

# The Challenge of Finding a Cosmopolitan Democratic Model



Argimiro Rojo Salgado

**Abstract** There is no doubt whatsoever that the current political structure of world society does not correspond to the objective needs of humanity as a whole. Issues that assume global dimensions can only be suitably addressed by means of a public authority whose power, constitution and means of action are also of a global dimension. In this sense, it is logical to consider the prospect of, or need for, a world government. However, the fact of taking politics onto the global stage should not entail the dissolution of democratic politics or, in other words, the loss of fundamental rights and freedoms, constitutional guarantees, citizenship or public space within our societies. This is one of the great challenges currently facing us, which obliges us to invent another form or other forms of democracy more in tune with the global era. The search for some kind of response to this challenge is, indeed, the fundamental requirement of this study.

**Keywords** Democracy · World government · Globalization · Cosmopolitanism · Citizenship · Nation-state · European Union

## 1 Introduction

The proposed demand for a global government is not born of mere speculation or dreaming, nor of a cosmopolitan choice or belief that one might profess. This proposal should be regarded as a pragmatic request and as the most appropriate political-institutional response to the characteristics of a world increasingly unified by the intensification and acceleration of processes of communication and

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interdependence on a planetary scale, and of a world beset, moreover, by systemic problems and crises that, like meteorological phenomena, spread quickly and powerfully, ignoring national borders and overwhelming the capacities of states the world over. An attentive and calm reading of what is taking place within the international system reveals states that, after many centuries of existence and gradual consolidation all over the planet, are showing clear signs of their inability to guarantee, the governability of societies conditioned by the logics of globalisation (Rojo Salgado, 2016).

Responding to global challenges from within the narrow limits of the nation-state is simply anachronistic and absurd. It is no longer possible to tackle global problems effectively with a collection of local responses, so a global imperative prevails. Held (2012) wonders, in this respect, why nowadays politics too should not be global, when other aspects of human life (health, disease, ecology, economy, social life, science, culture, sport) already are. This is, without a doubt, one of the great paradoxes of our time: everything is globalised except for politics and democracy; in other words, while we witness the emergence and spread of a planetary civilisation, in the political order, we remain anchored in the pre-planetary phase (Bummel, 2017).

On the basis of the idea of what Waldron (2005) calls “the circumstances of politics”, that is, considering that politics arises when the existence of social conflicts and disagreements renders necessary some kind of collective action or decision to manage the situation, we should identify the current existence of those objective conditions necessary for the practice of politics on a global scale to emerge and establish itself. A global politics that should not abandon one of its main conquests, attributes and defining features, which is its democratic dimension. However, what democracy can be practised on a global scale? A democracy the same as or only analogous to the one we have been using within the confines of the nation-state? Does taking politics onto the global stage force us to invent another form or other forms of democracy in keeping with the global era? Are we facing the challenge of finding a cosmopolitan democratic model?

The attempt to seek some kind of answer to these questions is the goal and purpose of this study, which, by way of a preliminary question, proposes a reflection upon what is involved in taking politics onto the global stage and upon the democratic principles and procedures that should inform that new, globalised political arena.

## **2 What Is Involved in Invoking Politics and Taking It Onto the Global Stage?**

Contemplating the need for a planetary government means invoking politics and taking it onto the global stage, thus transcending the monopoly of politics by the nation-state, and going beyond and perfecting, moreover, the current model of

global governance to which we are resignedly trying to conform, but which is plainly incapable of addressing in effective fashion the major issues facing the planet. The establishment of that planetary level of power of government and of public administration would correct the enormous discrepancy and imbalance that exists between the nature and scope of today's problems and challenges and the political-institutional architecture that prevails on a global scale. It would mean at the same time, and in similar vein, completing the political organisation of the Earth, which already includes local, national and in some cases also supranational governments (the case of the EU) but which still lacks that necessary global level.

Introducing politics onto the global stage involves, in turn, politicising issues common to humanity, global collective assets, which means incorporating them into the global public agenda so as to, subsequently, and making use of the corresponding institutions and procedures, adopt binding decisions for world society as a whole. This is precisely what politics is: an activity directed towards the regulation of conflict and the achievement of collective objectives, resulting in the adoption of binding decisions or, in other words, of obligatory compliance for all members of the community.

The attempt to introduce politics onto the global stage involves focusing our interpretation of the world and its governability from a global and cosmopolitan perspective, in line with the actual process of globalisation and general cosmopolitanisation of the planet. From the link between cosmopolitanism and politics emerges cosmopolitics, in other words, the proposal for a new worldwide political order based on transnational or supra-state government institutions, whose subjects would be the inhabitants of the Earth as bearers of the status of citizens of the world, with corresponding rights and obligations (Peña, 2010). If we consider the existence of that world community of needs, risks and human interactions, then we should agree upon the demand for not only peaceful coexistence but also understanding and cooperation between all the people, territories and human groups that form a part of the planet. What would appear reasonable, at this point in history, is to demand the definitive ending of divisions and conflicts to permit communication, cooperation, interdependence and association-integration between all the peoples and territories of the planet.

Cosmopolitanism obliges us, therefore, to relativize the value of belonging to particular societies, to limit closed and provincial patriotism (Nussbaum, 2013) and, consequently, to consider broadening the sphere of loyalties, solidarity, moral obligations and justice (universal justice). Cosmopolitanism presents a convergence of the positions of those who, faced by the reality of transnational connections, interdependence between societies and the crossed interests that challenge conventional notions of belonging, identity and citizenship, seek a reasonable alternative to statism and to ethnocentric, isolationist and exclusive nationalism. Cosmopolitanism obliges us to rethink (reinvent) politics and policies, since in conceiving of a political order projected onto the planet as a whole, we are testing many of the basic concepts of traditional political theory (state, sovereignty, citizenship, border, human rights), as well as the concept of democracy. This is the key question facing

us here: how cosmopolitanism is going to affect the theory and practice of democracy. But what is democracy?

### 3 Democratic Politics

Politics includes all activities of cooperation and conflict within and between societies, activities by means of which the human species organises the use, the production and the reproduction of biological, social and economic life. Politics involves organising and planning common projects, establishing binding rules and regulations that define relationships between people and assigning resources to different human needs and aspirations, and all of this is directed, on the one hand, to satisfy the interests of citizens, with egocentric, sectorial and one-sided objectives and, on the other hand, to defending and articulating a common good and a general interest that satisfies the majority. Deutsch (1981) considers an essential element of politics to be the solid coordination of human efforts and expectations in order to achieve a society's goals; for Sodaro (2015), it is the process in which human communities pursue collective objectives and address their conflicts within the framework of a structure of rules, procedures and institutions, with the purpose of finding solutions and adopting decisions that are applicable to society as a whole.

On the basis of these premises, bearing in mind that politics is inherent to the human condition and refers to everything related to community and social life, given that politics is a collective activity directed towards conflict management, it would be neither logical nor coherent to exclude citizens and prevent them from participating in decision-making in all those spheres in which politics intervenes and manifests itself. For that very reason, politics should always be informed and participatory; in other words and expressed in clearer and more precise terms, politics (including politics on a global scale) should always be democratic. And what do we mean by "democracy"?

One of the most representative definitions is the one provided by Robert Dahl (1999), which develops a concept starting with a basic question: how is it possible in the real world to maximise popular sovereignty and political equality? One of the North American political scientist's main contributions to the theory of democracy, with its regulatory and empirical components, consists of proposing a set of five criteria in order to identify and differentiate between what is and is not the democratic process, namely, opportunities for effective participation; opportunities for what he terms "enlightened understanding", that is, the capacity to know one's own interests or assets that are at stake; control by demos or citizens/voters of the public agenda; equality of guarantees in the final vote count; and, finally, full inclusion of all in the electoral process.

For Sodaro (2015), the fundamental idea behind the concept of democracy is that all citizens have the right to determine who governs them; around this central idea, it is possible to articulate a series of advantages, purposes, virtues and contributions of the democratic fact. Thus, democracy contributes to improving quality of life and

people's dignity by allowing them to participate in community issues, express their opinions and have a say in government decisions; it provides space for individual freedom and promotes political equality according to the principle of "one citizen, one vote"; it promotes an open and permanent debate on public policies, programmes and government alternatives, while it favours pluralism and counters the influence of hegemonic and privileged organisations and groups. Finally, democracy also enables citizens to be informed with regard to their governments' activities and establish legal limits and controls in relation to the exercise of sovereign power by state powers.

Associated with the above, there has been discussion as regards the field of reference and application of the term democracy. In this sense, it is worth recalling how for some authors this is a concept that refers exclusively to the political sphere, particularly to government institutions (Sartori, 1994); for other authors, meanwhile, the level of democratisation of a political system will depend precisely upon the degree of democracy existing in those realities alien to public institutions, such as political parties, trade union organisations and civic associations (Bobbio, 1986).

One might think, in this context, that limiting democracy in the public sphere, identifying in it a merely procedural dimension, and thereby excluding its application to other spheres such as the economic, the cultural, the social, etc., seems to contradict a substantial and integral conception of democracy, regarding it as directly associated with personal dignity and with the achievement of greater socio-economic equality among citizens. Democracy would be no more than an empty set of institutions if it merely permitted citizens to vote for their representatives in institutions; accordingly, full democracy implies that people can act and influence important institutions, organisations and processes that require their energy and obedience (Young, 2002).

In line with classic Rousseauian theory, advocate of the principle of popular sovereignty and of direct participation by citizens in the labours of government, various theories have recently been formulated advocating a participatory and deliberative democracy of general scope, in other words, a democracy that propitiates participation beyond a simple periodical electoral rite. A democracy that would permit genuine self-government via a free, responsible and committed citizenry, would not assign political activity exclusively to professionals in the field (politicians) and not limit citizen participation to the simple regular exercise of their right to vote. In this respect, our representative democracies should cease to be mere election democracies – which only place people in or remove people from power – and ensure us a far more representative representation, that is, "more complex, more capable of reflecting the autonomy, the diversity and the demand for fairness of contemporary societies" (Subirats, 2011: 32).

Therefore, and as a complement to representative democracy, it is necessary, at the same time, to open channels of participatory and deliberative democracy. Representative democracy is irreplaceable today, among other reasons because it endows political activity with legitimacy, coherence, stability and necessary articulation, and because, moreover, it protects democracy itself from the immaturity, weakness, uncertainty and impatience of the citizenry (Innerarity, 2020). However,

it is also necessary to provide a channel for and exploit those other modalities of collective action – beyond political parties and traditional pressure groups – undertaken by alternative social groups and civil society and which contribute so significantly to correcting, innovating and enriching the public agenda.

All this would make it possible to recover and reinforce the agora, that public space for deliberation and rational argument, deployed upon a basis of knowledge, freedom, equal rights, non-exclusion and the absence of coercion, in which individual aspirations and problems converge and are condensed to become collective causes in search of a solution (Bauman, 2003); that space where ideas such as the public good, solidarity, civic values or the fair and open society can emerge and take shape (Popper, 1994); that space that makes it possible to re-establish the capacity to control authority and render it publically accountable, making it more ethical and transparent, or unmasking it and revealing the lies, deceit and manipulation with which authority sometimes seeks to justify its inadequacies and capitulations in the face of the prevailing economic superdeterminism (Vallespín, 2012).

In the sphere of contemporary values, democracy appears as an ethically superior and unquestionable rationality, and in this sense, we should not let ourselves be blinded by authoritarian (or techno-authoritarian) political regimes that make a show of their ability to handle with a maximum of firmness, speed and efficacy all kinds of emergencies (the claims of efficacy and efficiency are not always justified), but at the cost of treating citizens like a flock of sheep and depriving them of one of the most fundamental rights: freedom and the capacity to exercise self-determination in relation to all those questions that affect them. There is no alternative to democracy, in spite of its imperfections, obligations and shortcomings.

The concept of democratic legitimacy or, expressed in another way, of democratic legitimation of political power, is the foundation of our entire existing legal-political system and is based upon that solemn affirmation we find in almost every constitution since the First World War, and according to which sovereignty resides with the people, from whom all powers emanate. Moving thus from the absolutist model of political organisation to the constitutional and democratic model, from politics without democracy to politics with democracy, consent and self-determination of citizens. All this means that governments, institutions and political power in general have their origins and foundation in the agreement, consent and trust of the governed, and never in force, coercion, imposition or tyrannical usurpation.

In this fashion, the question of why people obey, or why obedience is demanded, must be answered by saying that this occurs because citizens grant consent and delegate power, that quota of sovereignty that corresponds to them. Citizens, as holders of a sovereign power, and given that in practice, it is impossible to exercise sovereignty directly and together, in other words, given the non-viability of direct democracy, opt for indirect and representative democracy, which thus becomes the general form of constitutional and democratic government. By means of elections, we legitimise and authenticate power, institutions and rulers, in short, the political system as a whole. Therein lie their great importance and transcendence, and hence

the fact that elections are also considered to be the central institution of representative, legitimate and democratic government (Manin, 1998).

Following this reaffirmation of the democratic fact, one should acknowledge, however, that modern democracies are facing many challenges, and some of their promises, as Bobbio would say (1986), have not been kept. Among the obstacles to the true fulfilment of the democratic ideal, which put a brake on the transit to fairer and more equitable democracies, mention should be made of the market economy that inevitably generates inequalities in terms of income and wealth and, consequently, in life, opportunities, influence and power. This is an old problem, but one that has worsened due to – among other factors – both the collapse of the socialist alternative and the sudden emergence of the process of globalisation. Another obstacle arises from the fact that politics, especially public politics, is becoming increasingly complicated and difficult to understand and administrate, which means ordinary people tend not to get involved in and distance themselves from political compromise and activity, leaving this field to the minority. The crisis of political parties also contributes directly and significantly to this weakening of popular democracy and of corresponding representative government, as Mair (2015) points out.

#### **4 The Challenge of Finding a Cosmopolitan Democratic Model**

As stated above, the attempt or the need to establish politics on the global stage involves focusing our interpretation of the world, and of its governability, from a global and cosmopolitan perspective, in line with the actual process of globalisation and general cosmopolitanisation. But this cosmopolitanism forces us to rethink or reinvent politics, as the conception of a political order projected onto the planet as a whole tests many of the basic concepts of traditional political theory and practice, among them that of democracy. As Held observes (1997, 2005), the advent of the global era makes it necessary to reassess the traditional democratic model, restricted to the sphere and confines of the nation-state, and seek a cosmopolitan democratic model. This is the great challenge and task that needs to be addressed today: designing a political and institutional model on a global scale that makes it possible, at the same time, to safeguard and put into practice the democratic principles and procedures analysed earlier.

The internationalisation and globalisation of present-day political life contribute to this democratic crisis, insofar as the capacity to control our own political agenda is now weaker and more diffuse. The gradual emergence of supranational regimes, decision-making in barely visible or transparent global or sub-global spheres or scenarios, or the functioning of a global governance based on self-proclaimed directorates and on postulates similar to that of enlightened despotism, indicate an evident deficit or failure of democratic principle and practice.

The current model of global governance clearly lacks democratic legitimacy, as it does not permit all the citizens of the planet to participate sufficiently (give their consent) with regard to the way they are governed and the people responsible for decision-making. There is no cosmopolitan democracy, that is, inclusive and open global political institutions, invested with power and legitimised by a demos and a global, participatory civil society, which reduces the credibility and popularity of existing institutions. Neither is there a clear mechanism of accountability, which makes it impossible to determine, for example, who is accountable within a set of public and private agencies and networks in which, moreover, there are no equitable criteria that regulate participation in or exclusion from the latter (Keohane, 2003). It is difficult to identify the person or people that really take decisions in today's society, or to whom these actors should report or be accountable, which makes it impossible to resolve a crucial question: how and where to relocate accountability in the global era (Lafont, 2010). We are witnessing – claims Calame (2009) – a proliferation of international regulations issued by authorities without a visible face, without a clear mandate and without an identifiable location where one can appeal or file a complaint, which undermines the authority and effectiveness of the regulation.

Other shortcomings inherent to the model of global governance are reflected, for example, in the overlapping of institutions (between the UN Security Council and the G-8 and G-20 groups), in the limited capacity of global courts of law, in the over-representation of some countries in global organisations and the under-representation of many others, or in the participation and protagonism of non-democratic regimes in international institutions. Furthermore – and this fact should be highlighted – submission to international legality depends on the will of states and on their interests, and also on the *de facto* powers that act on a global level, without the existence of any authority capable of obliging them to respect that legality, especially in the case of the strongest powers. Meanwhile, weaker states, and their respective populations, are marginalised or excluded from decision-making.

It should be acknowledged, however, that in recent years, some global institutions have improved their effectiveness and efficiency, increased their transparency and extended their mechanisms of democratic accountability. The demand for unanimity, for example, has been softened to a majority, in decisions taken by organisations such as the International Monetary Fund or the World Bank, or a reinforcement of deliberative elements as has occurred within the World Trade Organisation. There are also more and more agencies at a global level that exercise the typical functions of guard dogs that help to uncover corruption or are responsible for ensuring that the global public agenda includes items such as accountability, transparency or respect for human rights. This is the case, for instance, of Amnesty International, Transparency International or the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Supranationality and the globalisation of political processes constitute, therefore, a trend and an unstoppable process in the current phase of humanity, which is, at the same time, the reflection and the result of the evolution of social relations, of technological advances, of globalisation and of the growing interdependence, economic and otherwise, created in recent times. Construction of the government of the planet has already started! Furthermore, some authors do not hesitate to affirm, in



this sense, that world government is already here (even if only a world government of experts), and that the world is already being governed to all intents and purposes by global institutions that undertake different tasks related to the governability of the planet (Colomer, 2015).

All of this should be underlined and valued, and constitutes, moreover, a significant cause for optimism in that dogged endeavour to progress in the democratic governability of the planet. However, we cannot resign ourselves to this model of global governance, characterised by a serious shortage of democratic legitimacy, of authority, efficiency and decisive, binding capacity, and characterised also by a multiplicity and overlapping of institutions and entities, by dispersed, fragmented and faceless regulation, and in which dozens of bureaux, organisations, agencies, funds, banks and self-proclaimed directorates (G-8 and G-20, for example) decide upon the fate of humanity as a whole without the latter's knowledge or consent.

At this stage of human history, hardly anybody questions the fact that the process of democratisation of political institutions, and the corresponding conquest of a series of rights, practices and principles regarded as fundamental in the political sphere (citizenry, participation, representation, control, public audit and intervention, legislation, guarantees, separation of powers, etc.) have taken place in parallel to the creation and consolidation of the state itself during its democratic period. In this respect, there exists a danger of, given the unstoppable process of globalisation, with the corresponding exhaustion and erosion of the state system, a dissolution of democratic politics or, in other words, the volatilisation of fundamental rights and freedoms, the absence of constitutional guarantees, the disappearance of citizenship or the loss of public space within our societies (Bauman, 2003).

Our conversion into citizens of the world – a consequence of the process of globalisation and cosmopolitanisation of today's societies – must not lead to a new situation that condemns human beings to being citizens of nowhere, with all that the latter entails. In other words, cosmopolitanism should not occur at the cost of abandoning our status as citizens, fought for and assumed as something indisputable within the framework of the liberal, democratic state, and which renders us holders of rights that can be asserted at any time before political power or any powers of an economic or other nature. We cannot resign ourselves, with the erosion of the state institution, to losing those political spaces where in the name of justice, ethics and law, it is possible to defend our rights and freedoms and formulate our demands.

For all these reasons, and in relation to the issue raised, there is a need to design alternatives to the traditional national-state architecture of politics and of democracy itself. This creates a new scenario of complexity that has to be accepted, transcending simplistic patterns and principles that have little to do with current reality. We now need to resolve the problem of how to define and where to resituate the old categories inherent to the democratic political model, based on ethical formulae of coexistence and on the values and principles that until now have characterised the democratic, social, constitutional state of law. At this point of the exposition, we should ask ourselves what could be the solution to this democratic incongruence on a global scale.

The search for a system of global democratic governability would be, in this sense, the coherent and logical response that from a political and even a moral perspective could be given to the fact of globalisation; globalising politics and democracy, that is, taking them onto the global stage and exercising them in a similar fashion to how they have been practised in a state-national context. Globalisation, far from leading to the end of politics, should instead be understood as “the continuation of politics via new means that operate on very different levels” (Held, 2005: 34). As Innerarity says (2020: 437), although globalisation imposes many constrictions upon politics, this does not mean its end, “but maybe also the beginning of a new era for politics”.

The solution to this lack of democratic legitimacy lies in “finding new systems of government that allow for the development on a global scale of something akin to effective government that is democratically responsible for its actions” (Keane, 2008: 91). Held (2005) insists on the need to associate and unite the working environments of the creators of laws and the recipients of the latter, to open decision-making spaces to those sectors and actors that are traditionally excluded and to be able, thus, to promote new spaces for debate, proposal and political enterprise on a global scale, connecting the circles of interested parties with those responsible for taking decisions so as to, thus, “create opportunities in order that everyone may express their opinions with regard to global public assets that affect their lives” (Kaul et al., 2003: 5).

Cavallero (2009) believes that only a federative global democracy can correct the increasing democratic deficit that characterises the current system of global governance. The same idea is shared by Bradford and Linn (2010: 10), who claim that today’s system of world governance is proving itself incapable of addressing the most important challenges facing the planet, which is why it is necessary to “move from the impasse in which we find ourselves towards an international system that would make it possible to tackle global challenges by means of a more democratic, inclusive and effective global governance”. It is a question, ultimately, of “calling for the handling of global public issues to be exercised in accordance with the democratic standards that historically have been achieved at such a cost inside states, and which are now being eroded from outside” (Ibáñez, 2015: 119).

Colomer (2015: 15), and after acknowledging that “the world is currently governed by a few dozen bureaux, unions, organisations, agencies, funds, banks, courts and self-proclaimed directorates at a global level”, wonders whether these formulae and models of institutional decision-making applied on a global scale can be compatible with a valid notion of democracy. His answer is affirmative, and he reasoned by saying that democracy is only a principle and an ethical notion based on social consent, which may operate via different institutional formulae, including those applied at a global level. It is a question, therefore, of being creative and designing new formulae that allow for decision-making on a world level while respecting the “spirit” and the essence of the democratic principle and procedure.

This question has also recently been commented upon by Innerarity (2020: 430), who says that “it is unacceptable for a handful of elites from a handful of countries, and without heeding public opinion, to condition the national politics of other

countries”. However, the same author recognises that the influence of international political decisions in domestic spaces is not always an unjust interference, “but an ever more present reality that requires legitimation”; moreover, international and transnational bodies, in both the global and sub-global arena, are absolutely necessary for the management of certain issues that exceed the capacities of states. The problem is that these international institutions suffer from that infamous “democratic deficit”; in other words, they are structurally undemocratic according to the criteria and standards against which we have heretofore measured and evaluated the democratic quality of political communities.

The solution to this dilemma proposed by Innerarity (2020: 117) involves (re) thinking global (cosmopolitan) democracy via new concepts and by means of unprecedented practices, such as imagining the democracy of the future within the framework of a world and complex societies that are heading towards not separation, but towards differentiated integration. In other words, we are moving towards a system of general pluriarchy structured in multidimensional fashion and in which the logics of hierarchies and subordination no longer apply. One of today’s great challenges is, in point of fact, to design the polycentric architecture of societies at every level, from global multilateralism to local communities, “shaping a multilevel governance that integrates the citizenry according to diverse logics and without thereby preventing effective government of societies”.

Another action would be to attempt to transfer the key values of democracy to other institutional forms operating in the transnational arena, or democratise diverse functional systems or complex regimes, both global and sub-global, that are formed in areas of specific action, instead of trying to do so with the entire global system, among other reasons because some areas may be more easily democratised than others. In the new global and globalised context, where highly complex systems converge and interact (all of them characterised by contingency, functional differentiation and interdependencies), democracy has ceased to exhaust itself in the interaction with the electorate itself, and if we want to implement the democratic principle in the new scenario (in which numerous areas of competence are decoupling from the space of state and democratic responsibility), we have no choice but to advance towards a new post-territorial congruence between the authors of decisions and their destinees.

On the basis of the idea that today’s societies form a set of systems that can neither be organised hierarchically nor merge into nor delegate responsibilities to a hyperstructure, Innerarity believes that everything constructed in a positive vein for political coexistence in the twenty-first century will be in terms of recognised difference, and that neither imposition nor subordination, neither exclusion nor unilateralism, will be compatible with an advanced democratic society. Every historical period requires its own form of government, and society today, increasingly globalised and marked by a high level of complexity, requires a redefinition of the subjects of government and the ways of governing. For this reason, and bearing in mind that democracy is not immutable and that the politics currently operating in environments of extreme complexity – and supranationality – has not yet found its democratic theory, the political scientist proposes a theory of complex democracy,

considering this to be the most suitable conceptual framework in order to articulate the democratic requirements arising from the very complexity and interdependence of today's societies. This will make it possible "to formulate strategies for the government of contexts and explore the territory of what we might call an 'indirect democracy'" (Innerarity, 2020: 57).

This approach involves, among other consequences, adopting a new perspective in relation to how we should understand politics today, that is, politics as a complex system (Vallès, 2020) and acknowledging, at the same time, that it is no longer possible to take the national state as the universal model and sole reference for the exercise of politics and democracy, since these can exist under formats different to that of the nation-state. The historical model of the nation-state cannot and should not exhaust or monopolise everything related to politics and democracy, and this situates us, inexorably, in a new scenario of creativity and political and democratic experimentalism that I believe should be accepted with courage, gradualism and rigour. This does not mean, however, that the experience, the background and the vast legacy that the nation-state has given to democracy – and to politics – should be cast aside. That legacy should be suitably exploited, adapted and reinvented.

Essentially characterised by society's political and legal order, the state is the last link in the long chain of successive forms of political organisation of societies, and constitutes the most universal, complex and refined system of human association and organisation in the history of humanity. As a model of political organisation of societies, the state has contributed countless breakthroughs and improvements from both the institutional point of view and from the point of view of recognition and protection of human dignity and of the rights that stem from the latter. It has provided us with, for instance, democratic institutions and principles, fundamental rights and freedoms, constitutional guarantees, citizenship, public space, coercive systems, institutional engineering and design, separation of powers, administrative, organic and territorial organisation, etc. Some of these elements, political-administrative techniques and characteristic features of the state institution could prove very useful when it comes to constructing and articulating the political and administrative system of the Earth's democratic government.

## **5 Some Examples of That Democratic Experimentalism on the Global and Sub-global Stage**

It is my belief that all these reflections and proposals, offered in the context of that enormous and sincere effort to find a cosmopolitan democratic model, are highly commendable and worthy of consideration; as a consequence, we should begin by designing and experimenting with (applying) on a global scale those new formulae of representation and decision-making, with the necessary adaptations and adjustments so as not to distort the essence of the democratic principle. It is time to be daring, to be entrepreneurs in the political and institutional sphere, to invent and

propose alternative models of politics, government and democracy. I shall now refer, specifically, to some examples of those democratic trials and proposals that are being witnessed at both the global and sub-global levels, showing that beyond the nation-state there can still be politics and democracy too.

### ***5.1 The Fledgling Global Civil Society: The Seed of the Cosmopolitan Public Space***

It is a verifiable fact that, for the first time in history, the collective action of the citizenry can influence political processes on a planetary scale. This is the consequence of a growing planetary awareness and of the emergence of a fledgling global civil society, formed by a set of institutions, actors and networks that extend and interact all over the planet. This global citizenship transcends national borders and presupposes a willingness to live together and tackle in a spirit of solidarity the challenges facing our species.

Since the symbolic date of 1989, and the chain of revolutions that contributed to the fall of the Berlin Wall and to the end of the Cold War, we have witnessed the spread of the mobilising practices of so-called global civil society. In 1999, in the city of Seattle (USA), there were major demonstrations under the democratically inspired banner “No Globalization without Representation”; in 2003, millions of citizens, drawn together by the slogan “United for Peace and Justice”, demonstrated on every continent against the invasion of Iraq. To which should be added, among other mobilisations, the relative success of the “alterglobalisation” movement embodied by the World Social Forum, or the so-called “Arab Spring” with its multiple demonstrations and protest movements that affected several Arab nations (Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Syria) and have led in some cases to the fall and overthrow of various governments or political regimes.

With the invaluable backing of new technologies, many other demonstrations continue to take place at a global level, evidencing that growing and persistent planetary civic awareness. The celebration in recent years of International Women’s Day (8 March) is proving to be another indisputable demonstration not only of the strength acquired by the feminist movement on an international scale, but also of that growing and expansive collective action of mobilisation and protest all over the planet. Recently there have been increasingly frequent and intense mass demonstrations by thousands of young people in cities right across the world, in protest against government inaction with regard to the environmental crisis and, in particular, everything related to climate change.

This global collective action has shown that the planet’s citizens have begun to realise that, through mobilisation and pressure, the course of history can be altered or even controlled by global society as a whole. This global collective action symbolises, moreover, the shift towards a fledgling global civil society, which Keane (2008: 8) defines as a dynamic non-governmental system of institutions, actors,

networks and socio-economic conglomerates “that straddle the whole earth... and whose peaceful or ‘civil’ effects are felt everywhere...from local areas...to the planetary level itself”.

This global citizenship, despite including and integrating a plurality of diverse actors governed by different cultures, laws and codes, represents the embryonic articulation of a *demos* that embodies the “cosmopolitan counterweight” (Beck, 2005) that transcends national borders. It also represents the seed of that global public space or arena, understood as an institutionalised sphere of discourse, response and action organised on a global scale – a sphere that legitimises processes of international society and makes it possible to “exercise shared responsibility in the protection of public interests and assets of the world community” (Rodrigo, 2016: 39).

This awareness and this political momentum on the part of global citizenship are a basic prerequisite for the democratisation of the emerging social order, for the formation of a system of global government and “for a redefinition of the universal rights and duties of the peoples of the world, crossing all borders” (Keane, 2008: 8). Moreover, this global civil society, through the multiple spheres and public spaces in which it is formed, helps to uncover corrupt business dealings, contributes to solving the problem of “there appears to be nobody in charge”, fosters the belief that alternatives exist, and is responsible for the inclusion in the public agenda of issues such as democratic representation, accountability, legitimacy, respect for human rights or defence of the interests and public assets of humanity.

These processes of global collective action, increasingly frequent and widespread all over the world, can be boosted by that new fledgling social class, that society, interconnected and active on social networks, which understands neither borders nor geopolitical or identity-based divides, and which Mason terms (2016) “universal educated citizens”. They represent and are, in turn, a good representation of, that growing process of global miscegenation, a circumstance that will also contribute to the gradual articulation of that awareness and planetary democratic action. As Trent (2007) observes, it is global civil society, far-removed from any connotations of anarchy, that should take a step forward, mobilise all its potential and acquire special protagonism at this crucial time, exerting pressure, obliging governments to act, participating in and legitimising this entire reform process that seeks to provide the planet with a system of democratic government.

## ***5.2 The Proposals of the World Federalist Movement***

The World Federalist Movement, with a long history and presence on the international stage, has been monitoring this question closely in recent decades, and it is worth taking into account its various studies, reports and proposals on the subject. On the assumption that the establishment of a cosmopolitan democracy, in other words, a democratic government of the planet, cannot occur overnight, but requires time and will probably need to take place over various stages, federalists suggest

that the initial phase should be the creation of a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly (UNPA). The main reason for this proposal is the fact that, in the context of purest democratic logic, parliament is the core, central institution par excellence and the source of legitimacy upon which any system of democratic government should be based. This assembly would constitute the starting point and the driving force and guide in this gradual process of the creation of the global democratic government of the future.

This proposal was launched in 2007, and since then has been widely endorsed by numerous individuals and institutions belonging to civil society organisations, national and international parliaments or political party networks from over 150 countries. It is worth highlighting, in this respect, the important resolutions in support of this proposal adopted by the European Parliament, the Pan-African Parliament, the Latin American Parliament, the Socialist International, the Liberal International, the Global Green Congress, etc. All these resolutions underline the urgent need to provide the planet with a system of governance in line with the challenges posed, and without abandoning at the same time democratic principles and procedures.

As Bummel (2017) explains, the UNPA could essentially be – and in a preliminary phase – an advisory body of a subsidiary nature created by the UN General Assembly and initially formed by national parliaments. Its powers, and its legitimacy, would gradually increase over time, as was the case with the European Parliament. It should be recalled, in this respect, that the latter evolved over different stages; having begun as a Common Assembly created in 1952 (which indirectly represented the peoples of member states via delegates elected by the respective national parliaments, and with essentially advisory and supervisory, but non-legislative, powers), 5 years later, it became the European Parliament (with increased competencies, assuming, among others, budgetary control of the European Communities), before finally achieving, in 1979, direct election of its members and a substantial extension of its competencies.

Nowadays, the European Parliament, along with the Council, serves as the EU's legislative organ and is increasingly influential in the Union's entire political process. To the Parliament corresponds that function of utmost significance within any democratic organisation: political representation, control and legitimisation, in addition to its budgetary and advisory functions, the appointment of senior officials, etc. As Bummel suggests, the UNPA could fulfil a similar role to the European Parliament, but at a global level.

Following the example of the European Parliament, and according to the federal collective's proposal, the members of the UNPA would not be assembled as a function of their national origin, but would be organised into transnational groups on the basis of different existing political-ideological positions (Conservatives, Socialists, Liberals, Greens, etc.). This assembly would initially be formed of national MPs, and its members would later be directly elected by citizens. Its competencies would also be adopted gradually and progressively, from informative and advisory functions to genuine parliamentary functions of representation, legislation, legitimisation and control.

In a similar vein, it should be noted that in 2015, and coinciding with the United Nations' 70th anniversary, the Commission on Global Security, Justice and Governance published a report with 80 recommendations aimed at correcting and countering the state of crisis affecting global governance. Among the most significant conclusions and recommendations were various proposals such as the need to create a UN parliamentary network that would make it possible not only to improve the organisation's transparency and knowledge throughout the world, but would also enable national parliaments and civil society itself to participate in its tasks, thus propitiating the beginnings of a transnational democratic culture that could influence decision-making at a global level.

### ***5.3 The Reference of the European Union***

The aforementioned references show that in this complicated task of finding the most appropriate form of democracy to be implemented on a global scale, we should take advantage of and adapt recent and innovative models and experiences of political organisation that have been experimented with relative success. This is the case, for example, of the European Union, which can offer important lessons regarding the governability of societies on a supranational scale.

The EU is one of today's most representative examples of regional integration, an experience whose characteristics and successes make it a reference not only for other processes of continental or sub-global regionalisation, but also for the very process of global integration. The EU is a special and unprecedented case (both in terms of method and the result achieved) of suprastate integration; a work in constant evolution and constructed via processes of trial and error; a novel, innovative, daring polity, in line with the new times and moving in the direction set by the evolution of humanity; a political laboratory where great debates take place and new models of governability of societies are experimented with; a case of reconversion and redefinition of the state institution, evidencing the fact that the state-nation does not have a monopoly on the forms of political organisation of human societies.

The EU is also a complex and pluriarchic model of government, without one single centre, where politics moves from hierarchy to heterarchy and where governing involves administering heterogeneity; a major meeting point and scenario of dialogue and negotiation between a variety of actors representing a plural and complex society; a space of tolerance, respect for human rights and the capacity to recognise new emerging actors (regions, Euroregions, minorities). The process of European construction will ultimately represent that perspective of reconciliation, rapprochement and federal unity of the old continent in which more blood has been spilt per square metre than in any corner of the planet.

A pioneer in the process of the creation of the nation-state, today's Europe is setting the path for a review of the latter, which is why the political experiment that is the EU is the object of all kinds of descriptions: post-state society, metanation, post-modern society (Cooper, 2005) or model of multilevel governance (Morata, 2004).



This Europe, characterised thus and in spite of its shortcomings and weaknesses, brings value and a very powerful and encouraging demonstrative argument when it comes to underpinning the proposal for a democratic government of the planet: there is life beyond the state, and it is possible, in spite of the many difficulties that exist, to transcend prevailing statism and invent new models of democratic political organisation in line with new times and needs.

The EU is an undisputed, though improbable, model of supranational organisation-integration, increasingly close to the parameters characteristic of a democratic, federal organisation. This is because, among other factors and defining features, the common institutions of the EU evince a clear independence from the member states; the laws that emanate from these institutions are based on direct or indirect legitimacy granted by popular sovereignty and are of a binding nature for states and citizens; there are direct relations between EU institutions and laws and the citizens of the entire Union; moreover, decision-making in a series of important areas – the number of which is steadily increasing – is based on majority criteria, rather than the unanimity rule; and finally, there is an explicit and precise assignment of competencies to the EU, both exclusive and shared.

That Europe, which in the twentieth century was the main theatre for the two most terrible and devastating Cosmopolitan wars in history, now constitutes the supreme experiment of reconciliation and construction of the ideal of lasting peace and represents the trial version of what could be a future cosmopolitan order. History demonstrates that the political unification-federation of societies has taken place via concentric circles and over successive phases, and that federative processes are contagious. For this reason, it may be argued that “the process of European integration, far from hindering or contradicting the global project, will contribute to its reinforcement and acceleration by acting as an example and stimulus for other processes of continental integration initiated in other regions of the planet that will eventually converge in a future worldwide integration” (Rojo Salgado, 1996: 11).

The European experience can definitely provide us with the new model of political organisation required by the planet, courtesy of its innovative and multiple experiences of suprastate integration, of intrastate decentralisation, of cross-border cooperation-integration, of multilevel governance and its commitment to multilateralism, consensus, dialogue and respect for human rights (Rojo Salgado & Varela, 2016). As a case study of institutional innovation, of administration and constitutionalisation of transnational laws, of shared sovereignty and of shaping of a post-national demos, the EU can show us the direction that should be taken by a cosmopolitan democratic governance (Habermas, 2012). This is how, ultimately, and in this context of reconciliation, integration and political and institutional innovation, this Europe will truly be able to lead the twenty-first century (Leonard, 2006).

To a large extent, the EU is already functioning in accordance with the parameters and logic of multilevel governance, characterised by interactive sociopolitical forms of government; by a highly complex and labyrinthine political process (clear evidence of which are the countless advisory committees and work groups within the Union’s main institutions); and by the presence of the numerous and diverse actors involved, both public and private, at different levels, who seek to coordinate

their efforts and share their resources (cognitive, technical, financial media, institutional) with a view to the functional resolution of problems and the creation of opportunities in this new suprastate context. A procedure, moreover, which, by its very nature, facilitates the presence of diverse mechanisms of equilibrium, checks and balances when it comes to making decisions.

The idea of governance, as relational government, is also associated with the concept of network, revealing a scenario consisting of different actors interrelated via a network, forming reticular structures to negotiate and commit to certain policies and their implementation. The network means that a plurality of actors, who represent, in turn, multiple organisations and interests, interact, mediate and share information and resources, facilitating proximity (reconciliation, on occasions), negotiation and compromise between the different parties involved. As far as the European arena is concerned, the proliferation of multiple and extensive networks that represent a myriad of interests, groups and agencies, both public and private, is already an established reality, and Brussels, the EU capital, is the epicentre of this giant mesh that is being woven (Morata, 2004).

Hundreds of organisations have their offices in Brussels, in order not only to defend their respective interests before the Union's principal decision-makers, but also to interact among themselves so as to facilitate the attainment of shared objectives. The Commission, the European Parliament and the Council, without abandoning their political role, seek to involve relevant public and private actors, promoting and fostering agencies and mechanisms of participation and consultation, via, for example, extensive comitology, fora and advisory bodies, facilitating that co-governance, that open governance, that participatory democracy, which makes it possible to share resources, information, knowledge, perspectives and, most importantly, negotiate, commit to and assume joint responsibility for specific policies and their implementation.

The practice of governance in the European arena makes it possible to replace a predominantly linear and vertical model, in which political decisions are taken at the top or from a hierarchical centre, with a kind of virtuous circle, based on plural and multilevel participation, negotiation and interaction between the actors and networks involved, and throughout the entire process, from the formulation of policies to their implementation and subsequent evaluation. In short, the experience and the results obtained over these 70 years show that the singular method of European construction has proven its viability and effectiveness in a case of supranational integration. For this reason, closely following the European path, with the necessary improvements and adaptations to the global scenario, could be a convenient option in this immense and commendable task of equipping our planet Earth with a democratic government.

## 6 Conclusion

Given the existence today of those necessary and sufficient conditions for the emergence and establishment on a global scale of the sphere and practice of politics and given, in turn, that this global politics should not abandon one of its main conquests and most defining features, which is its democratic dimension, in this study, I have attempted to raise the issue of the challenge of finding a cosmopolitan democratic model. In answer to the question of what democracy can be practised on a global level, various ideas, proposals and experiences have been analysed and explored (from complex democracy to multilevel governance, via representative, participatory and deliberative democracy).

I believe that some or all these ideas, proposals and experiences may be of some use in relation to this commendable and enormous challenge of finding a cosmopolitan democratic model based on that cardinal and essential premise of all democratic construction, according to which governments, institutions and political power in general must be based on the agreement, consent and trust of those governed, and never on force, coercion, imposition or tyrannical usurpation.

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