1ST EDITION – THURSDAY, 21st APRIL 2022

EUROPEAN TECHNOLOGY FORUM 4 SUSTAINABLE DEMOCRACY

PANEL 4 – TECHNOLOGY FOR NGOs & CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

How can Technology be used to create more impact on Society?

REPORTED BY EMRANA BAJRAMI, STUDENT

MASTER EUROPEAN GOVERNANCE

UNIVERSITY OF LUXEMBOURG

SUMMARY

The panel was held as part of the European Technology Forum 4 Sustainable Democracy, which brought together prominent figures from civil society and technology to raise awareness on the sustainability of democracy and to promote civic involvement. The panel engaged lively and involved enriching discussions with **Axel Dauchez** CEO of *Make.org*, **Darko Brkan** President & Co-Founder of *Zašto ne*, **Esther Nass**, Director of *Consul Democracy Foundation*, and **Dr. Ariane König**, Research Scientist & Project Director of *Nexus Futures* at the University of Luxembourg, while **Mario Afonso Ramada**, Student of the Master in European Governance at the University of Luxembourg, moderated the talk.

Technology is a useful tool to tackle the decrease of consensus of collective decisions, indeed Axel Dauchez aims at addressing this issue through the creation of a mass collaboration platform intended to increasingly engage citizens and civil society, thus bringing a positive transformation in the social framework. Several projects involving a wide range of actors from citizens to EU institutions and NGOs, have been introduced within his organization. As a matter of fact, such platform facilitates the definition of political programs before elections as well as it contributes to the activation of civil action with NGOs at national level, resulting in a large collectivity engaged with a mission and subsequent significant impact.

What must be also recognized are the issues that can emerge from the misuse of technology. Darko Brkan refers to the concept of accountability as it is the mission of its NGO, which is involved in fact-checking and monitoring of political processes in Bosnia and Herzegovina. As the user experience is different now than it was in the past, it can be noticed that technology is used intensively also enabling the spreading of disinformation. Considering this, it is essential to act in a more adapt and effective way keeping the pace with the development of technology. Clearly there are checks and balances in place with regards to technology, however its role in the promotion of sustainable democracy must be remarked since, as Esther Nass points out, to date, accessibility and sustainability of democracy are the primary concerns. Technology facilitates the realization of these dimensions by offering platforms on which citizens can participate, communicate, and confront on diverse visions and perspectives. In this way, it can be noted that when all voices are heard collective work can lead to meaningful and harmonic achievements.

Social transformation can be attained through participation as notes Dr. Ariane König, who is focusing on the engagement in transformative sustainability in her research. There is a massive gap between expert knowledge, collected data and people, thus tools for citizens are introduced to reduce this divide, complement official data collection, and inform on policies, contributing at the same time in creating windows of accountability. Hence, technology has the potential to foster the implementation of the projects local actors deem as necessary, and to compare different participatory actions.

Considering this new generation of technology breakthroughs what does this mean for systems of governance that were created long before digital disruption?

This involves the concept of democracy, seen as an institutional system which gathers representatives who take decisions and implement them, according to a provided set of rules. In the current society it is fundamental to meet the characteristics of a given user experience to create a significant impact. Furthermore, people find democracy less engaging probably because of its divisive connotation, in elections for instance, therefore, in this regard, appears relevant the issue of reintermediation between citizens and institutions through open source, representation, and accessibility.

How to create trust and global transparency in a wider perspective?

Increasing trust towards the government and the people is crucial, as the whole democratic process is favored when the two parties involved share a common interest. Nevertheless, it must be also noted that trust is not buildable, and it can be effective exclusively in function of strong social cohesion. Another prominent aspect is the idea of participation, as the sharing of power, such as decision making, can promote citizens' engagement as well as it can the emerging commitment.

CONCLUSIONS

The general conclusions resulting from the discussion are the following:

- The collaboration of large collectivities through participative technologic platforms can create a meaningful impact on society and on the sustainable nature of democracy.
- It is fundamental to be aware of the opportunities, as well as of the dangers stemming from technology and dictating the use people make of it, as, besides the promotion of civic engagement, disinformation is equally a present element.
- Along with societal transformation, sustainable and accessible democracies are achievable through the coordinated participation and the positive use of technology, reducing the distance between people and institutions and fostering collective action.
- In order to have functional democracies reintermediation among people and institutions, trust between involved actors and social participation are essential.