



SYMPOSIUM ON DEMOCRACY AND NEW MODES OF GOVERNANCE

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Introduction

THE ARTICLES IN THIS SPECIAL SECTION ORIGINATE FROM AN EU-funded 6th Framework Integrated Project on New Modes of Governance (NMG).¹ Richard Bellamy, Dario Castiglione, Andreas Føllesdal and Albert Weale were the ‘Democracy and Legitimacy Taskforce’ of this project. They had the role of interacting with the various empirical projects and establishing a normative framework which would help researchers assess how far this new development of EU governance was serving to overcome or deepen the EU’s notorious democratic deficit. Adrienne Héritier and Dirk Lehmkuhl were the directors of one of the key ‘clusters’ of empirical projects that explored the issues of delegation, hierarchy and accountability. As these articles reveal, there is a certain convergence in our normative and empirical accounts. NMG claim to offer heterarchic forms of decision-making that are open, deliberative and participatory and well suited to generating consensual agreements that are both flexible and effective and therefore apt for regulating complex processes within a system of multilevel governance involving a plurality of actors and power-holders. Not only is it said to be an appropriate form of governance for many of the policy areas dealt with by the EU, but its participatory and deliberative features allegedly give it democratic qualities as good as, and more suitable in this area than, the standard democratic mechanisms of competitive party elections to representative legislatures, which then seek to direct policy through more command-and-control mechanisms and are ultimately accountable to the voters for any mistakes.

¹ Contract no. CIT1-CT-2004-506392.

Our assessment of this claim is mixed. As Weale argues, NMG can provide a certain kind of political accountability if they adopt a form of reasoning in their respective policy areas which is open and replicable by the public or their agents. However, as Føllesdal and Bellamy and Castiglione argue, the motivation for them to do so in consistent and representative ways that reflect the plurality of interests of those likely to be affected is uncertain, unless these new modes are embedded within old modes of government that enjoy more traditional forms of democratic accountability. This assumption appears to be reasonably well founded in the empirical evidence summarized by Héritier and Lehmkuhl. As they note, NMG operate best under the shadow of hierarchy offered by the old modes of government typical of the member states whose representative and democratic processes give them legitimacy and ensure their responsiveness.