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Listening to the views of European public

An assessment of the first participatory experiments to be organised across the Community

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Policy Paper 44

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Introduction

Deliberative and participatory democracy has picked up a head of steam, as is shown by the growth in the number of mechanisms giving citizens a say (public debates, consensus conferences, deliberative polls, etc.) and the numerous proposals for these same citizens to become active players in the political system. When Michèle Alliot-Marie was France's justice minister, didn't she go as far as to propose integrating civil society into decision-making on probation? The European Union is active in these matters too, with participatory experiences at the EU level also having flourished since the early 2000s. These have generally been backed by the EU institutions and by the Commission in particular. But what assessment can be made of these first initiatives?

The ideas set out in this study draw inspiration from the seminar organised jointly by Notre Europe and Sciences Po's Centre of European Studies, '*La démocratie participative dans l'Union européenne*' [Participatory democracy in the European Union], which took place on Friday 25 June

2010 at Sciences Po in Paris. The experiences referred to are therefore those that were presented on this occasion and which, for some, come under the Commission initiative called 'Plan D' for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate. The table does not therefore aim to be exhaustive. It does not include the European Parliament's *Citizens' Agoras*[1] or the initiatives launched as part of the 'Europe for the citizens' programme'[2], which has been looking to bring Europe closer to its citizens since the mid 2000s. But the experiences set out here have not been chosen arbitrarily as all the participatory mechanisms that we have analysed have a certain number of points in common: their strong deliberative dimension, the space grated to information and knowledge conveyed to the citizens taking part, direct participation by the citizens, a significant budget proportional to the scale of the project and their transnational dimension.

These participatory experiences raise a number of questions: what is the significance of this growing use of participatory democracy for an atypical political system which remains an OPNI (*objet politique non identifié* or unidentified political object), according to the now well known expression of Jacques Delors? What is the specificity of such experiences organised transnationally and involving citizens from different countries? Have they had a visible and quantifiable impact for the European Union? And, in particular, what lessons can be drawn in terms of the participatory dimension of the European system?

1. www.europarl.europa.eu/agora
2. http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/citizenship/index_en.php

I. The reasons for growing interest in participatory experiments

There are three sets of reasons that explain why the European Union is interested in setting up participatory experiments involving 'ordinary' citizens.

The functional argument: EU institutions intervene more and more in the area of regulating risks and need to determine the response tailored to scientific and technological challenges. One of the key aspects of European integration is about setting up a big market within which goods, services, people and capital need to be able to move around without any obstacles. But putting in place a market of continental dimensions does not only mean dismantling obstacles to free movement. Every time that fundamental interests are subject to protection at the national level, keeping the level of protection gained can only be done in two ways: either by tolerating the maintenance of protective national laws (as the Treaty of Rome occasionally

allowed[3]) or by proceeding to harmonisation with protection rules. This last solution has often been preferred by the European Commission and the countries that are most well advanced in protection, which pushed for intervention by the Community and then by the European Union in areas such as protection of the environment and of the consumer, health and safety at the workplace and public health (Héritier, 1994). This logic of re-regulation (Majone, 1990) has led to a gradual extension of the EU's powers via the Single European Act and the Treaties of Maastricht and Amsterdam. This momentum was also accelerated by a series of crises in areas such as food safety (the mad cow crisis) and maritime pollution (the *Prestige* and *Erika* shipwrecks).

But how does Europe need to carry out these new tasks? Intervening in the areas in question often requires a mastery of complex scientific and technological issues, which go beyond the skills available within the EU institutions. The European Court of Justice then set down as a general principle the need to consult experts when that is necessary to ensure the objectives of protecting Community legislation.[4] The Treaty of Amsterdam then confirmed this principle.[5] These demands are based on a fairly traditional division of labour between scientists and politicians, with the former providing the latter with the elements for a decision based on the latest state of scientific knowledge. Unfortunately, the reality is often more complex and the boundary between a political decision and scientific debate is relatively porous. Science does not always deliver clear-cut judgements. There is often disagreement within the scientific community itself as to the scale of a problem or as to the best way to deal with it (Godard, 1997). Politicians can thus be attacked for having adopted the opinion of

3. See, for example Article 95, paragraph 4: " If, after the adoption by the Council or by the Commission of a harmonisation measure, a Member State deems it necessary to maintain national provisions on grounds of major needs referred to in Article 30, or relating to the protection of the environment or the working environment, it shall notify the Commission of these provisions as well as the grounds for maintaining them."
4. Case C212/91, *Angelopharm GmBH v Freie und Hansestadt Hamburg*, Rec. 1994 I-171.
5. Article 95 § 3.

some experts.[6] In other cases, the nationalities of scientists brought their neutrality into question.[7] Finally, views against new techniques can be very strong, even in areas where their harmfulness has not been proven, as was shown by the resistance to GMOs or hormone-treated beef. In this general context of uncertainty and even of suspicion, consulting 'lay people' may seem like a way to shed light on a decision and to help decision-making thanks to a new and complementary perspective that citizens can bring to socio-technical controversies that have not been scientifically resolved.

The legitimacy argument: The main place to look to help our understanding of why citizens' participation is being used at the European level is the crisis of legitimacy that has been sweeping across the European Union since the early 1990s (Boussaguet, Jacquot, 2009). The Treaty of Maastricht was symptomatic of this crisis, which explains the difficulties surrounding its ratification. Polls about European public opinion have all confirmed that the 'permissive consensus', i.e. the tacit support of citizens for EU integration in which they blindly followed national elites, was a thing of the past. Even if, overall, citizens want Europe, they are now displaying a lot of unease about a political system that they do not understand well and which sometimes seems to them to threaten ways of life that they are attached to. Hence, in particular, their tendency to snub the ballot boxes during European elections (43% turnout in 2009). This phenomenon of disaffection was particularly marked during the 1990s when public opinion began to get upset about Europe's growing control in a number of areas at a time when it was showing its fears about the economic recession and rising unemployment. The figure of the Polish plumber, brandished about in France by the opponents of the Bolkestein Directive on the liberalisation of services in 2005, is a good illustration of this widespread fear of Europe

6. The European Commission has, for example, been dragged before the Court of Justice for having followed the recommendations of a committee of experts on the banning of a cosmetic product that was considered carcinogenic - *Case T-199/96 Bergaderm and Goupil v Commission* [1998] ECR II-2805.
7. In its opinion on the EU's handling of the mad cow crisis, the European Parliament's committee of inquiry has, for example, drawn up a rather gloomy picture of the way in which the veterinary scientific committee works, criticising in particular the British experts EP Doc A4-0020/97A, 7 February 1997.

and the threat that it could pose to national models (social protection in this case).

This context of disaffection brings difficulties with it for the European institutions, which can only base themselves on a relatively low level of legitimacy at a time when they are called on to intervene in increasingly sensitive areas. The French and Dutch 'noes' to the referenda on the Constitutional Treaty in 2005, then Ireland's 'no' to the Treaty of Lisbon in 2008 only served to underline this gap in legitimacy. Furthermore, this was seen as a sign that citizens now wanted to make themselves heard and wanted Europe to be made with them and while taking account of their wishes. For all these reasons, the EU got interested in ways to allow a more major inclusion of private actors from civil society in the decision-making process. The interest in these forms of legitimisation is in particular due to the fact that European citizens, in representative procedures, do not clearly see the result of their vote in European elections (notably because the preferences expressed by voters at best play a remote role in the designation of the EU executive). As the Commission points out itself, citizens do not know the representatives that they have elected very well or even at all. "Active participation of citizens in European affairs is low and support for the European Union has deteriorated steadily in the recent past. [...] The heart of the issue in regard to EU-level participation, besides the fact that there is only moderate interest in participating in politics of any kind, seems to lie in the logistics. European citizens are not sure about the structure of the EU and uncertain as to whom they could turn to if they had an issue or concern. They do not know who is making the decisions. For two-thirds of Europeans, it is unclear who represents them in the European Parliament".[8] The development of a participatory component of democracy then emerges as an interesting addition and a means to legitimise the European system and its decisions.

8. http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52007SC1267:EN:HTML, date consulted: 5/1/2011.

We find a reflection of that in the White Paper on Governance that was made public in July 2001.[9] The paper includes a plea in favour of more openness and the involvement of civil society. "What is needed is a reinforced culture of consultation and dialogue; a culture which is adopted by all European institutions [...]".[10] As it happened, this was only about big general principles lacking in precise indications as to how they would be put into practice. However, the Commission has continued with its search for channels via which laypersons could have their say. In particular, the sixth framework programme for Research and Technological Development encouraged research on this issue in its science and society section.[11] Community funding has therefore made it possible to launch theoretical research into the place of the citizen and the organisation of the first citizens' conferences at the European level. But it was especially in the wake of the French and Dutch referendums in 2005 that the European institutions began to insist on the need for 'permanent dialogue' with citizens. This is in particular what the Commission did in its Plan D (for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate), which was launched in October 2005. "Plan D aims at involving citizens in policy substance and to increase ownership. It offers ways and means by which the Commission could bring various policies to the citizen's attention, generate debate and provide a channel for citizens' concerns to be brought to the attention of European decision makers".[12] Plan D was the opportunity to finance (or co-finance) a considerable number of transnational debates and deliberative initiatives.

The identity argument: Finally, in connection with the preceding argument, using participatory mechanisms is part of a more general rhetoric of the European Commission, which seeks to promote an 'active European

9. Commission of the European Communities, *European governance: a white paper*, July 2001, COM (2001) 428 Final.
10. Ibidem.
11. The report on the role of civil security in European research (Banthien H., Jaspers M., Renner A., 2003) is also in this section.
12. European Commission, Secretariat General, information note from Ms Wallström, 'Plan D: Wider and deeper Debate on Europe', 24 November 2006, Brussels, SEC (2006) 1553. http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/communication/pdf/SEC2006_1553_en.pdf, date consulted: 5/1/2011.

citizenship'.[13] Participatory experiments are designed as a way to develop transnational exchanges and to generate a feeling of belonging among citizens taking part. So the idea is to shape citizenship to promote the emergence of a European public space in which citizens, sharing common ideas, would feed the process of European integration. While this set of arguments does not appear as such in all the 'programme' documents of the European Commission devoted to the direct participation of European citizens, such as the 2005 Plan D, it has been mobilised in all the participatory projects put in place in this context - and which all underline the 'identity added value' drawn from such experiments.

13. This is a key slogan in the Citizenship Programme 2007-2013, http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/citizenship/programme/about_citizenship_en.php, date consulted: 5/1/2011.

II. An initial assessment of European participatory experiments

The first remark that needs to be made about the first participatory experiments organised at the Community level is their extreme diversity. While they do have in common the fact that they place citizens at the centre of the mechanism to make them debate, deliberate and have a say on given issue, it has to be noted that these experiments are different both from the point of view of the issue debated as the citizens involved and the procedures put in place to collect their comments. Four categories of participatory mechanism at the European level can be discerned:

- *Deliberative polls*® – A trade mark filed by Professors Fishkin and Luskin, deliberative polls® are based on particular methodology that consists of 'educating' citizens about the issues debated before gathering their views. The idea is to let citizens express themselves, but 'with knowledge of the facts', because for these two university academics, democratic legitimacy is based on

informed opinion, open deliberation and the equal participation of citizens: "A Deliberative Poll (DP) surveys a scientific, random sample before and after it has deliberated one or more policy issues or electoral choices. The deliberative treatment includes exposure to balanced briefing materials laying out the arguments for and against given policy proposals, small group discussions led by trained moderators, and plenary sessions in which competing experts and politicians answer questions formed in the small groups. The post-deliberation measurement affords a picture of what the public would think if it thought and knew much more about the issues and had talked much more about them with a much wider variety of their fellow citizens, and the contrast with the pre-deliberation measurement shows how these more considered opinions would differ from those the public currently holds".[14] This particular exercise has been tested twice at the European level. The first experiment took place in October 2007 as part of the 'Tomorrow's Europe' project[15] (Monceau, 2010), organised under the auspices of Notre Europe as part of Plan D. Its slogan was 'All Europe in One Room' - 362 citizens from the 27 member states of the EU came together in Brussels in the premises of the European Parliament to deliberate for two days, before taking a view, on the main social and foreign policy issues that affect the future of the EU. The second experiment, 'Europolis'[16] dates back to May 2009 (Isernia, 2010) and was led by the University of Siena. It was organised around the European elections, and as for 'Tomorrow's Europe', was made up of three phases (first poll, deliberation, then second post-deliberation opinion poll). A panel of 348 citizens from the 27 member states of the EU, spent three consecutive days discussing, internally and with experts and elected representatives – in small groups and then

14. http://www.tomorrowseurope.eu/IMG/pdf/Press_pack_Tomorrows_Europe_17_Sep_07-3.pdf, date consulted: 5/1/2011.
15. http://www.tomorrowseurope.eu/
16. http://europolis-project.eu

in a plenary session, issues such as immigration, climate change and the European decision-making process, before their views were gathered.

- *Citizens' or consensus conferences (CCs)* – These are based on two main working principles: educating a panel of laypersons to give them the necessary weapons to allow them to dialogue and debate in a constructive way with experts in the area concerned; the deliberation of these lay citizens, who withdraw to set out a certain number of common recommendations in a consensual manner (see Boussaguet and Dehousse, 2007). This search for consensus differentiates them from the aforementioned deliberative polls, which are based on the individual opinions of the participants. Four experiments have so far been carried out at the European level: the first of these experiments was organised as part of the RAISE project[17] ('Raising Citizens and stakeholders' Awareness and Use of New Regional and Urban Sustainability Approaches in Europe', financed by the European Commission as part of the sixth Framework Programme for Research and Development) in December 2005, on the theme of 'the city of tomorrow' (Sessa, 2010). The second one, called 'Meeting of Minds. European Citizens' Deliberation on Brain Science'[18] (MOM), was about the neural sciences (Rauws, 2010). It was a two-year project that ended in January 2006 with a meeting of European citizens and the public presentation of the report of this convention to the European Parliament. The third also ran for two years (2006-2007) and was focussed on rural Europe ('What roles for rural areas in tomorrow's Europe. European Citizens' Panel initiative: regional and European perspectives'[19]). As the final report of these panels says, it was

17. http://www.raise-eu.org
18. http://www.meetingmindseurope.org
19. http://www.citizenspanel.org

a "dialogue between ordinary citizens, experts and politicians" at the regional and European level. Finally, the fourth and last experiment, called 'Move Together'[20] ran from March 2008 until December 2009 (Sessa, 2010). Devoted to 'sustainable transport and urban development', it was based on a transnational focus group of 27 citizens – one per member state of the EU – as well as a panel of 25 local citizens during the final meeting in Rome. The aim was to get them to discuss and express views on European research in sustainable transport.

- *Consultations of citizens* – We are giving this category the name that the experiment that embodies it was given ('European consultations of citizens'). However, it needs to be distinguished from 'traditional' consultations that are routinely organised by the European Commission and which consist of consulting, upstream of the European decision-making process, a whole range of actors, mainly stakeholders and/or interest groups (lay citizens are few and far between in this type of procedure) to understand their point of view on the decisions underway or about to be taken.[21] The aim of the former is to get European citizens debating amongst themselves so that they can give their opinion on a particular theme. The big difference with the CCs presented earlier is that there is a lack of advance education of the citizens and that there are few experts present during the debate. This type of exercise has, for example, been organised twice as part of the 'European consultations of citizens' (ECC)[22], a pan-European project initiated by a consortium of 40 independent European organisations (Rauws, 2010). The first one, which brought together citizens from 25 member countries, took place in Brussels in 2007 on the future

20. http://www.move-together.net/
21. See in particular the 'Your Voice' website run by the European Commission: http://ec.europa.eu/yourvoice/index_en.htm
22. http://www.consultations-europeennes-des-citoyens.eu/fr/

of Europe looking ahead to 2020. The experiment was repeated in 2009 to "discuss the economic and social future of the EU beyond its geographic and linguistic frontiers".

- *Networking local spaces and sectoral activities* – This is especially the case for the FARNET network[23], which seeks to establish links and exchanges between fishing areas in Europe (Burch, 2010). The aim is to develop transnational activities to strengthen the local governance of these areas. Inter-area cooperation is perceived as a way to exchange information and good practices to improve sectoral and territorial governance and, thanks to the involvement of numerous actors, both public and private. In this context, transnational seminars, opportunities for meetings and deliberations with citizens – professionals, stakeholders, NGO representatives, etc. - from several European countries that had adopted proposals concerning the management of fishing areas.

Beyond stating the diversity of these participatory experiments, what are the first lessons that can be drawn from them? There are certainly a number of encouraging results to pinpoint: all the organisers stress first of all that these experiments have shown that it was very possible to organise deliberations on a transnational scale (Monceau, 2010; Rauws, 2010; Sessa, 2010). Transposing participatory mechanisms from the local and national level to the European level was a challenge and the first observation that needs to be made is that it was relatively successful. Organising the participation of citizens from diverse national origins on a transnational scale proved to be achievable and the deliberation possible – at the cost of significant methodological investment and innovation, which we will come back to. Secondly, all the assessments of these different participatory experiments that were

23. https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/cms/farnet/fr/node

done stress the satisfaction of the citizens in their participation in the instruments and the fact that they feel "more European" at the end of the participation process (Sellke et al., 2007, p.28 ; Mohr, 2006, p.15). So there was said to be an 'identity' added value of having European citizens take part in this kind of instrument. But these conclusions should not mask the many difficulties encountered in carrying out these participatory experiments.

The difficulties can be categorised in three main ways.

The *first difficulty*, for the analyst or even just an observer of these participatory experiments, relates to their heterogeneity, which can be summed up with a simple question: Why have a participatory instrument? It would be a misuse of language to talk of European participatory democracy in the singular as so many instruments have been tested and they are so different, especially in terms of their end purpose. But how can we think about the participation of citizens on a European scale if we do not know exactly what is the aim assigned to this participation? The experiments carried out so far and mentioned above show a big diversity of objectives, ranging from straightforward methodological and experimental interest, as was partly the case for the MOM (Boussaguet and Dehousse, 2009, p. 783) or deliberative polls to the desire to provide help for a decision (the panels of European citizens on rural Europe), via the wish to 'manufacture' a European people (the Europolis project's slogan was none other than 'a deliberative polity-making project'). There are therefore big risks of bundling them all together and confusion, which makes the interpretation and use that can be made of these instruments difficult, both for potential organisers and for the European institutions and the citizens concerned.

In addition, what general observation can be made from these

experiments and how can one move from the stage of a pilot experiment to that of institutionalised political participation? A number of observers express a fear of seeing these experiments reduced just to the status of 'democracy in a laboratory' (Blondiaux, 2010), which would work on a reduced scale without managing to escape from fulfilling merely an experimental function.

Finally, the question of the 'why' implies that of the 'receiver' of the deliberation-participation, i.e. the European institutions. If they are the target audiences of these experiments then it is worth looking at how they take on board these citizens' observations. The observation that needs to be made about the CCs, deliberative polls and other consultations organised on a European scale is that they attract relatively little interest. Apart from a few personalities made aware of these issues and willing to extend their implementation (Durant, 2010), the prevailing impression is rather of partial attention as is demonstrated by the occasionally limited interest generated by these experiences during the public presentations of their results, their weak showing in the media and their lack of impact on European decision-making. This is the case despite the fact that the presentations were done in highly symbolic places (European Parliament, Economic and Social Committee, etc.) (Boucher, 2009).

The *second difficulty* concerns more the actors in these participatory experiences, i.e. the European citizens: a participatory instrument for whom? The first assessments and research on the issue first of all underline the non-representative nature of these experiments and even their clearly elitist aspect (Boussaguet, Dehousse, 2007). The citizens taking part are generally 'real' European citizens, mobile and educated, along the lines of the'Eurostars' described by Favell (2008). Most, who come from higher level socio-professional categories, have a university degree (more than 88% of the participants in the RAISE

project for example) and are already actors engaged in civil society (that is the case for more than 45% of the participants in the citizens' panels on rural Europe). The method of recruiting panellists obviously plays a significant role in this overrepresentation of some categories of the population, as the RAISE case shows and for which self-selection was the rule and English the only language allowed. This bias is considerably reduced by other methods of recruitment, more random and based on the definition of certain precise selection criteria (age, place of residence, socio-professional category, etc.), but even these techniques do not completely do away with the distortions. Finally, no experiment was able to present a perfect likeness to European society's sociological structure. In these conditions, what is the European people that expresses itself through these participatory instruments? Without necessarily going as far as to look to have a perfect photocopy of European society in the panels that were put together, does one not have to try to have at least a diversity of viewpoints represented? The question continues to be an open one.

In connection with the preceding remarks about 'democracy in a laboratory', we also need to ask questions about the articulation between the factual public opinion that is expressed in the context of these instruments and public opinion as a whole, at the level of European society (Sintomer, 2010). "Who says what?", "What link does that have with European public opinion?" (if it exists as such) and "What place should be granted to the views expressed by citizens?" are questions that have not been resolved so far and which seem to be essential if one intends to give some definition to participatory democracy at the EU level.

Finally, there is the issue of 'who' raises questions relating to the nationality of the participants: when one organises a transnational deliberation involving citizens from different countries, how do

the latter need to be represented within the instrument? A lot of experiments organised up until now have chosen to ensure that there is identical representation of each state. This seems to be derived from international relations according to which each state must not be treated differently from the others ('one state, one voice').[24] However the application of such a principle may pose some problems in the case of participatory instruments. It may create an overrepresentation of some points of view to the detriment of others. In addition, the coexistence of national panels may generate reflexes to defend interests or national viewpoints according to a logic of competition with other nationalities. This is one of the perverse effects observed when carrying out the MOM project, alternating national meetings and European conferences. One German-speaking member of a group shouted "We've won!" when he found that that one of their proposals had been taken up during the European Convention (Mohr, 2006, p. 39). We now move on to the third difficulty of participatory experiments concerning the organisation and running of such experiments.

This *third difficulty* could be summed up as follows: how can one have a European participatory instrument? While the experiments carried out so far at the European level have 'worked' well, this should not mask the practical problems encountered when putting in place such instruments. The transnationalisation of the deliberation / participation has been given effect via a certain number of innovations that allow citizens from different nationalities to debate with each other (alternating national and European meetings in the case of the MOM or European consultations of citizens, alternating regional and transnational meetings in the case of panels of citizens on rural Europe; alternating deliberation in small groups and plenary sessions for the *Tomorrow's Europe* deliberative polls; coexistence of roundtables,

24. We see that, at the EU level, this principle of equality of states was not taken up as votes are weighted within the Council of Ministers.

working groups and plenary sessions during the transnational seminar organised by Farnet, etc.). Each time, however, the discussions came up against difficulties that are well known by the European institutions: the range of languages and translation.[25] In addition to the costs and logistical problems implied (audio equipment, interpreters, etc.), using simultaneous translation runs the risk of understating disagreements and interfering in the content of debates, which a number of the organisers of the project and participants regretted (Rauws, 2006). We know that technical solutions do not resolve everything and that it is sometimes very difficult to 'translate' the disagreement and make different national cultures cohabit (Duchesne, 2010). More generally, this difficulty illustrates the tension that there is, in most of these experiments, between looking for a big deliberation on the one hand and managing diversity on the other. Ensuring that debate, diversity and inclusion all coexist is a big challenge, which organisers of participatory experiments have not always measured precisely before launching into their different projects.

In addition, most actors, representatives of European institutions or organisers of such projects underline the major cost of these participatory experiments – one to two million euros on average. Of course that is still low by comparison with the routine working expenditure of many international institutions – think for example about the cost of the monthly exodus of the European Parliament to Strasbourg for plenary sessions (Monceau, 2010). At the very least that makes it important to specify what one expects from these instruments and in what perspective they can be used.

25. Some experiments, such as the RAISE project or the CC 'Move together' chose to take only one language, English, to run the experiment but, while this choice resolves the issue of languages, it has consequences from other points of view. For example, the elitist nature of the panel of citizens is accentuated by this choice, given the reduced number of non-Anglophone European citizens capable of speaking sufficiently good English to take part in a consensus conference.

Finally, due to the complexity of organising such experiments on a transnational scale, there is a big danger of seeing a growing number of procedures and rules to try to 'control' how they take place, which may, over time, harm the quality of deliberation and exchanges between citizens, who are obliged to respect the guidelines set by the organisers. This frustration emerged in particular in the case of the MOM project and citizens' panels. The evaluators stressed that there were too many materials and working rules (Goldschmidt and Renn, 2007; Mohr, 2006). This profusion of rules was a source of misunderstandings and some irritation for participants. Some had the feeling that "the process was more important than the people" (Mohr, 2006, p. 26). It occasionally led to disagreements. During the last day of the European Convention of the MOM project, the panellists did not recognise what was presented as the result of their collective deliberations and rejected the summarised proposals put forward by the organisers.

There are therefore a lot of actual or potential difficulties once one seeks to transpose participatory instruments to the European level. In addition to the 'traditional' difficulties that these instruments traditionally encounter at the national or local level (the representativeness of the citizens selected for example), there are specific problems at the European level, such as their end purpose in an atypical political system or the way nationalities and languages are brought together. It is therefore appropriate to present some tracks for reflection to try to respond to these difficulties so as to shed light on, as far as can be done, the use of participatory instruments at the European level.

III. What kind of participatory democracy for Europe?

It is not a question here of singing the praises of European participatory democracy and defending a normative position in favour of citizens' participation but more about reflecting on the concrete ways to make this participation something that can be envisaged, to make it possible and to give it meaning for the EU. Whilst bearing in mind the methodological difficulties that have just been underlined, there seem to us to be three major tracks that should be explored.

Track 1. Define clear objectives

In response to the first series of difficulties mentioned earlier, it seems to us necessary, initially, to bring the participatory instruments from the 'laboratory', i.e. from the experimental status in which they have been confined up until now to the European level. The proliferation of experiments presented here, as well as their relative success, tend to show that one can

move beyond the learning stage and that it is now possible to envisage citizens' participation in a serious and self-confident way. That must, however, go via an exercise in clarifying the participatory instruments to shed light on the use of them and to adapt them to the objectives pursued. This is something that putting in place a participatory 'tool box' could contribute to doing, based on lessons learnt from experiments carried out up until now. The objective is to be able to respond to the following question: which participatory instrument for which purpose? The table below offers a first summary of the participatory experiments tested to date.

Table 1: Proposal for a participatory tool box

Participatory instrument	Purpose	Opinion sought	Target audience	Type of knowledge
Conference of citizens (CCs)	Help with a decision	Collective / consensus	European institutions	Specialised expertise on an issue
Networking activities and territories	Transnational network of actors	Collective	A sector of activity	European legislation / professional knowledge
Consultations of citizens	European citizenship / defining political orientations for the EU	Collective	European public opinion / European institutions	Education about Europe
Deliberative polls ®	European citizenship	Individual	European public opinion	Education about Europe

Through this typology, one can sort within different existing participatory instruments and differentiate between them based on their end purpose. It therefore seems over-simplistic to talk about European participatory

democracy in the singular as there are many instruments and they have a range of different goals. However, two main orientations seem to emerge (Ricard-Nihoul, 2010), according to which participation is geared to the decision-making process and conceived as an aid for decision-making or towards the European people and conceived as a learning tool for citizenship and to help in the formation of opinions on a certain number of issues. There are intermediary instruments between these two opposites on the same continuum, where one has the CCs at one end and deliberative polls (which allow "the transition from photography to film" with regard to individuals' opinions – Monceau, 2010) at the other. Some try to combine the two goals. That is the case for citizens' consultations, which are meant to take part in the emergence of a European people while defining the general axes of public action for the EU. Others are addressed to particular sectors of activities (networking territories and professionals).

Track 2. Transnationalising the functioning of such events

The transposition of the participatory exercise at the European level is not immune from difficulties, as we have able to observe. If one leaves to one side the simple scenario in which a single langue, English, is used for deliberation, which has significant consequences for the selection of citizens who may take part in the instrument, one finds oneself managing complex, multilingual and often multilevel deliberations (participatory processes being often divided into two phases, initial meetings at the national level preceding conferences at the European level). It seems to us that two lessons can be taken from the experiments that we have analysed.

With regard to the management of different languages first, the problem is as complicated for all the other European situations, in particular the institutional ones, in which several working languages exist side by side. However, the organisers of some participatory experiments have been

innovative and found a solution that we think could be used more widely. This is to alternate monolingual phases and multilingual ones to promote both in-depth exchanges of views on some issues (in a single language) and transnational deliberation as such (with different languages and nationalities).

This is, for example, what the designers and organisers of the MOM project imagined when they used the so-called 'carrousel' method for the second European Convention in January 2006. There were big circular, multilingual, tables surrounded by eight smaller, monolingual, tables like the petals of a flower. Citizens moved between them as per a complex choreography, which allowed them to alternate in-depth discussions with people speaking the same language as them and more general exchanges of views around a multicultural table. That of course implies considerable logistical work (75 people had, for example, been hired to help discussions flow smoothly in the case cited in addition to there being 48 interpreters and professional facilitators). But this is also a way of ensuring that one avoids the traps of straightforward translation, which often plays a part in erasing the conflictual aspects of exchanges of views and is a potential obstacle to in-depth thinking.

The second lesson concerns the organisation of the participatory experiments. In order to avoid a feeling of frustration among participants, linked to the large number of procedures and their lack of clarity, and even coherence, it seems relevant to us to envisage a certain degree of centralisation in the organisation process to guarantee the necessary clarity, openness and uniformity for a 'good' deliberation (Boussaguet, Dehousse, 2009). That may seem counter-intuitive at first sight as the participatory experiments are conceived as bottom-up processes. However, centralising does not necessarily mean concentrating the decision-making power in the hands of a handful of individuals. On the contrary, one could easily imagine representatives of citizens and 'facilitators' (or moderators)

of the debates taking part in the definition of the design of the participatory instrument and the very organisation of it upstream of the process.

Track 3. Better listening by the European institutions

Finally, reflecting on participatory democracy at the European level presupposes focusing on the context in which this citizens' participation is organised and is developed. So that brings us back to asking the question about the link that participation/deliberation has with the European institutions. So far, while the experiments that have been organised have been rounded off with a presentation of their results to representatives of the European institutions (European Parliament, European Commission, European Economic and Social Committee, etc.), it is difficult to measure the exact impact that they might have had. For such experiments to have meaning at the European level, they would need to be somewhat listened to by the institutions. It seems to us that three tracks should be explored in that connection.

The first consists of making the subjects of citizens' deliberations match the EU's areas of competence. This is because one cannot have any influence on political institutions when the views taken concern issues not dealt with at that level of government. The first experiments of CCs at the Community level (MOM and RAISE) focussed on areas largely located outside the EU's area of competence – neural sciences in the first case and the issue of development in towns in the other – which of course limited their influence on the EU decision-making process.

The second track implies an effort by the institutions themselves to determine the attitude for them to adopt towards these participatory experiments. This is about putting in place a certain type of procedure consisting of saying/specifying what the European institutions, led by

the Commission, are meant "to do with all that". If the stated goal of the participatory instrument is to help decision-making then one is within one's rights to think that the minimum that could be asked of European institutions would be to have to send a reply to the organisers and citizens taking part in the instrument. This duty to reply would at the same time be a guarantee that these institutions had listened.

Finally, and this will be the last point, would it not be necessary to think about a form of institutionalisation of this citizen's voice? It seems to us that the time has come to move from the stage of pilot experiments to a form of stable input into the European political process. One of the tracks to do this would be to provide this citizens' participation with an institutional conference. The history of European integration is dotted with institutional and legal creations that have often come ahead of the social and political reality – European political parties or the Committee of the Regions are illustrations of this process of premature institutionalisation, accompanying and facilitating phenomena that one wants to encourage. Along the same lines, it would be appropriate to reflect on putting in place an institution[26] tasked with embodying citizens' participation and deliberation at the European level, rather like the *Commission du débat public* [commission of public debate] in France of the *Danish Board of Technology* in Denmark.

By allowing promoters of participatory initiatives to benefit from the tool box drawn from the successful participatory experiments, that would make it possible to facilitate these transnational debates and give them visibility at the EU level. This body's mission would be to help actors interested in the choice of the most appropriate participatory tool for the objective being pursued and in the organisation of the consultation/deliberation

26. 'Institution' should be understood here in its wide sense and not in the strict legal sense of 'institutions of the EU' such as they are listed in the Treaties; it is more about a body or a structure that is independent of the EU institutions.

itself. It could also centralise results, disseminate them to the European institutions concerned and do an assessment and the follow-up after the experiment.

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In sum, it would play a role as an interface between the participatory instrument and the EU institutions and would facilitate the smooth running of the event. This idea of institutionalisation is not a new one. It has, for example, been mentioned following the MOM project by external evaluators tasked with doing an assessment of the experiment. "Consideration should be given to institutionalising public participation at European level. A permanent organisation, as opposed to an ad hoc arrangement, is needed to ensure that deliberation takes place as required. This is required at European level, perhaps within the EU institutions or perhaps an independent body. If these processes are not institutionalised they will die" (Renn, 2007). However, this kind of idea is spreading more and more as the number of participatory experiments grows (Sintomer, 2010). To progressively transform into political routine what is only still at the stage of experimentation today, it is essential that the stock of experience that has been gradually built up is stored away and that we reflect on the best way for it to benefit European citizens.

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The spoken comments of participants in the seminar entitled "*La démocratie participative dans l'Union européenne*" [Participatory democracy in the European Union], which took place in Paris on 25 June 2010, can be added to these sources. Reference is made to that in the body of the text in the form of a parenthesis mentioning the name of the speaker followed by the date 2010. Here is the list of these participants:

- Loïc BLONDIAUX (University Paris 1)
- Monica BURCH (Farnet network)
- Renaud DEHOUSSE (Sciences Po, Notre Europe)
- Sophie DUCHESNE (Sciences Po/CEE, CNRS)
- Isabelle DURANT (European Parliament, Vice-President in charge of relations with civil society)
- Pierangelo ISERNIA (University of Sienna)
- Cécile LE CLERCQ (European Commission)
- Bernard MANIN (EHESS)
- Henri MONCEAU (Wallonian ministry of the economy and of new technologies, head of cabinet)
- Gerrit RAUWS (Fondation Roi Baudouin)
- Gaëtane RICARD-NIHOUL (Notre Europe)
- Sabine SAURUGGER (IEP Grenoble)
- Carlo SESSA (Isis)
- Yves SINTOMER (Marc Bloch Center in Berlin, University Paris 8)

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