

## **Defining Cosmopolitanism: European politics of the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

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The discussion of the political dynamics of cosmopolitanism initiated in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and mostly during the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It concerns the encounter which deals with “the second modernity”, The structural distinctiveness of the latter refers to the potentiality for consensus, the creation of multiple political and social alternatives, the recognition of the social and political otherness and the consummation of political criteria discursively produced.

The aim of the paper is to contextualise the demand of current European societies to face, for the first time in their history, multiple complexities primarily on the issues of immigration, environmental policy and the existing political and legal systems. It is exactly the ambivalences and diversities to the previously referred social and political areas that give shape to the second modernity.

The latter term was not coined having considered a specific historical period that is defined by time or name, but by the impact it bears on democracies. Supranationalism undergoes criticism by European societies and their official national politics. The European political agenda should probably set up claims in solidifying a novel cosmopolitan rationality which addresses dialogue processes and collectively reached binding decisions for European peoples, institutions and governments.

The primary concern should be to clarify to what degree cosmopolitanism engages in deploying and reinforcing *democracies*. A distinctive feature of democratic regimes is not only the evolvement of particular sets of social, political or legal rules but also the critical assessment and extension of intercommunication of all political subjects within complex political processes. In such a sense, the question to be prioritised is whether what is brought forward politically on a European scale is the transnational recognition of cultural diversities or not.

Cosmopolitanism encompasses diverse theorising and very often finds itself in the position to challenge opposition from perspectives that undertake the task to exert negative critique on a cosmopolitan and potentially global project of political theorising. Moreover, criticism of the (re)established empire(s) throughout the globe signifies the most crucial opposition to cosmopolitanism. What in the 18<sup>th</sup> century appeared as a politically attractive response in order that humanity would reach consensus for peace, for politics of the 20<sup>th</sup> and more importantly 21<sup>st</sup> century seems to be the reactionary project that literally provokes conflict and inequality.

The subject matter of the proposed research topic attempts to clarify that cosmopolitanism bears the potentiality to reconstruct an institutional imaginary that can and ought to be of multifarious nature and intentions upon modern political theory and politics. The political dynamic of a cosmopolitan project extends into the formation and influence of a public consciousness through communicative processes. In this respect, cosmopolitanism rediscovers the lost honour of political consciousness of individuals along with societies and provides the bonds for reaching understanding of diversities. Cosmopolitanism transcends the obstruction of reaching consensus. Consensus is an option but not an indispensable presupposition. Quite the opposite is the case, consensus appears as being the aim and not the functional end of every communicative process within cosmopolitanism.

In terms of social-scientific theorising, cosmopolitanism can validly be considered as the change of paradigm for modern thought. Hence, it remains in itself an unfinished,

aspiring and diverse scheme that aims at defining its own political potentials for modern societies.

The innovative character of a cosmopolitan project presupposes the coordination of a certain political agenda that incorporates, first and foremost, the extension of parliamentarism beyond the nation-state. Dialogue and exchange of argumentation at an institutional level, the encouragement of open participatory procedures of deliberative politics and the legalization of socially and institutionally solid political and civil rights for all citizens of a European society appear to be unavoidable but nevertheless, much complicated modes of advance.

The concept of a European civil society occupies European political thematics and is characterised as a “process concept”. It entails that European politics and the construction of new political institutions are “process concepts” as well, namely processes in process. Neo-institutionalism appears to be the innovative project for 21<sup>st</sup> century’s European societies. In this respect, the formation of new institutions can function as the pioneering scenario for the empowerment of European civil society where the latter actively restructures the institutional sphere. Although European institutions of national or supranational level served, in the past, to promote a common European politics, it appears more than obvious that they have come to a social and political standstill. In practice, they further goals opposed to the consolidation of a common European project on politics: apathy, disillusionment, discouragement towards open participation or merely lack of any political communication, as experienced with the rejection of the European constitution, are the direct aftermaths of European political institutionalism.

Politics seems divided into an official and an unofficial level: there are institutionalised political processes and there emerges a level of “subpolitics” where citizens express political interests and demands respectively. Nevertheless, these remain excluded from being incorporated into the political agenda. An open democracy, as the one Europe claims to be, justifies its cosmopolitan character when all public spheres of all nation-states are given the opportunity to be recognised by official politics.

Cosmopolitanism considers political concerns that do not implicate or necessitate the abolition of existing institutions. It calls for innovation that would open the way for new institutional politics to emerge locally within the nation-states and on a transnational level as well, where the transnational project can potentially function in a threefold way:

- a) It strengthens the political deliberation of European civil society which finds active expression and representation through novel communicative ways,
- b) It alters the status of representation not only in institutional but also in social and political terms. The new aspiring project that neo-institutionalism has to undertake is to include all marginalised “others”. Apart from the political intentions of parties, the persistent and increasing political presence of social movements has to be incorporated within European institutionalising processes, unless a political cul-de-sac is *ante portas* for European politics,
- c) The aspired widespread participation, that opens the way for the political activation of multiple public spheres, is due to the appeal of the creation of new institutions as well, such as a European constitution, a directly elected presidency, respective ministries and a concrete legal system.

The project of European integration in any sense cannot be fulfilled, unless the need for a social-scientific theorising is also fulfilled, thus providing the link to

contextualising European society. Issues of institutional legitimacy, political crises or monetary integration seem to widen the democratic deficit, until the questions of “what is a European society?” and “how can European political integration be accomplished through diversity?” are answered by means of reasoning and political argumentation based on the complex European reality. Political integration depends on a self-reflexive political theory that contextualises the prospects of neo-institutionalism. In more exact terms, we attempt to offer a threefold suggestion concerning political integration of the EU:

- a) that any political deficit or reductionism should be dealt with by reinforcing participation of all citizens within European institutions or by forming new institutions that would accomplish open, deliberative political participation,
- b) that the latter is facilitated by the encouragement and institutionalisation of communicative processes of multiple dialogue that reaches all strata of European society and potentially convinces people of the indispensability of discursively reached European politics, and,
- c) that the empowerment of European civil society – not in terms of geography but in those of addressing all social fields – would create a collective consciousness that reaches broad areas of European societies creating a European society. We should reconsider not only European politics beyond the nation-state on a wishful level of supranational negotiations and agreements, but also what designates political demands transnationally beyond official politics and social institutions.

Communicative deficit within European pragmatics is interlinked with the democratic deficit. Europe refuses (in the general context of many negligent refusals) to recognise the form of political deliberation that is analogous to the contribution of multiple public spheres, whereas deliberative political formation already takes place and promotes dialogue through multiple, non-politically represented public spheres. Public spheres intercommunicate creating fora of discursive procedures attempting to include any “other” by exchanging uncoerced political argumentation, still not officially recognised and prioritised through European institutions. Thus, multiple forms of social dynamics under construction remain politically unexploited and uninstitutionalised.

A cosmopolitan project that can offer a substantial space for transnational communication paves the way for transnational public spheres to exist and intervene within politics. Transnational connectivity embodies public spheres’ connectivity. The intention of cosmopolitanism to shift the focus of politics from the rationality of the nation-state to the transnational intercommunication of multiple diversities acquires a definite political orientation because a European civil society already does exist. Our interest remains to trace to what extent public spheres and civil society can find valid political representation in order to accomplish deliberative participation in the European parliament and various commissions. In terms of official politics, the EU appears to offer neither any politics nor any concrete, specific policy for emerging and urgent political demands.

The EU offers solutions to *governing issues*, which in an obsolete and fruitless way implement political demands of European societies. On the other side of politics where *governance* is questioned, political institutions appear to distance themselves from actualising a certain political perspective. The valid interest that cosmopolitanism prioritises formulates criticism on the rather exclusive political perception of ‘either ... or...’ and articulates an inclusive deliberation of a ‘both ...

and...’ political understanding. Instead of solidifying exclusions, cosmopolitanism encounters to provide a scheme of political viability for people and societies.

In an attempt to bridge the gap between opinion formation within public spheres and decision-making procedures within parliaments and other institutions, European politics should probably start considering and not neglecting, recognising and not disregarding obvious – according to empirical data and measurable effects - political procedures that aspire to reach political participation and deliberation. The latter especially, call for inventing and expanding new ways of political encounter in order to tackle existing crises or deficits effectively, over which politics claims jurisdiction to intervene and regulate.

The EU should probably shift the focus from apolitical official politics towards unofficial political politics. State political decisions and options as well as specific policies appear to hold back the formation of a diverse and therefore viable political perspective. Regarding communication, a different, more functional but concurrently more rational form is required, where the politically active should include the socially dynamic, and where political systems of localised or expanded character should deal with what any political and social inclusion of the “other” consists of, namely with the incorporation of any form of social, political or economic diversity.