

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

2-3 May 2023 | European University Institute, Florence

Abstract

This workshop is a collaboration between the EUI's Interdisciplinary Research Cluster [Transnational Democracy in the 21st Century](#) (TD21) and ARENA's network of excellence EU Differentiation, Dominance and Democracy ([EU3D](#)), itself part of EUI's [EUI DiCE network on Differentiation: Clustering Excellence](#). It will explore alternative conceptual frames for what we may call "Transformative Transnational Governance" in the 21st century.

*

The world is stranded in a no-man's land between the post-cold war order imagined by the west and an as yet undefined post-western world in which big and middle-ranking powers from the global south claim a much bigger say. Russia's war against Ukraine has given rise to a surprising resilience and cohesion among advanced democracies in the face of Putin's threat. But the conflict has also highlighted the equivocal position of the global south where most states see no reason to "side" with the west or the east, preferring instead to tread their own strategic path.

We ask what the EU could and should do against this backdrop. We posit that much will rest on the fate of democracy, democratic resilience and democratic innovation in its midst as well as in the wider world. Resilience is generally understood as the ability to maintain, or bounce back to a stable equilibrium. But in a situation of external and internal challenges brought about by deep structural change, even the capacity of states and peoples to agree on what might constitute a stable equilibrium is part of the challenge.

One hypothesis is that the 'look and feel' of such an equilibrium is key to the ongoing credibility of the EU in the world as is its contribution to what we refer to here as transformative transnational governance. Arguably, if it is not possible to return to status quo ante, sustainable transformation lies with more radical democratic innovations and renovations which put in question entrenched structures of power. And on this count, the EU has much to learn from many places in the rest of the world.

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

benefit from collective intelligence beyond the diplomatic and technocratic worlds? How do we amplify the transformative power do democratic innovations?

Sponsors:

This event is organised in the framework of EU3D, a 4-year research project concluding at the end of July, which has analysed the conditions under which “differentiation” in the EU and beyond is politically acceptable, institutionally sustainable, and democratically legitimate, given the spectre of dominance, and the conditions under which EU reforms may fail or succeed.

The pan-EUI TD21 Cluster serves as a site for interdisciplinary exchange and collaboration by bringing together all researchers at EUI interested in the challenges facing democracy and its variants, through the concurrent transformations of institutions, networks, societies and political actors at supranational, macroregional, national and subnational levels around the world. Normatively, it supports projects of democratising transnational governance, both at the European and global level including through the potential for creating new democratic practices.

Programme

Tuesday, 2 May

Sala del Consiglio, Villa Salviati | Via Bolognese 156 - 50139 Florence (FI)

14:30 – 16:00 From the EU to the global and back: Differentiated integration and transnational democracy

We will start by discussing how to best address the democratic challenges associated with differentiation at the European and global levels. We will ask normatively whether and how it is possible to ensure that the complex mosaic of cooperation beyond the state is conducive to democracy rather than dominance with emphasis on an EU inside-out perspective. We are interested in basic principles as well as the range of mechanisms available to the EU and in what nature and type of relations among actors would ensure democracy in a highly differentiated context.

Discussion starting point: **Kalypso Nicolaidis** and **Franca Feisel**

Roundtable kickoff: Elizabeth Maloba, Olivier de France, Stefano Merlo

16:00– 16:30 *Coffee break in the Courtyard, Villa Salviati*

16:30 – 17:45 Segmented or Plural: The EU's political and legal order, prospects for 'bouncing back'

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

Discussion starting points: **John Erik Fossum** and **Max Steuer**

Roundtable kickoff: Pablo Puertas Roig, Aris Georgopoulos

17:45 – 18:45 *Reception in the Courtyard, Villa Salviati*

Wednesday, 3 May

Sala del Consiglio, Villa Salviati | Via Bolognese 156 - 50139 Florence (FI)

9:30 – 10:30 Culture at war: Russia, Ukraine and the fight for the European public

This session will focus on the challenge that Russia's war in Ukraine constitutes for European culture and values, on the ways in which Europe is responding to it, and the democratic dimension to this response. More specifically, the paper suggests that the war in Ukraine is testing Europe's credibility in its declared attachment to the values of openness, diversity, freedom, and solidarity. The study builds on the contribution from ECFR's 27 associate researchers who conducted research in their respective countries.

This allowed us to explore the different approaches that the EU27 have taken so far to the challenges in question.

Discussion starting point: **Pawel Zerka**

Roundtable kickoff: Zakaria Al Shmaly, Jennifer Welsh

10:30 – 11:00 *Coffee break in the Courtyard, Villa Salviati*

11:00 – 12:30 **Concluding session: Democratic resilience and transnational governance**

This session will build on the discussions of the previous sessions to draw some prescriptive lessons on the democratisation of both the external relations of countries or regions, and the design of transnational governance *per se* to serve more transformative goals. What role for institutions versus civil society in this respect? How far do we get by borrowing democratic concepts from the world of states and adapting them to the transnational context? Is democratic experimentation or innovation the key to transformative transnational governance? If so, how?

Discussion starting point: **Philippe Schmitter**

Roundtable kickoff: Elizabeth Maloba, Kalypso Nicolaidis, John Erik Fossum

12:30 – 13:30 *Lunch in the Courtyard, Villa Salviati*

Other relevant events at the EUI on 3 May

“The diversity of pre-1945 international economic thought”

[Register here](#)

17:00 – 19:00 CEST | Sala dei Cuoi, Villa Salviati

<https://www.eui.eu/events?id=558038>

“What next for EU climate policy?”

[Register Here](#)

17:00 – 18:30 CEST | Court Room, Palazzo Buontalenti

<https://www.eui.eu/events?id=557667>



EU3D is funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme Grant Agreement No. 822419