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New tendencies in EU governance and the future of the EU governance model – redefinition of old concepts

The explanation of the EU governance model as inter-governmental or federal entity have been today superseded by the multilevel governance model. Multilevel governance gives a valuable account of the way the EU functions from the perspective of the organisation of its public administration institutions. However, its present organisation is the result of the pressure of tendencies that have been present informally or tacitly on subnational and global level since the 1970-1980 and that, in the case of the EU, have been turned into institutional principles of governance.

This institutionalisation is especially visible in the framework of the structural funds, whose gradual development was since the very beginning motivated by the reduction of disparities between the different member states of the Union. Yet, their economic *raison d'être* has over time radically changed the initial governance relations within the EU. With the gradual introduction of the different principles meant to fix their administration and management, the participation of certain public actors in the EU policy-making processes has been formalised. This since the very beginning encouraged networking among public actors as much as among public and private actors.

Yet networking as such was a trend that has been specific for non-governmental actors, especially on global level, since the 1970-80 due to the advent of internationalisation. Economic stakeholders during the 1980s started to create large corporate networks in order to keep up with internationalisation, while civil society used the global arena to exercise external pressure on national governments with respect to human rights, minority rights and the environment.

The EU as a new and emerging governance entity and, at the same time, as a unique transnational space, provided a futile ground for the application of the principles of global governance. Its supranational level could be perceived as having the role of the oldest international organisations, having to keep the authorities of the member state happy while trying to consolidate the belief of their citizens in its higher goals. It was understood, then, that the economic viability of the EU can only be sustained if the cooperative power of all its actors (governmental, economic, social) is unleashed. This of course meant the role and the principles on which governmental actors and public institutions are based and are functioning need to be radically redefined. Thus, the need to make them “think globally but act locally” was recognised during the *euroforia* of the ‘80s when the subnational governmental actors were brought to the scene of EU public policy making. Since then the EU has been gradually expanding the range of actors that participate in the preparation, management, implementation and evaluation of its policies and can define its future.

Having a closer look at the structural funds and their development gives us the opportunity to actually see how this process of mapping or incorporation of global economic principles and the strategies to enforce them took place during the last 25 years of the development of the EU. The changes concerning their administration witnessed the gradual inclusion of increasingly more public and non-public actors in a way that became increasingly more formalised. Thus, on the

basis of the same global principles and strategies, the actors upgraded the traditional ways of policy making by creating cooperative networks on different levels and with different actors contributing in that way to an ever more diverse and dynamic governance structure of the EU. Such governance structure adopts cooperation and networking, strategies specific to global economic and civil society structures, as the underlying principles in the way all its actors participate in the social structure. This is extremely important in the case of the public actors since they are now forces to act as service providers for the non-governmental actors rather than just as controllers and regulators of the public sphere.

The argument, as suggested above, becomes the key element of social participation of all the actors. Yet, the diversification of the policy-making sphere and participants provided for the emergence of a numerous networks of new actors form all three social sphere (governmental, economic and social/civil) on all the present levels of governance. The advantage of this development is the fact that now EU citizens have multiple routes of access for social participation locally, nationally and transnationally; they can choose on which level and in what way to participate according to their interests and available resources.

On the other hand, this increased networking has a few negative effects. One of them is the fact that it produces an extremely complex network of social interaction, which is difficult to grasp for many European citizens, without a certain amount of involvement of their side and which is also extremely competitive on all levels. There is a pool of ideas that need to be promoted, but their promotion and advertising become extremely difficult if you cannot define the exact parameters of your target group and if there are a dozen of other actors trying to do the same thing. This kind of social participation requires an enormous amount of energy and strength and good educational foundations first of all on individual level so that each citizen can be able to ripe the benefits of such a governance structure. In other words, such a new networking governance structure produces a strong sense of insecurity in terms of inability to be competitive and innovative enough in such a diversified environment from the point of view of the individual citizens.

On the other hand, determining the way such new governing structure is to function, that is establishing sound and non-discriminatory rules of interaction among the various actors and underlying cooperative networks, becomes almost an impossible task under the present circumstances. Yet, this is so not because of the impossibility or the unsustainability of such a governance structure, but because of the inexistence of a guiding vision of how such governance structure might look like.

The benefits of networking have been acknowledge by all the actors and all the levels only by the mere fact that the ways the different actors interact and associate themselves have been booming in the last decade. Networking has been developing too fast for most of the European citizens to be able to keep up with it. It seems to be the EU optimal governance structure, in which there will be no dominant level of governance and no dominant actors, and in which each actor shall be able to participate in the preparation and the administration of the different public policies, at the right state and at the right level, which would lead to optimal level of social commitment and benefits on the part of each individual citizen.

Yet, today's networking structures are constrained by ideologies, concepts and principles that have been applied for centuries and have been suitable for what used to the modern nation-state.

A post-modern vision of the organisation of the public space of Europe would thus require a

radical overhaul of what democracy, legitimacy, citizenship, identity, social commitment etc. actually mean. It would require the defining democracy and legitimacy not only as direct representation. It would require a concept of citizenship, which is going to be much more flexible the one that we presently enjoy and which is not tightly bound to the remnants of the old concept of a nation-state. It would require the raising of the awareness of the European citizens on the benefits of having “fluid identity” and the education of future generations to think of themselves as multidimensional as the society they shall be living in the near future. And last but not least, it shall require constant awareness that activism is not something that some crazy people do but that each one of us is obliged to participate in the creation of a European space, no matter how little and in what way, in order to be entitled to benefit from its advantages.

Public space and its organisation is the result of the contribution of each member of a specific society, The EU as such is an innovative project that offers us the possibility to redefine and ultimately to change the way public space is organised in order to create a new public space which shall be more suitable to each one of us. Yet this requires the development of our social imagination as much as our efforts to stimulate the social imagination of the upcoming generations in order to empower them to make the new public space a sustainable objective.