



4-5<sup>th</sup> December 2023

III Forum on the Future of Democracy

# Beyond a MINIMAL Democracy

**Fondazione  
Giangiacomo  
Feltrinelli**

Viale Pasubio 5,  
**Milano**

# Concept

In recent decades,  
**representative democracy has atrophied**, confining itself to the ritual of its procedural and institutional dimensions. Populist leadership, technocratic pressures, and right-wing forces with their hegemonic narratives have often proposed **simple and top-down solutions**, even in response to global challenges such as the climate transition, which, due to its impacts, requires shared decisions.

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If this is the global trend, **how and under what conditions can representative democracy be revitalized**, integrating and improving its traditional mechanisms?

The Third Forum on the Future of Democracy, titled “Beyond a Minimal Democracy”, aims to collect the most interesting **European experiences of Democratic Innovation** to understand whether – and under what conditions – **participatory and deliberative processes** can function as a revitalizing force for democratic systems and civil society.

This two-day international event is organized by the **Giangiacomo Feltrinelli Foundation** and the European project **PHOENIX**. It alternates working sessions with plenary sessions featuring prominent guests such as **Wendy Brown, Graham Smith, Yves Dejahnghere, Kalypso Nicolaidis**, and many others.



## Agenda

# 4th December

15:00 – 15:30

Welcome and registration

Opening panel

### **Democracy means participation**

*What is democracy made of? Democracy reaches its full potential only when participation extends beyond mere electoral appointments. However, how should we conceptualize participation to address the crisis of representation? What are the characteristics of inclusive and effective participatory processes?*

15:30 – 16:30

Plenary session

Introduction **Giovanni Allegretti** *Centro Estudos Sociais, Universidade de Coimbra* and Principal Investigator of the H2020-funded PHOENIX project

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Roundtable discussion with **Yanine Welp** *Albert Hirschman Center on Democracy*, **Manuela Gervasi** *European Environmental Bureau*, **Valeria Fantini** *Alda – European Association For Local Democracy*

16:30 – 18:00

First session of the Working Groups

18:00 – 18:30

Coffee break

**Public talk** / Plenary Session

### **Democracy upside down: is it still possible to build the present time together?**

*Markets and global challenges, the erosion of intermediate institutions, authoritarian trends, and technocratic, one-size-fits-all solutions—all of these are reasons to be concerned about the fate of our democracies. When and how does a democracy falter, and how can we ensure its vitality? Is co-designing our present moment the answer we require?*

18:30 – 18.45

Greetings by **Massimiliano Tarantino** *Director, Fondazione G. Feltrinelli*

18.45 – 20.00

Keynote speech

**Wendy Brown** *Institute for Advanced Studies, University of Princeton*

In dialogue with

**Emanuele Felice** *Economist, IULM University*

Roundtable

**Iolanda Romano** *Avventura Urbana*

**Kalypso Nicolaidis** *EUI, Democratic Odyssey Project*

**Alberto Alemanno\*** *The Good Lobby*

## Agenda

# 5th December

9.30 – 10.00

Welcome and registration

Plenary session

### **Deliberative democracy on climate change: how to foster cooperation against polarisation**

*Climatologists, futurists, scientists: the debate on climate is tainted by fake news, disinformation, and polarizing opinions. But if we wish to engage in decision-making on issues that concern even future generations, do we have to be experts in those topics? How can Democratic Innovations facilitate dialogue and awareness on such divisive issues?*

10.00 – 11.00

4 **Jane Suiter** Dublin City University in dialogue with **Giuliana Gemini** AIP2 – Italian Association for Public Participation & Poliedra and **Sonia Bussu** University of Birmingham

11.00 – 13.00

Second session of the Working Groups

13.00 – 14.00

Lunch break

14.00 – 15.30

Third session of the Working Groups

15.30 – 17.00

Plenary Session

### **On the outcomes of the Working Groups** with **Giovanni Allegretti** and **Simone Disegni**.

*This roundtable aims to discuss policy proposals and the outcomes of the working groups. The session intends to offer the general public, as well as practitioners and experts, an overview of current best practices while also envisioning strategies to enhance ongoing experiments in Democratic Innovations. The brainstorming emerging from these groups will provide policymakers, researchers, and administrators with sources of inspiration and critical reflection, enabling the empowerment of citizens and the integration of their efforts into institutional work.*

17.00 – 17:30 Networking drinks

Plenary session

### **What kind of Democracy for the future?**

*To reconcile the fragmented society, within a scattered political framework, what future democracy is needed? Who is in charge of drawing the next generation of democracy?*

17:30

Keynote speech

### **Graham Smith**

University of Westminster & KNOCA

In dialogue with **Yves Dejaeghere** FIDE and **Alessandra Cardaci** Debating Europe

Agenda

# 5th December

18:30

Open to the participants of the Forum and upon invitation

**Conclusion of *Stagione Scomposta* 2023**  
and overview of Fondazione Feltrinelli's **Policy Briefs:**  
**Four Paths Towards a Better Democracy**

With

**Massimiliano Tarantino** *Director of Fondazione G. Feltrinelli*

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# Working Groups

Table 1

## Participatory Democracy and Institutional Politics: Cooperation or Antagonism?

President: **Jón Ólafsson**  
(University of Iceland)

The opportunities for participation are multiplying: in a disintermediated society, individuals seek new, independent forms for mobilization, choosing which cause to engage with on each occasion. How can these spontaneous forms of collective action dialogue with traditional organizational structures of institutional politics? How can political parties connect with new spaces and movements which contribute to the rise of political thought? How can the exchange of practices and ideas be facilitated among these actors?

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Table 2

## Participatory Green Transition: Tools and Methods

President: **Sheila Holz**  
(CES, University of Coimbra and Coordinator of the PHOENIX project)

Citizen engagement is a crucial factor for any policymaking that aims to be inclusive and sustainable. The green transition is one of the most urgent and global challenges of our time, involving citizens at multiple levels. For its legitimacy as well as its effectiveness, it requires that stakeholders participate in its implementation. Which tools and methods of Democratic Innovation are most suitable for ensuring the support for a rapid and tangible transition? Citizens' Climate Assemblies are already practised at the European level, but are they the most suitable tool for discussing transnational, complex, and intersectional issues such as the climate crisis? From the local administrative level to the national level, we will discuss tools and methods for a genuinely participatory and legitimate green transition.

### CALL FOR PARTICIPANTS!

We are inviting researchers, scholars, practitioners and experts of citizen participation to **join our working groups**.

**Register by November 27 [here](#)**

A travel and accommodation reimbursement of up to **€ 250** is provided.

## Tables

Table 3

### **Inclusive Deliberative Pathways: How to Represent the Absent**

President: **Alfredo Ramos**  
(*Institute of Public Policies and Goods -CSIC*)

What does it mean to be inclusive when it comes to defining deliberative processes? The selection of mini-publics or participants in citizens' assemblies must be highly representative to generate trust in deliberation. What are the best and fairest criteria for selecting participants? How can artists and facilitators bring the concerns of the absentees to the discussion table? How can we overcome the biases of "presentism" and change the deliberative framework towards greater representativeness?

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Table 4

### **Digital Citizenship. New Generations and Participation Platforms.**

President: **Kristina Reinsalu**  
(*e-Governance Academy*)

New generations have learned to use digital platforms to connect beyond territorial limits and national borders, achieving unexpected levels of aggregation. New technologies can facilitate participation by providing not only coordination and communication tools but also ensuring the transparency of participatory processes. In what specific ways can platforms serve these purposes? What are the risks associated with e-democracy? What role do platforms play in connecting mini-publics and other political actors? What are the biases of institutional actors towards online activism, and what is the conversion rate into real-world mobilization?

## Tables

Table 5

### **Participatory Practices at Scale: Thinking Globally, Acting Locally**

President: **Iacopo Zetti** (*University of Florence*)

Transnational challenges, supranational decision-making bodies and national parliaments appear distant from citizens' lives, yet their decisions have an immediate impact on the present and future. Who is responsible for bringing the concerns of territories and communities to these tables? Can deliberative and participatory assemblies be extended to citizens from different countries, starting from common challenges? How is mediation done between the outcomes of local participation and the interests of the globalized society? If the ongoing challenges are global and transnational, what makes *legitimate* the policies that result from the deliberation of local minipublics?

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Table 6

### **Informing for Deliberation: The Role of Media in Healthy Deliberative Practice**

President: **Kelsey Belz** (*The Good Lobby*)

Disinformation, polarization, and pollution of public discourse are challenges that all democracies must face. A properly informed public, equipped with the necessary resources to understand the issues on which it is called to express itself, is an irrevocable condition for the quality of participatory moments. What is the role of journalists and communicators in relation to deliberative democracy? How can correct information be provided on complex issues? What is the current media coverage of participatory practices outside of election periods? What can the media do to ensure that politics is no longer just a matter for a few?