critical in bringing about systemic change, especially when change is uncomfortable for individuals and its positive effects might not be visible immediately. To regain trust, efforts have to be made across various levels of government and society.

Invest in education

Because of the tremendous amount of information we have to digest on a daily basis, the complexity of the challenges we face, and the rapid change of technology, production, and labour, we need well-educated, creative citizens who understand how the world around them works and are in possession of the skills and knowledge to shape it. This does not simply mean a flexible labour force for the economy, but rather minds that are autonomous, or, in other words, conscious citizens. Good education for all has to become as fundamental a right as the air we breathe.

Value honesty

We make mistakes every day. We arrive late to meetings, damage our cars, or forget our loved ones' birthdays. In our personal relationships, we have learnt how to understand each other's weaknesses, flaws, how to say sorry, and how to forgive. But we are much less

To regain trust, efforts have to be made across various levels of government and society.

forgiving of our representatives and decision makers. We have to learn to differentiate between failure, damage done by mistake, well-intentioned poor decisions and shameless corruption. Honesty should be valued more than short-term success. This also applies to political campaigns. Respect for human dignity also means that voters or consumers are considered as grown-ups when addressed by politicians or advertising companies.

Stop impunity

One reason for the general mistrust towards elites stems from the perception that the 'big fish' are never caught, that the elite – be it politicians representing interests of certain lobbies instead of their electorate, or CEOs of car manufacturers that simply cheat with emissions to make bigger profit while neglecting the aspects of our health and the environment – can do whatever they please. The work of Romania's National Anti-Corruption Directorate (DNA) has shown how important prosecution of corruption is in parts of the world where citizens rarely witness that corruption and mismanagement has consequences.

Strengthen communities

Lack of trust towards government and institutions is especially problematic if it is accompanied by low levels of social trust. In several countries, citizens have greater trust in the police than in their fellow citizens. While being more connected than ever virtually, we might feel lonelier than the generations before us. A new social fabric has to be created in many of our societies. The balance between self-interest and community-interest has to be tipped towards the latter.

Political reforms can also support this process. More competences have to be delegated to the local level of public administration to create new forms of participation and encourage collaboration between individuals and micro-communities. Regaining and sustaining trust can only be possible by claiming political space for citizens and their communities. This is why working on the local level has become a strategic activity for the anti-corruption watchdog I am working for, K-Monitor.

And this is also the reason why I find the subnational level as one of the most inspiring areas the Open Government Partnership (OGP) is involved in. I would want for this pillar of open government to rapidly expand and welcome cities and regions of countries where governments have not realised the importance of openness and participation. In so doing, the OGP can play a pioneering role in strengthening new forms of participation and restoring trust within societies.

A MESSAGE OF HOPE

MICHAEL O'FLAHERTY

Michael O'Flaherty is Director of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights and adjunct Professor of Law at the National University of Ireland Maynooth. Previously he served as Chief Commissioner of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and as a member of the United National Human Rights Committee, latterly as a Vice-Chairperson.

In the run-up to the crucial May 2019 elections for the European Parliament, what we have 'always' taken for granted – liberal democracy, respect for universal human rights, and the rule of law – no longer remains uncontested, while their defence increasingly resembles a retreating rear-guard action. Collective memories of the horrors unleashed by totalitarian regimes upon Europe fade, or, worse, are transformed into a nostalgia for a glorified utopian past.

Ten years have passed from the greatest economic crisis since the Great Depression which triggered an unprecedented crisis of democratic legitimacy. In some European countries, this led to electoral gains for populist, even extremist,[1] parties which challenge the very essence of liberal democracy, some speaking openly of a new "illiberal state" to best protect the interest of the "nation".[2]

Much evidence has accumulated during that time pointing to the dangerously rapid erosion of the post–war institutional architecture which ensured peace and democratic stability in Europe: only last year, the report of the Bertelsmann Stiftung on the Sustainable Governance Indicators suggests that in the EU "the model of liberal democracy is subject to growing pressure – in some countries this means that even central democratic and constitutional standards such as media freedoms are already severely damaged or undermined".[3] The FRA's[4] own survey work over the past few years highlights the persisting plight of large shares of the diverse migrant or indigenous minorities living in the EU, in particular Roma, Jews, Muslims or LGBTI people, as well as the critical challenges facing civil society organisations working to protect and promote human rights.[5]

> We need a vision for Europe's future, defined in terms of participation, non-discrimination, free choice, and pluralism, and where fundamental and human rights are used to realise that vision at the most local level.

Mainstream political parties reacted with surprise and annoyance. Many tried to lure back voters by adopting a harder stance on migration and security (both core citizens' concern across the EU);[6] others responded to economic grievances through job creation, better wages, pension security, etc. The European Commission, guardian of the EU's Treaties and its Charter of Fundamental Rights, pursued a precarious balance: they responded to popular concerns about security and migration whilst trying to reinforce social protection and improving rules on working conditions through legal measures under the non-legally binding 'new European Social Rights Pillar'. This initiative tries to counteract the consequences of the EU's

efforts after the economic crisis to maintain fiscal discipline, necessary for the survival of the EU's common currency – a core aspect of European integration. It also has the potential to reduce persisting inequalities within and between Member States.

The Commission's suggested policy responses, if effectively and swiftly implemented, could resonate positively with many. And yet, others, mostly from low and middle-income groups,[7] could retain their societal pessimism, "an additional and possibly overarching characteristic of populist radical right voters"[8] if they continue to feel and fear that they and their families continue to lose out when others are gaining.

What to do? We need a vision of democracy that builds on the wisdom born out of past experience to describe a future where the potential of modern technology is used to both improve material well-being and enhance citizens' participation in decision making, thus serving democracy; where education does not merely transmit knowledge, but serves to raise citizens, women and men respectful of each other, thus promoting human rights; where the operation of justice makes everyone feel, in the words of Hannah Arendt, to have a "right to have rights", thus building confidence in the rule of law.[9]

Such a vision was articulated by the over 700 participants of the Fundamental Rights Forum organised by FRA last September. A vision for Europe's future, defined in terms of participation, non-discrimination, free choice, and pluralism, and where fundamental and human rights are used to realise that vision at the most local level. A vision for a democracy that redistributes "the power to speak to the public, so that the arguments and positions of all the people are taken into account in public decisions and in establishing the rules, laws, and institutions."[10]

This is a resounding message of hope, matched with an urgency to make use of the existing tools and mechanisms that governments have to address threats to democracy and reinvigorate the notion of all human rights for all. They have already committed to achieving this by the end of the next decade in the global plan of action, Agenda 2030, and its 17 sustainable development goals. This will require globally, in a European, and in every national context the development of unprecedented levels of synergy and cooperation. This will fuse the productive energies of every citizen, every community and organisation, every level of government to deliver what can transform nostalgia – for a chimeric past – to vigorous hope for a better future.

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1 For example, the 'Popular Association – Golden Dawn' a political party represented in the Greek Parliament; its leader and several members are currently on trial for forming a criminal organization (Article 187 par. 1 Greek Criminal Code).

2 Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, speech at the 25th Bálványos Summer Free University and Student Camp, July 30, 2014, available at https://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/prime-minister-viktor-orban-s-speech-at-the-25th-balvanyos-summer-free-university-and-student-camp.

3 Bertelsmann Stiftung (2018), Policy Performance and Governance Capacities in the OECD and EU Sustainable Governance Indicators 2018, p. 52.

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5 FRA (2018), Challenges facing civil society organisations working on human rights in the EU.

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TRANSPARENCY, DISINFORMATION, AND NEW LEGISLATION FOR POLITICAL PARTIES

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Kajsa Ollongren is the Dutch Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations since October 2017. In that capacity she is responsible for the Open Government Partnership Action Plan of the Netherlands.

As Interior Minister, I deal with matters relating to the state of democracy in the Netherlands on a daily basis. There are two aspects that I would like to single out here: trust in political parties and the fight against disinformation. These affect transparency – the heart of the work of the Open Government Partnership – they reach beyond the interests of the Netherlands, and they are interlinked.

The situation in the Netherlands is a relatively healthy one. Trust in democracy is at a high level. The same goes for trust in Dutch elections, which has been reaffirmed time and again by foreign observers. We are regularly invited to talk about our achievements in this regard. This high level of trust is a precious asset that we obviously cherish and wish to maintain.

We have a long tradition of attaching great importance to the independence of political parties. Therefore, we are in principle wary about imposing laws or regulations on the nature, shape, and funding of political parties. This means that, unlike a number of other western democracies, the Netherlands does not as yet have a general law on political parties. The question, however, is whether – in the light of the online revolution – this position is still adequate in present times.

Technological developments are moving ahead at a rapid pace all over the world. They bring benefits, but at the same time also make us vulnerable. The internet gives us a greater degree of freedom in airing our opinions, thereby facilitating a fundamental constitutional right: citizens' ability to challenge and to be critical. On the other hand, we are also witnessing foreign interference in democratic elections, such as through the dissemination of disinformation. These developments are occurring at a time of increasing polarisation in our western societies. Heated debates and strongly held opinions have always been part and parcel of everyday life. And that is as it should be. However, with the increased use of the internet, it is becoming increasingly difficult to trace texts back to their original authors.

To prevent the exploitation of society's differences through disinformation, there needs to be greater clarity as to where the information comes from. The Dutch cabinet would like to see political parties set an example in this regard. That is why I am proposing the creation of a Political Parties Act.

The battle against disinformation and for transparency in politics has to be fought jointly by governments and the private sector.

The key word in the new act will be transparency. We seek to introduce greater transparency into how political parties are funded while making online election campaigns and political advertisements more transparent, as a means of combatting disinformation.

In addition to existing rules, we are proposing to prohibit all foreign donations to Dutch political parties, with the exception of donations emanating from the European Union member states. Financial ties with political parties in the European Union fall under the free movement of capital and the close relations that most Dutch political parties have with their European sister parties. Dutch citizens who are eligible to vote but reside outside the Netherlands can still donate.

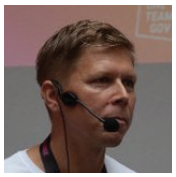
We are also aiming to make political campaigns more transparent. Until now, there have been very few laws governing electoral campaigns in the Netherlands. However, a State Commission recently recommended that Dutch political parties taking part in elections to the House of Representatives should be obliged to report on the digital instruments that they use during election campaigns. Possible examples include data analysis; micro targeting; and other digital technologies for profiling citizens, reaching them, and providing them with information. The State Commission also advocated compulsory transparency regarding political advertisements so that it is immediately clear what they are and who is responsible for putting out the message contained in them. We will be giving these recommendations our serious consideration and incorporate them into the new act, where possible.

Fortunately, we are not the only ones. These matters are coming under scrutiny in other countries as well. The exchange of knowledge and best practices at the European level can be greatly beneficial. That being the case, researchers in the Netherlands studied the impact of social media and search engines, in the run-up to our regional elections of 20 March, and continue to do so ahead of the 2019 European Parliament elections. They have also been looking at the transparency of the origin of information from search engines and on social media.

In this matter, technology companies play a key role. For example, Twitter recently announced that it will only allow political advertisements in the European Union from parties that have registered on the platform in advance. This will improve transparency to Twitter users as to who has paid for a particular advertisement and whom it is intended for.

The battle against disinformation and for transparency in politics has to be fought jointly by governments and the private sector. It is a positive sign that companies such as Facebook, Google, Twitter, and Mozilla have signed our European Code of Practice. However, the code will only be of use if it is actually complied with. Let us, as governments, call upon these companies to ensure that they adhere to these agreements and work jointly to safeguard our democracies from online interference.

ROLE UPDATE: THE CIVIL SERVANT IN THE NETWORKED SOCIETY



ADRIAN SOLITANDER

PIERRE MESURE

JENNY PERSSON[1]

@OneTeamGovSE

One Team Gov Sweden is the Swedish chapter of a global community, working together to radically reform the public sector through practical action. One Team Gov is driven by optimism and the desire to make things better, and united by a set of core principles.

When reading about Sweden being the most democratic country in the European Union (EU)[2] you would be forgiven for thinking that there aren't too many challenges to democracy here. Look beyond the rankings, however, and you will find room for improvement.

Amidst the talk about democratic values, it may be easy to forget that the quality of impartial and effective public service is more relevant to citizen satisfaction with democracy than the representational processes themselves.[3] Developing the role and health of public service is therefore an essential part of taking care of a democracy.

Recently, a Swedish chief physician publicly shared some of her experiences of public administration: "People do not want to hear more ill-prepared proposals from ignorant, controlling politicians, regional directors, or administrators. They do not want more middle managers, management support, guides or coordinators coordinating stuff they do not want. They do not want to hear the word production unit when talking about health care. No more steering groups where no one dares to be honest."[4]

Reports and our own observations suggest that similar experiences are common amongst public servants everywhere in Sweden, and arguably in many countries throughout the EU. Command-and-control governance, excessive outsourcing of competence away from the public sector, monolithic procurements, and excessive supervision are all part of the problem.

It is clear that these are structural issues that require political attention at the highest level as they ultimately threaten the quality of democratic outcomes. Nonetheless, across many countries in the EU and beyond, we see civil servants who proactively want to help renew the public sector from within. In a few countries, including Sweden, our grassroots movement for the renewal of the public sector goes under the name of One Team Gov. We bring together anyone interested in contributing, regardless of their sector, seniority, skills, or background to both voice and develop ideas for reform.

Here are a few ways in which we think the role of public servants and the principles of civil service could be updated to achieve better democratic outcomes:

The quality of impartial and effective public service is more relevant to citizen satisfaction with democracy than the representational processes themselves. Developing the role and health of public service is therefore an essential part of taking care of a democracy.

Bring back the human into complex problem-solving

First, we believe decision-makers must abandon the dogma that there is one way to 'do' reform. Civil servants should not create huge plans or think that they will get everything right from the beginning, but should instead be humble in their approach and focus on asking the right questions to get to the best answers. New policies should be tested with real people – citizens and public servants – as early as possible and refined with their needs in mind.

Invest in in-house digital competence

Second, underinvestment in the digital competence of public servants on all levels is becoming a major problem for running secure public services and handling citizen data in a fair and democratic manner. It is difficult to exercise control of external suppliers' operating staff, thereby leaving sensitive citizen data at the risk of leaks or misuse. It is crucial that the public sector acquire IT competence of its own. This means giving public servants better opportunities to improve their digital skills as well as attracting and developing new in-house digital talent.

Embrace technology for democratic checks and balances

Third, instead of demanding ever-increasing command-and-control structures, we believe that the media, politicians, and supervising authorities should embrace technology to a much larger extent than they currently do so as to make the public sector more accountable. Data-driven and open government approaches remain underutilised in this context. There are approximately 90 supervisory government agencies at the national level in Sweden. We believe that reinvesting some of their current efforts into the best of digital thinking for more data-driven accountability would pay off immensely.

Finally, let us recall that enormous sums of money are spent on administration at all levels of government and the public sector instead of creating real value. Real value for citizens can only be created when their knowledge and insights together with those of public servants are included irrespective of hierarchies and silos. For this purpose, open and informal networks like One Team Gov provide a powerful platform and should be considered as part of the professional development of public servants in the networked society.

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[1] All active in One Team Gov Sweden, a grassroots movement based on seven principles for the reform of the public sector. https://www.oneteamgov.se/.

[2] EIU Democracy Index 2018.

[3] Boräng, Frida & Nistotskaya, Marina & Xezonakis, Georgios. (2017). The quality of government determinants of support for democracy. Journal of Public Affairs. 17. e1643. 10.1002/pa.1643.

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ACCOUNTABLE PUBLIC GOVERNANCE: FROM "DECIDE-ANNOUNCE-DEFEND" TO "ENGAGE-DELIBERATE-DECIDE"

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The context within which governments operate is changing: hierarchies are turning into networks; consultations are taking the form of co-creation and citizen assemblies; collective wisdom and action are playing a bigger role than 'mere' political will; policy-making is increasingly being based on data and open knowledge; bureaucracies are being replaced by citizen-friendly (e-) services and processes; and strategic planning is being complemented by agile experiments.[1,2] All of this requires a fundamental rethink of the role of the public sector.

The accountability of the public sector lies in the manner in which processes are undertaken, that is, in the architecture of governance. How does this governance reveal itself? One can, for example, judge whether its structures and processes are open and transparent, whether the public sector facilitates dialogue and discussions, whether it inspires collective action and uses collective wisdom, and how deftly it solves conflicts and co-creates strategies to protect public interest. One can also gauge by whether the public sector values the pioneers, innovators, and activists who campaign for sustainable development, equal rights, or reclaiming public space.

Enabling governance in the Nordics

The Finnish government is an inspiring example in creating enabling environments: four years of testing experimental governance have led to the emergence of a culture of trust and courage,[3] with failures as a logical part of the learning process. The government task force accomplishing this feat produced and disseminated knowledge, built networks, and supported the planning and implementation of experiments. The Finnish government has realised the power of co-creation in the context of diminishing resources and ageing society.

Despite Estonia's reputation as a digital pioneer, public sector innovation is lagging behind. Ministries work in silos and digital means are still believed to solve big problems. There are some attempts to foster design thinking and experimentation, but the potential for innovative governance in this small, flexible, and tech-savvy country is on hold.

Having said that, Estonian policy-making is inspired by citizen assemblies. Three assemblies have been held by civil society organisations and think tanks during the past six years, with the most recent set up by the Ministry of Environment. The Forestry Assembly[4] selected approximately 40 people by lottery, who – over two weekends – learnt about the state and the future of forestry, discussed alternatives, and submitted 100 suggestions to the ministry. The proposals served as an input to the forestry development plan.

The previous three assemblies in Estonia[5] - People's Assembly on Elections, Engagement and Parties in 2013; People's Assembly on the Future of Ageing in 2017; the deliberation series #HowDoWeLast? in 2018 and 2019 - have introduced Estonians to knowledge-based discussions and collective decision-making amongst

a diverse group of people. These processes have combined offline and online tools – as observed with the platform rahvaalgatus.ee – to facilitate and increase the role of deliberative democracy.

Citizen assemblies as a way of governance

Such people's assemblies in Estonia, but also in the UK, Belgium, Mongolia, Tanzania, Iceland, and many other countries have proven that designed deliberation helps overcome ignorance and polarisation on thorny political issues; focus on common goals, such as sustainable forestry in Estonia or rewriting the constitution in Mongolia and Iceland; and build a more conducive atmosphere for consensus. The more citizen assemblies there are, the more familiar people will become with this model of policy-making. They are bound to question why more issues could not be decided via this method. Having realised the potential of empowering citizens, the German-speaking region in Belgium is remodelling its governance[6] by creating a permanent citizen assembly with randomly selected inhabitants.

With an enabling and inspiring public sector, citizens will need no longer measure their trust in institutions, as trust will be embedded in the design of deliberative governance.

Using and enabling collective wisdom and action can quickly replace the by now outdated policy-making creed of "Decide-Announce-Defend-Abandon". With the "Engage-Deliberate-Decide-Implement" way of governance,[7] solutions tend to be more innovative and policies more legitimate as they have more "owners". Although assemblies are advisory in nature, the proposals hold the weight, substance and legitimacy of public voice on an issue.[8] It is therefore crucial that citizen assemblies be commissioned by those who have the responsibility to implement policies – local, regional, or national governments.

The ancient Greeks managed to organise public policy by deliberation. Why can we not do the same now? If there are doubts as to how a small group of people, referred to as the mini-public, can be entrusted to decide challenging issues for the whole of society, then one could point them towards the Centre for Deliberative Democracy at Stanford University, which has developed technological tools to bring deliberations to the broad public. Could this method be scaled up to tackle major topics such as the climate crisis?[9]

The EU's Future of Government 2030+ scenarios[10] predict that citizen assemblies will become mainstream in governance. With an enabling and inspiring public sector, citizens will need no longer measure their trust in institutions, as trust will be embedded in the design of deliberative governance.

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1 https://apolitical.co/solution_article/trends-government-innovation/.

2 https://states-of-change.org/stories/towards-an-experimental-culture-in-government-reflections-on-and-from-practice.

3 https://apolitical.co/solution_article/finland-experimental-culture-government/.

4 https://www.envir.ee/et/eesmargid-tegevused/metsandus/metsanduse-arengukava-aastateks-2021-2030.

5 https://rahvakogu.ee/in-english/.

6 https://www.politico.eu/article/belgium-democratic-experiment-citizens-assembly/.

7 https://static1.squarespace.com/static/53f5e2eae4b0593b948c9e4c/t/547f6e43e4b0c27762e5896e/1417637443121/feb09_engage_deliberate_decide.pdf.

8 https://www.involve.org.uk/resources/blog/opinion/citizens-assembly-climate-change-how-would-it-work.

9 Ibid.

10 https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/publication/eur-scientific-and-technical-research-reports/future-government-2030.

BATTLES FOR IDEAS

MICHALIS PERSIANIS

Michalis Persianis is Corporate Affairs Director at Bank of Cyprus. Previously he worked as a correspondent for the Wall Street Journal and Dow Jones from 2011 to 2014, and as Head Editor for Economy and Finance at Kathimerini newspaper (Cyprus edition) from 2009 to 2014.

We stand before one of the most difficult predicaments of post-Cold War politics in Europe. Four elements are working in tandem to increase the sense of alienation of Europeans from their polity, while also boosting fringe parties in many European Union (EU) member states – First, a consistent failure of technocrats to provide solutions to enduring problems; Second, technological change that caters to the massive but rapid consumption of partial information; Third, an increased demand by citizens to be included in decision-making as they search for solutions to persistent problems; and lastly, the stifling of public debate – on which vibrant liberal democracies depend – by the consensual politics of the largest parties in Europe.

It is clear that the financial malaise, the migration crisis, continued security concerns, and a growing anxiety over job security in the face of new technologies have together catalysed the feeling that our system of political organisation is exclusive, opaque, and ultimately ineffective in the face of mounting problems.

In the context of increased demands, impotent delivery by technocrats, and the feeling of alienation, citizens turn to sensational, quick answers that they can process in the brief amount of time that they consume posts, blogs, infographics, and slogans.

Each individual or group quickly sharing the information is primarily interested, not in its intrinsic usefulness, but in capturing a shred of attention amongst its massive audience. In this process, information is prone to be eroded, toxified, and fragmented into bits digestible in the brief attention span of social media.

In consuming and propagating partial, sensationalist slices of information, citizens become polarised, disenchanted, and disaffected, unwilling to spend more than a flake of attention. None of this will change soon, and political parties catering to fear and populism from the fringes of the political spectrum are poised to continue expanding their base across Europe.

The remedy can be no other than a daring, aggressive social and economic legislative agenda on a European level.

Political parties and movements that define themselves as "anti-establishment" thrive on these polarising "slivers of information" of our age by providing simple but faulty solutions to the very complex problems that consensual politics and glorified technocrats fail to address.

Ironically, the consensual politics adopted by the political and economic forces of "the establishment," only exacerbate their position through the homogeneous texture of their politics. The major European parties have not locked horns over ideological grand themes since the 1990s, with some brief and ultimately impotent examples like the Working Time Directive that led to national-level mobilization in 2006, including demonstrations led by labour unions.[1]

Apart from clustering mainstream parties as "the establishment" in the eyes of citizens who feel marginalised, these tactics also elevate the role of technocracy. Technocracy, however, has failed to deliver solutions. This can arguably be attributed to the European Commission's sole right to initiate legislation. The results tend to be politically pasteurised half-measures driven by lobbying and backroom haggling. Above all, they often seem to be arbitrary, as they address problems but seldom do they provide tangible solutions.

Above all, the European political debate is focused on "managerial" issues. This is important, but it is not enough. Discussions on integration, on subsidiarity, on deeper collaboration, and on the nature of the future EU polity have been relegated to the role of moot intellectual exercise. One is hard pressed to find an iota of vision in the Commission's ten priorities – even in areas such as migration and the EU's role as a global actor where a new "geometry" of EU capabilities is manifestly needed.

The remedy can be no other than a daring, aggressive social and economic legislative agenda on a European level. Apart from a deeper monetary and banking union, the EU needs a stronger social agenda that can bring to question its very structure. Should there be a European right to access universal healthcare? Should there be a European set of principles on housing? Should migration become an outright EU competency? Where is the Petersberg-task army we were promised as part of our humanitarian vision and our role in the world?[2]

Regardless of the answers we may come to, such questions would refocus public discourse back to the principles and foundational beliefs of the EU rather than banalities like the infamous inspection rules on cabotage. Ultimately, they would disaggregate "the establishment" into distinct parts, reinvigorating the very public debate that makes liberal democracies so vibrant.

It would also cause intense debate and political positioning without jeopardising the democratic process. Liberal democracy thrives on battles for ideas and on a vibrant public debate.

Lastly, a more aggressive, radical, and daring legislative program would perhaps produce more useful results than those seen in several decades of Commission-initiated legislation, precisely because our union is in need of more aggressive solutions.

The democratic process will surely water-down such proposals to achieve majorities. However, such moves will at least reinvigorate a meaningful public debate that can crowd out some of the more populist slogans.

This is not enough, to be sure. But it would be a good start to fighting back.

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1 https://www.euronews.com/2006/02/12/thousands-demonstrate-against-eu-services-directive.

2 http://www.weu.int/documents/920619peten.pdf.

MEANINGFUL CIVIL PARTICIPATION AND AN INDEPENDENT CIVIL SOCIETY – ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF OUR COMMON EUROPEAN FUTURE

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Europe is our joint special project based on liberal values, human rights, and fundamental freedoms.

Currently, in some contexts, the rise of populist nationalism, ideologically motivated discrimination, and exclusionary narratives expressed in public spaces destabilise our *vivre ensemble*, or our ability to live together, and our relationship with others at all levels of society.

In democratic states, civil society organisations play a key role in fostering social cohesion by acting as a bridge between different segments of the population. Moreover, civil society organisations collectively represent a political force by acting as agents of change. Today, a lot of them are under attack for that role. Stifling their voice has become a subtle exercise through the (ab)use of legal regulations, such as those of the Schengen area or the overinterpretation of international recommendations or standards like the guidelines[1] of the Venice Commission on Fundamental Rights, or the joint OSCE/ODIHR and Venice Commission Guidelines on Freedom of Association.[2]

Massive protests, such as those of the yellow vests in France, highlight the disconnect between policymakers and vulnerable citizens. From a human rights perspective, social rights strengthen peace and democracy. A sharp fall in the trust placed by individuals in political systems of representative democracy primarily demonstrates that the social contract between those who are governed and those in power must be strengthened, protected, or, in some cases, even renegotiated. The solution should include greater accessibility to public institutions and stronger civic participation, as proposed in the Council of Europe Guidelines for civil participation in political decision-making.[3] A mutually beneficial partnership with service-oriented Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and sustainable civil society funding mechanisms are important factors in the success of the multilateral framework.

One can be certain that the final face of Europe will depend on our collective effort, the strength of our commitment to defend liberal democracy, and a pluralistic and diverse society that defines our relationship with one other.

We should bear in mind that without guarantees for civil society independence at the country level, there is no guarantee that independent CSOs will participate at the international level. Civil society is self-governing. As such, we must believe in its self-generating capacity. However, in order to exist and further develop, civil society needs to see that its actions bring about change.

Solidarity within Europe cannot be achieved without civil society. Together with CSOs, public institutions should strengthen their responsiveness and make their expertise both visible and transferrable. Connections with citizens and grassroots organisations cannot be made via technological tools alone – they should be made by the people and for the people. Technologies can help us better understand the impact of our actions, but they cannot replace our empathy or sensitivity. We should not be afraid of people whose nationality, religion, and belief systems are different from our own. For that to happen, we need to talk to one another and not simply go our separate ways, following our own interests.

Only together can individuals and CSOs improve democracy in a more efficient way. Every individual is fully responsible for exercising, respecting, and observing human rights on a daily basis. However, leaders have a specific duty in democratic debate to shed light on the challenges facing communities and groups in a manner that puts forward their positions without necessarily seeking to impose them upon the whole of society.

To make democratic institutions more accessible and transparent, we should not wait until they open themselves up to us. We must question them, oversee them, and exercise our rightful democratic control.

It is only by listening to citizens and considering minority interests that the public sector can adopt citizen-oriented policies and provide answers to their respective needs. In order to increase public trust and make accountable policies, this voice and contribution through direct citizen and civil society participation should be taken into account during all stages of the decision-making process, including the design of policy agendas. Improving access to information should be prioritised at the central and local levels where citizen associations play an increasingly important role in developing and providing public services.

There is still time to act before Europe arrives at the point of no return. Is its ability to reinvigorate itself not one of the crucial characteristics of democracy? One can be certain that the final face of Europe will depend on our collective effort, the strength of our commitment to defend liberal democracy, and a pluralistic and diverse society that defines our relationship with one other. The 2019 European elections present a crucial moment and a chance for the Europe that we want to defend.

[1] https://www.venice.coe.int/WebForms/pages/?p=02_Rights&lang=EN.

[2] https://www.osce.org/odihr/132371.

[3] https://www.coe.int/en/web/civil-society/guidelines.

HEALTH OF DEMOCRACY IN EUROPE: BUILDING TRUST VIA LOCAL GOVERNMENT

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Democracy is the best system of decision-making that exists in society. It has its faults, and we have to look at it critically. Democracy has made it back to the public agenda, and it must be renewed. Thinking local and community decision-making are key to reshaping our concept of democracy. Governments need to reshape democracy to leave no one and no place behind, to give people the feeling that they can decide their future and influence how they live. Governments need to not only talk about participation but also re-shaping models. We need to ask ourselves how we want to work, produce, and consume. This is a dialogue that can only take place in democratic societies.

The 2019 elections to the European Parliament take place at a crucial point when we are witnessing the rise of hate speech and growing conflicts throughout the world. At stake is the defence of democracy, European integration, our humanist tradition, and the rule of law.

There is a growing loss of public confidence in elections and democratic institutions, which has resulted in increasingly low abstention rates. The European Union's 2018 Eurobarometer showed a fall in public confidence in the main national political institutions. However, the survey also found that despite a general climate of mistrust in public affairs, there is a high level of trust (over 50%) in locally-elected representatives. Mayors and councillors are the representatives closest to citizens. This makes the grassroots level ideal for participatory democracy: it ensures citizen participation in public affairs and decision-making and provides an excellent platform for the use of innovative practices and tools.[1]

The Treaty of Lisbon recognises the local autonomy of European local authorities as a necessary criteria in achieving a more democratic and participatory Europe in a system of multi-level governance, elevating them to the category of essential future actors. This is why the European Union and the central governments must draw on this trust in local government to rekindle democracy. Now more than ever, we must recognise local democracy as a central pillar of European democracy and consider the territorial network of municipalities as an asset to ensure a strengthened democratic space and re-establish trust in representative democracy.

Against this backdrop, local and regional leaders are fighting to include more diverse voices in policy-making and develop policies that respect human rights, foster gender equality, and combat discrimination. Reinvigorating confidence in our institutions requires putting our youth at the centre of decision-making, collaborating across all spheres of government, and ensuring the full and active participation of women as agents of change.

Several local and regional governments have already adopted measures to promote participation, transparency, and accountability (e.g. neighbourhood assemblies

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in Barcelona and Paris Metropole meetings)[2] and build territories that innovate and co-create services, tools, and solutions together with their citizens. These actions are all battling the decrease in trust.

From this perspective, there are five fundamental elements that will further help in achieving the above objective: 1) strengthening local and regional government capacities on open government and designing legal and institutional frameworks that are accompanied by sufficient human, technical, and financial resources; 2) promoting governance models (such as multilevel, public-private) and legal frameworks that support decentralisation; 3) promoting the commitment and co-responsibility of both political actors and citizens; 4) fostering more democratic and transparent European and global governance by ensuring local and regional governments have both a strong voice and representation; and 5) strengthening and developing spaces for local government and community organisations to share, learn, and exchange.

Citizen confidence in the legitimacy of institutions is crucial, but it is equally crucial for public authorities to undertake political projects capable of connecting with society. A bold plan – such as the 2030 Agenda – that puts people at its centre of the political agenda is needed. This new global framework fundamentally reconceives the role of local and regional governments and recognises their importance in solving major democratic, environmental, economic, and, social challenges.[3,4]

Along this vein, our constituency of local and regional governments in Europe – represented in the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR)[5] and in United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)[6] – is committed towards building a more democratic Europe from the bottom up by developing learning systems, technical capacity exchanges, and consultation mechanisms so as to develop joint priorities and support the work of the Community of Practice on Transparency and Open Government.[7] The values promoted by the 2030 Agenda and its complementarity with the Open Government agenda indicates that local and regional governments are key to making this a reality. We should uphold these values and see them as tools for the construction of a stable, sustainable, inclusive, peaceful, and democratic future for Europe.

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1 The Congress' contribution to the reflection on the future of the Council of Europe (Helsinki Ministerial Session 16-17 may), Report, CG36(2019)08prov, 18 March 2019. Available at: https://search.coe.int/congress/pages/result_details.aspx?objectid=090000168093bfe1.

2 UCLG (2017). GOLD IV - Fourth Global Report on Decentralization and Local Democracy: Co-Creating. The Urban Future: the Agenda Of Metropolises, Cities And Territories. Available at: https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/goldiv_en.pdf.

3 UCLG and World Bank (2008). "Decentralization and local democracy in the world: first global report by United Cities and Local Governments". Barcelona.

4 UCLG (2016). "Sustainable Development Goals: What local governments need to know". Barcelona.

5 See http://www.ccre.org.

6 See http://www.uclg.org.

7 See http://opengov.uclg.org.

POLITICS – A PERSONAL AFFAIR, A PUBLIC AFFAIR

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I am going to start with three different frames that might seem out of context. Frame one: it is 6:55am on Monday, 26 February, 2018, when my phone buzzes with the message: "an investigative journalist and his fiancée have been murdered". Frame two: it is 1:30am on Monday, 5 March 2018. Seven young people are gathered in a living room of a small apartment, finalising a press release demanding an investigation and calling for a "new trustworthy government". They soberly sign the document. Frame three: it is 5:15pm on Friday, 9 March 2018. I am standing in a Bratislava square filled with nearly seventy thousand people. There are three steps in front of me and a microphone to the left. A deep breath and a greeting to the thousands – the gathering *For a Decent Slovakia* is about to begin.

These frames are primarily personal. Tossed right into the course of my nation's history, I await my own reaction and that of the community.

The brutality of Ján Kuciak's and Martina Kušnířová's murders affected large masses of people in Slovakia and abroad because they linked everyday innocent life with the power of the state. The murders revealed how some politicians diminished politics. They viewed "politics" as an opportunity to acquire assets for themselves and for those close to them. It was the absence of reflection that should have followed the young people's murders, together with the overall state of the country, which sent people into the streets.

The long-lasting absence of a reflective dialogue resulted in politics being viewed as something not meant for the ordinary person, let alone something an ordinary person could significantly impact. Sprinkled with a populistic fear of the unknown, such as migration, power was shifting from the hands of ordinary people to authoritarian alpha males.

The fallibility and unsustainability of this kind of politics was clearly shown by the *For a Decent Slovakia* gatherings. Peaceful, determined, and non-violent, the demonstrations called for citizen-centric politics. Politics, what authentically might be called "service". This kind of reaction may well be a response to the democratic deficit in current political discourse and the winning streak of populists, linked to the rhetoric of fear and hatred.

These challenges cannot be taken on by daily mass demonstrations. The answer lies in the incorporation of politics into people's daily lives. Citizens are an active part of a community's story and should participate in community dialogue.

This transition to authentic dialogue requires further steps. It is clear that these must originate from both sides – citizens and the state – both of which need to meet halfway.

The time has come, especially in post-communist countries, to get rid of the mindset that politics only concerns our parliaments and is something dirty and corruption-riddled. Politics is the ability to develop ideas and solutions that help make our lives and the lives of those around us better. It is also the ability to co-create and be part of a community that wishes for and realises such solutions.

Depending on the level of complexity, the variety of solutions, and the size of the community, we can also talk about the degree of politics. Yet, in principle, politics is also the ability to convince people about the necessity of home renovation, and the passing of laws that lead to road and highway renovations. The key element here is not the difficulty of the problem, but the authentic participation of individuals in finding solutions, otherwise referred to as the subsidiarity principle or the decentralisation of power.[1]

Steps taken by the state should include the setting up of mechanisms that engage citizens in the shaping of their environment. When using the term 'state', we somehow think of geographical borders, airports, large cities, or mountains. However, talking about individuals and the state leads us to the idea that the state primarily comprises our surroundings and the community we live in. It is therefore the state's job to ensure that communities, made up of individuals, are heard and engaged. Methods used to achieve this should include decentralisation, open dialogue between citizens and institutions, as well as an active education towards broad common dialogue.

The ability to lead a dialogue – personal, community, and nationwide – in the times of social media and information overload is our biggest challenge.

This type of politics will naturally bring about leaders or "politicians" who view communities, regardless of their size, as fellow citizens and not as marketing targets.

The ability to lead a dialogue — personal, community, and nationwide — in the times of social media and information overload is our biggest challenge.

Without bearers of change none will occur, and without change, no real bearers will come. The circle, as old as democracy itself, is not closed, however. Quite the contrary, it can be entered at any time. It is a highly interpersonal matter filled with dialogue – the relationship between I and Thou and I and Us.[2] Active community dialogue is a way of overcoming the crisis. A deep breath and a greeting to the thousands – this is a start of a dialogue that makes public affairs personal and that allows personal affairs to become public.

[1] http://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/7/the-principle-of-subsidiarity.

[2] http://www.the-philosophy.com/buber-i-thou-summary.

FROM ALGO-DEMOCRACY TO POLIS: RECLAIMING HUMAN PARTICIPATION IN A POST-HUMAN WORLD

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In a rather ironic fashion, and without etymological commonalities, the term *algo-democracy* may simultaneously refer to two things: a democracy that is heavily mediated by algorithms or an ailing democracy. 'Algo' can either stand for algorithm or pain.[1] More often than not, it stands for both.

At the turn of the 21st century, the Internet was seen as a boundless space where humans could exercise their autonomy away from the interference of governments and private interests. Almost fifteen years ago, the vision of open government and inclusive democracy seemed imminent – an aim to be achieved through the opening of data, the use of digital platforms, and e-voting. The emergence of social media platforms, as a global space for public discourse, was originally hailed in the context of the Arab Spring and the Occupy movements. The platforms were seen as instruments of liberation, which when combined with the reclaiming of physical public space, could lead to regime change and the return to original forms of direct and inclusive democracy.

Today, we know better.

If there is one certainty, it is that algo-democracy does not only involve humans. It needs algorithms to operate. These algorithms are not necessarily designed to maximise participation, inclusiveness, or diversity. Instead, they are written to intensify the experience of social media users, extract data from audiences, and produce value for the platform owners and the businesses that develop around them. The instrumentalisation of human-to-human interaction through constant monetisation of surveillance, which Shoshana Zuboff has described as "the Big Other",[2] has a profound effect on the ways in which we collectively take decisions: it not only influences our social media behaviour, but also the way in which we choose our governments.

> It is only when we understand how algorithms work that we can assess their effect on public participation.

The problems with the model of the Big Other are manifold: in an attention-driven economy, the algorithm is incentivised to reinforce rather than challenge our opinions. This leads to what is known as the "echo chamber effect" which prohibits the essence of democracy from emerging: public discourse is replaced by a conglomeration of enclosed discussions of like-minded people that

do not interact with each other. For each of them, their social circle – as mediated by social media – *is* the reality. Algo-democracy thus produces a rhizome of enclosures rather than a Polis: by fragmenting public dialogue into likeminded pieces, it nurtures extremism under the guise of radicalism, increases segregation, and prevents citizens from identifying the points they have in common.

Is there something we can do about this?

Reclaiming collective human subjectivity is a good starting point. This means that, above all else, we need to have a better understanding of how algorithms operate. Algorithmic transparency should be the first priority of our digital Polis. It is only when we understand how algorithms work that we can assess their effect on public participation.

This is not an easy task legally or practically.

Legally, we need to introduce legislation that requires transparency, accountability, and participation, not just on the part of governments, but also global private entities that operate digital platforms. We currently have an idea of how it can be done: the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) concerning algorithmic transparency with respect to personal data is a limited yet good starting point. The new EU Copyright Directive[3] requiring digital platforms to clear copyrights before they share content so as to ensure equitable and fair information dissemination is another limited but equally important example. Finally, the European Commission and Federal Trade Commission (FTC) fines to FANGs[4] violating competition law, with all their limited effect and ex-post operation, are a good illustration of imposing sanctions when competition law and, hence, market openness is violated to the detriment of both business players and consumers.

Practically, we need to develop mechanisms for understanding and making use of algorithmic transparency in a meaningful and functional way. The Creative Commons experience demonstrates that complex legal documents, such as copyright licences, may be simplified through the use of icons and with the aid of software. Various Codes of Ethics, such as the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) Code of Ethics or the UK Data Ethics Framework; Algorithmic Impact Assessments, such as the ones proposed by the European Parliament; the FTC or the ACM and other forms of self-regulation and reflexive regulation may contribute to identifying solutions that increase transparency and accountability in the operation of algorithmic systems.

Overall, there is no one-size-fits-all approach. However, we have the beginnings of a solution, provided we are willing to take the necessary steps to implement it. The youthfulness and vigour of Athenian democracy was, to a large extent, the result of the *demos* having a sense of ownership of the *polis*, of developing a collective subjectivity through a process of public discussion, open participation, and collective decision making. If we wish to make our algo-democracy truly democratic, we will need to reclaim this human subjectivity. This will not happen through a neo-luddite abolition of algorithms, but rather a consistent global effort towards algorithmic transparency, corporate accountability, and inclusive human participation.

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1 "Algea (Ancient Greek: Ἄλγεα; singular: Ἄλγος) is used by Hesiod in the plural as the personification of pain, both physical and mental." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Algos.

2 https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2594754.

3 https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2019/04/15/eu-adjusts-copyright-rules-to-the-digital-age/.

4 Facebook, Amazon, Netflix, Google.

EMPOWERING CIVIL SOCIETY FOR BETTER CONTROL OVER DIGITAL PLATFORMS

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The emergence of the World Wide Web almost 30 years ago profoundly transformed our societies by allowing billions of people across the world to connect and exchange information; opening up new ways of thinking and empowering civil society to monitor governments, uncover corruption, overthrow dictators, and even strengthen democracy.

In fact, free and open access to the Web has become so crucial today that the United Nations Human Rights Council recognises internet access as a fundamental human right and affirms that "the Internet is one of the most powerful instruments of the 21st century for increasing transparency in the conduct of the powerful, access to information, and for facilitating active citizen participation in building democratic societies." This potential for increased transparency has empowered civil society to profoundly reshape the way in which we understand democracy at a time where nearly 80% of the world's population can read and write. It has also helped create the underlying trust in our institutions and social cohesion, thereby allowing our democracies to remain strong under pressure.

While our governing institutions have started the necessary transformation to allow for an enhanced public oversight, new opaque actors, sometimes manipulators or criminals, have emerged with the advent of the digital revolution. Today, billions of people experience the Web only through a limited number of enormous privately-owned companies, built with the objective of maximising their profits within the new Attention economy.

To be clear, we should not be advocating for a shift in the objectives of these companies. Although it is important to recognise the contribution of these companies in helping our democracies adapt to the new paradigm of open government, it is not their role to reshape the social frameworks of our political commitments. Instead, if we are to reinvigorate our European democracies and restore trust in our institutions, we need to challenge the *status quo* and re-politicise – in the most noble sense – the collective definition of our social values. In other words, computation should never replace the political life of a community as the basis for governance.

It is now time to apply the core principles of open government — transparency, social participation, and accountability — to the giant tech firms.

Indeed, if free and open access to the internet is a fundamental human right, then we cannot allow a handful of platforms to build the codes and algorithms that will ultimately define which opinions or ideas are shared and what values should be protected or banned. These decisions should be taken in complete transparency and after collective social participation, at an institutional level, enabling both governments and civil society to hold these firms accountable for their actions.

The first step to reinvigorate democracy in Europe is therefore to agree, at the EU level, on a new legal framework imposing a much higher level of transparency on these actors. This obligation of transparency will enable civil society to co-create, alongside the brightest minds from the business, technological, government, and academic sectors, the tools required to tackle the threats to political freedom.

An initial measure towards transparency was recently taken with the signature of a pledge by social media platforms to improve the scrutiny of their online political advertisement placements. However, this is far from being sufficient and some companies have been very slow in implementing the measures they agreed to. Instead, the new regulatory framework needs to impose much stricter transparency requirements that should also be extended to certain algorithms used by these platforms. France is committed to pushing some of these measures during its G7 presidency this summer.

In the past decades, we have collectively understood, as stated by Karl Popper,[1] that an open society can be brought about only if the individual citizen is able to critically evaluate the consequences of the implementation of government policies, which can then be abandoned or modified in the light of such scrutiny. It is now time to apply the core principles of open government – transparency, social participation, and accountability – to the giant tech firms and empower civil society through the use of our collective intelligence and to critically evaluate the consequences of certain codes and algorithms. This is essential to achieve a new equilibrium of democracy and rebuild trust in our institutions across Europe.

[1] Thornton, Stephen, "Karl Popper", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2018/entries/popper/.

IMPROVING GOVERNMENT RESPONSIVENESS AS A WAY OF REGAINING CITIZEN'S TRUST AND WILLINGNESS TO ENGAGE

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There are no shortcuts in the fight to increase citizens' trust in institutions and their willingness to participate. It is everyday work that requires tireless energy and vigilance in listening to and understanding the public and responding to received policy inputs. This is one of the main lessons I have drawn from my seventeen-year experience of promoting a more enabling environment for civil society development and strengthening relationships between citizens, CSOs, and governments.

When reflecting on the root causes of the lack of citizen participation in the EU, my first intuitive reaction is that the crisis of trust in institutions is directly related to the crisis of institutional responsiveness, primarily at the national level. The remedies to this crisis need to be sought mainly in changing the manner in which the governments of EU member states accommodate public policy inputs on a daily basis.

During my leadership of the Croatian Government's efforts in transforming practices of public consultations and policy dialogue with CSOs and citizens, we witnessed a striking phenomenon of an almost 5000% increase in citizens' comments on new legislative initiatives in just three years. In addition to other intervening factors during that period – such as having more open government strategies with more proactive communication of public consultations through social media – the marked increase in willingness to participate was indisputably linked to a significant improvement of the quality of the institutional response to inputs received in drafting legal and policy acts. When all government bodies started to publish detailed reports on the results of public consultations, with personalised, elaborate, and well-argued responses to every citizen or organisation on why their policy inputs were not accepted, the interest in taking part in public consultations started to grow radically.

Building government capacity in conducting meaningful and effective public consultations and leading open and inclusive policy dialogue is an essential investment in the health of our democracies.

The impact of institutional response to policy inputs from online and offline consultations on future participation of citizens and interest groups is still an under-researched topic. There is as yet not enough empirical evidence to suggest that users who receive personalised responses to their inputs, are more motivated to continue participating in future policy debates. However, Croatian experience and feedback from users shows that a personalised institutional response to contributions may increase trust in the meaningfulness of the process and enhance the willingness of citizens and organisations to contribute to policy making processes.

Despite an obvious administrative burden, this practice of personalised institutional responses has been integrated into the central online platform for e-consultations, which has been used by fifty Croatian government bodies, generating continuous increase of new users, and making Croatian "*e-savjetovanja*" platform a real success story. Improving and maintaining the quality of institutional responsiveness has required strong central policy coordination, and more than eighty training sessions for hundreds of civil servants from all government bodies, in less than three years.

Building government capacity in conducting meaningful and effective public consultations and leading open and inclusive policy dialogue is an essential investment in the health of our democracies.

In addition to online interactions, we also need more direct one-on-one opportunities for national government officials (but also MEPs and other representatives of EU institutions) to have in-person conversations with members of local communities. Officials also need to respond to the needs and issues raised by citizens and their associations in the different phases of agenda-setting, formulation or implementation of different policies. The proposal of the EU's new Rights and Values Programme[1] should not only offer more opportunities to build innovative and creative models of citizen engagement and participation, but also to improve the responsiveness of EU member states to citizens' and CSO inputs as a crucial precondition for mutual trust-building.

My recent experience of leading EU technical assistance projects supporting Western Balkans governments has helped me realise how strongly the health of EU democracy and consistency in safeguarding EU fundamental values correlates with the credibility of the EU in advancing essential rule of law and democratic reforms in the immediate EU neighbourhood - amongst both the current and potential candidates for EU membership.

Governments of the EU member states need to start leading by example when it comes to safeguarding civic space and enabling meaningful public participation in decision-making processes. This requires time on behalf of public officials, citizens, and CSOs alike. Deeper relationships and mutual trust can develop even from a short five-minute conversation.

Most of us feel frustrated and worried about the direction that our countries and the EU as a whole, are taking. The way to move forward needs to be based on creating a more favourable environment for the work and development of a vibrant civil society and an independent media, and on nurturing proactive transparency and open data policies. Most of all, the way forward needs to begin with one conversation at a time.

[1] https://www.europeansources.info/record/proposal-for-a-regulation-establishing-the-rights-and-values-programme/.

DOES THE EU WANT WHAT ITS NEIGHBOURS NEED?

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Soft power works when a country or a bloc of countries "gets others to want what it wants".[1] For the European Union (EU) to succeed with soft power, as coined by Joseph Nye, key stakeholders in aspirant members of the club, and in neighbouring countries, must first find the EU's culture and ideology both attractive and legitimate.

Well before that, however, opinion-shapers in the respective countries have to come to terms with the prevailing and emerging trends in political and cultural identity at home.

The pendulum of political popularity has rarely been as volatile as today, where we see new political forces emerge overnight and sweep to power, such as Nikol Pashinyan in Armenia and now Volodymyr Zelenskiy in Ukraine. Some anti-establishment movements are targeting corrupt elites and calling for more accountability to citizens, but others are promoting intolerance and the rejection of the full participation of minority groups in society. In some countries, the volatility reflects a crisis of trust in democracy, and even more so in governments per se.

In the aftermath of the Arab Spring, hopes for more democracy were dashed in many countries. In the Western Balkans and, more recently, in Moldova, we have seen EU-oriented political parties become increasingly dominated by corrupt oligarchs and a false choice posed to citizens of a pro-EU government versus a pro-Russia regime, when all people really want is an honest government that puts in place economic policies that promote sustained prosperity. That priority overrides citizens' preferences for particular foreign policy orientations.

The attraction of closer integration with the EU should be obvious – from access to markets to the freedom to travel, study, and even work in EU countries – but the benefits of democratisation, strengthening of the rule of law, and justice for all are valid even without the perspective of EU membership.

This is why the focus of the EU and its neighbours should be on sustained good governance, democratic practices, and institutions for the long term – regardless of any timetable for EU membership. Sticks and carrots run the risk of sparking counter-movements channelling frustration with protracted EU membership efforts into a more nationalist, inward-looking politics. This phenomenon is partially evident in the politics of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Turkey and of Milorad Dodik in the Serb-majority entity of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Indeed, the confidence to combine an embrace of democracy with preservation of traditions, such as religion, can avert what Ivan Krastev has called the "return to tradition" following the disappointment of the quest for, or imitation of, the "normality" that the EU was perceived to embody.[2]

Trust in the EU varies significantly in the EU's neighbourhood. In Morocco 64% trust the EU, in Jordan the figure is 60%, and in Algeria 49%, whereas in Tunisia only 39 % do so.[3]

As part of its Open Government Partnership (OGP) strategy, Morocco is focusing on the younger generation and building a digital presence to improve access to information and citizen participation in government. Out of the 18 commitments in the Moroccan 2018-2020 National Action Plan, six are digital initiatives.[4]

In Tunisia, the lower level of trust in the EU might be counterintuitive as "for many Tunisians, the EU and its member states still represent a model to be achieved", argues Cengiz Günay.[5] However, Günay makes a point that resonates with Krastev's allusion to the need for locally owned democratic development. "Over-reliance on Western/ European guidance has thwarted the advancement of independent and creative home-grown approaches and solutions to domestic challenges."

The EU is the only foreign institution trusted by the majority of citizens in the six Eastern Partnership countries (61% in 2018). The EU enjoys the highest levels of trust in Georgia (73%) and Armenia (70%). Around two-thirds of Moldovans and Ukrainians also trust the EU.

In contrast, two-thirds of citizens are not satisfied with the way democracy works in their country. Moldovans are the most dissatisfied (81%). Only one in four Eastern Partnership citizens trust the parliament and one in three the government. In another nod to the importance of the social cohesion aspect of tradition, religious authorities appear to be the only ones towards whom trust outweighs distrust (57% versus 34%).[6]

In the Western Balkans, the least trusted institution is the parliament (28%), followed by the courts (30%) and the executive (31%).[7]

A more hard-hitting approach from the EU should put open government and transparent justice at the heart of the agenda.

In Armenia, protester-turned-prime minister Nikol Pashinyan has stressed time and again that he is "accountable directly to the people". Pashinyan's direct approach – calling hundreds of thousands of Armenians to gather in public squares to prompt the resignation of the previous government – is mirrored by Zoran Zaev, the Prime Minister of North Macedonia, who staked everything on resolving his country's name dispute with Greece and then put the result to the people in a referendum. Although the result was far from assured, like Pashinyan, Zaev did not wait for international actors to set the agenda. Both countries face huge challenges, including the need to sustain trust in political institutions and the wider political spectrum.

The development of the fourth OGP Action Plan in Armenia gained pace after Pashinyan became Prime Minister. According to Tatevik Margaryan, "civil society launched a large scale awareness-raising and consultation", driven by "renewed energy in the country brought by the change of government". The general belief in the political will to reform "has generated much-needed enthusiasm to contribute ideas on how to make the government more responsive to citizens' needs", resulting in a more ambitious Action Plan, driven by the crowdsourcing of ideas from all ten regions in Armenia.[8]

The fourth OGP Action Plan of North Macedonia is supplemented by an Action Plan for the Parliament, which includes a commitment to improve citizen participation in the Assembly's legislative and supervisory process.

Apart from Skopje, the Western Balkans is awash with tense political divisions. Albania, Montenegro, and Serbia have been witnessing mass

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demonstrations by opposition forces every weekend for much of 2019, albeit led by opposition leaders that inspire little confidence amongst the population.

To rebuild trust, citizens must above all be confident that the justice system is not marred by corruption and political manipulation.

Effective anti-corruption agencies, supported by independent prosecutors and judges, are a top EU priority, which in turn makes it a priority where the local needs and donor priorities converge.

A more hard-hitting approach from the EU should put open government and transparent justice at the heart of the agenda. Local experts should be trained and empowered to develop solutions that will work in the local context. International support could take the form of secondment of experts who have taken centre-stage in turning around justice systems in other countries, but the principal outcome must be solutions that inspire trust because they are tailored to the local context and local priorities.

This should be complemented by international support to democratic actors in bringing citizens into participatory decision-making processes – to hold authorities to account and to monitor reforms in the justice system. Civil society actors who undertake this effort must also go beyond capital cities in gaining the public's trust, including in more tradition-bound communities. Much like the EU, civil society must start by "getting others to want what it wants".

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6 ECORYS (2018). *Annual Survey Report. EaP Regional Overview – 3rd Wave*.

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8 https://www.opengovpartnership.org/stories/building-on-momentum-co-creation-insights-armenia.

THE OPEN GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIP is an international multi-stakeholder initiative that aims to secure concrete commitments from governments to promote transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption, and harness new technologies to strengthen governance. To participate in OGP, countries must endorse a high-level Open Government Declaration, deliver a National Action Plan developed with public consultation with civil society, and commit to independent reporting on their progress.

For more information about Open Government Partnership, please contact the Support Unit.

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