



Engendrer la cohésion sociale Fostering Social Cohesion

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Is Europe still *sui generis*?
Signals from *The White Paper on European Governance*

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There is no single way to understand either the importance of the *White Paper on European Governance* [COM(2001) 428] or even its goals. For some observers, the document represents a misunderstanding of the difference between government and governance (Sbragia, 2001). For others, just as in LaFontaine's fable of the frog who wanted to become as big as the ox, the Commission wants to become more like a government, or in the words of Fritz Scharpf, the White Paper proposes an "inflated image of the Commission's capabilities". It projects "a heroic self-image of the Commission complemented by a deep distrust of the Member States, whose role in policy-making and implementation the White Paper seeks to have reduced or bypassed wherever possible" (Scharpf, 2001: 8). The White Paper was denounced as nothing less than a *coup d'État* by France's influential *Le Monde* (Cassen, 2001: 28). Others claimed that the White Paper is an attempt by the Commission to carve out a new role for itself "that is reminiscent of French-style executive centralization" (Scharpf, 2001: 8; Sidentop, 2001: 113) and that the White Paper projects a "vision of a hierarchical and unitary entity" reminiscent of an outdated model of the 19th century state (Kohler-Koch, 2001: 184).

Our goal here is not to arbitrate these debates. These are not the arguments that we address in this paper. We do not wish to claim or to reject that the White Paper is about creating a "Commission-government" (Weiler, 2001: 208). Our claim is the much more straight-forward one that the White Paper is truly about *governance*. This is what the European Union, as a non-state, can provide. The White Paper provides an image of modern governance and that is a significant event for the EU, one that alters its approach to generating legitimacy.

However - and this is our second claim - in proposing ways to enlarge and remodel the governance practices of the Union, the White Paper actually shares many of the current ideas about practices and forms of governance being adopted by national governments, because *they themselves* are becoming more like the institutions of the Union. This is occurring because, for national states, governance is an alternative approach to the hierarchical, top-down vision and practices associated with the Weberian bureaucratic state. Governments almost everywhere are moving away from command-and-control measures and in doing so, they are increasingly adopting the type of "soft" policy instruments used in the EU. As they do so, they are also modifying their citizenship practices, in particular shifting the routes of access to participation, stressing partnerships with civil society organisations, relying on them to deliver programme, and inventing new forms of citizen engagement. Therefore, to the extent that everyone is "doing governance," the EU is becoming less *sui generis* than is generally recognised.

The demonstrative logic of this paper is the following. First, we describe briefly the White Paper's vision of governance. We then elaborate on our contention that the notion of governance draws both the Union and national governments onto the same conceptual and practical terrain. Thirdly, and because among their proposals for improved governance, the authors of the White Paper suggest the need for a more direct link between the Commission and civil society as well as new forms of participation, we substantiate our claim that the authors put forward a vision of a European citizenship regime which is very close to that being promoted in a number of national states, both in Europe and elsewhere. This vision is one in which practices of governance recognise a variety of types of actors, in which the formal governmental institutions of the modern state play a new role as well as a less decisive role, in which partnerships across sectors

and levels are key governance structures, and as a result, one in which forms of citizen participation are changing.

We are using a comparative perspective to examine the White Paper proposals, and to demonstrate their similarities to changes occurring in the citizenship regimes of a number of countries. It is important to be mindful that in the case of the EU, this is primarily a *textual analysis*, comparing one European text to the historical experience of a number of national governments. The proposals of the White Paper have not been acted upon in any systematic way as of yet. However, talk about governance is by no means limited in Euro-speak to just the White Paper. Indeed, the Convention is being called on to entrench in any constitutional proposal some classic governance forms and relations.¹

Getting from Intergovernmentalism to Governance

In the White Paper, participation is identified as one of the five principles of good governance, along with openness, accountability, effectiveness and coherence. Improved participation is supposed to enhance both the efficiency and legitimacy of European governance: it is said to respond “to the expectations of the Union’s citizens” (p.35), it will help “connect Europe with its citizens” (p.3), lead to a “less top-down approach” (p.4) and make the policy process “more inclusive and accountable” (p.8). All this, in turn, should “create more confidence” (p.10) in European institutions and generate “a sense of belonging to Europe” (p.11).

This focus on participation represents an important shift in the discourse of and about the European Union (Magnette: 2001: 23). In the past, arguments have tended to stress that legitimacy will be generated more by good policies than by democratic practices. It is precisely this attention to participation, expressed via new links between the Commission and citizens, that allows the White Paper to be more than a technocratic document about efficiency and effectiveness that might have been appropriate to any generic public administration up-date. Indeed, it is the emphasis on participation that grounds the White Paper’s claim to offer a vision of the institutions of modern governance. It also represents a vision of citizenship that departs both from the intergovernmentalism embedded in post-Amsterdam models of European citizenship and from long-standing nationally-based images of citizenship, in which access to representation passes primarily if not exclusively by political parties and parliaments.

While always careful to acknowledge the importance, role and rights of “national governments” and “national administrations,” the White Paper also declares that “it is time to recognise that the Union has moved from a diplomatic to a democratic process, with policies that reach deep into national societies and daily life” (Commission, 2001: 30). From this perspective, it claims the right to enter into a democratic dialogue and foster a more open policy process with a wide range

¹ For example, at the Mid-Term Review of the Social Policy Agenda, held on 19-20 March 2003 the Keynote Speaker, Maria João Rodrigues, called for recognition of “modern governance” in the treaties. Under modern governance she included a significant place for the involvement of civil society and the social partners. MEP Anne Van Lancker and Delegate to the Convention, called on the Convention to recognise new forms of governance, and under this label she mentioned the role of the social partners and civil society, as well as constitutionalisation of the Open Method of Co-ordination. From her perspective, good governance requires, as a *sine qua non*, good co-ordination.

of actors. The focus is particularly on “a stronger interaction with regional and local governments and civil society,” via “a more systematic dialogue with representatives of regional and local governments”; flexibility in implementation of Community legislation; minimum standards for consultation; “partnership arrangements” for consultation beyond the minimum standards, in return for guarantees of representativity (Commission, 2001: 4).

In arguing that it is time to move “from a diplomatic to democratic process” the White Paper is clearly seeking to move beyond intergovernmentalism - which implies that relationships are first and foremost among governments - and build more direct links with civil society. This shift towards a more “democratic process” suggests that White Paper proposes that the Union seek to create and maintain legitimacy in quite a different way. This search for legitimacy is clearly expressed in its proposals for a new form of governance:

‘Participatory governance’ is a key term describing the outcome of one of the Prodi Commission's four strategic priorities – to develop a new mode of governance. Aimed at laying out recommendations on how to increase the legitimacy of the institutions and enhance democracy in Europe, the White Book raised the ‘public dialogue’ to a leading idea. With ‘public dialogue’ as a new method of work the Commission not only introduced a theoretical but also a practical discourse aimed at citizens in the EU (Liebert, 2001: 9).

Of course, the authors of the White Paper had to justify their position with reference to Community history. Therefore, they have reworked a long-standing notion, that of the Community Method. They claimed that improvements to the Method would come “by following a less top-down approach and complementing its policy tools more effectively with non-legislative instruments” (Commission, 2001: 4).² Thus, the White Paper’s definition of the Community Method supposedly offers a way to address “one of the major problems confronting our societies,” that is increasing distrust of institutions and politics, as well as democratic institutions (“at both national and European levels”) to connect Europe with its citizens. It must, in other words and according to the White Paper, become a democratic Method and respond to the democratic deficit of European citizenship.

Is this then a *coup d’État*, an effort to position the EU as a state-in-becoming by providing itself with the traditional institutions of statehood and by-passing the Member States? Certainly, “the instruments of participation promoted by the White Paper correspond to a general and long-term evolution of citizenship practices in the Western world” (Magnette, 2001: 26). Combining new

² Goals of action, sources of legitimacy, and policy processes are, for the authors, embedded in the *Community method*, defined (Commission, 2001: 8) as a decision-making process that:

“... provides a means to arbitrate between interests by passing them through two successive filters: the general interest at the level of the Commission; and democratic representation, European and national, at the level of the Council and European Parliament, together the Union’s legislature.”

This is, of course, not the agreed upon definition of the Community Method. For example, Ulrike Liebert, who holds a Jean Monnet Chair at the University of Bremen, defines the Community method as an alternative governance model to that proposed in the White Paper, which she characterises as “participatory”. She labels the Community Method as “the ‘Monnet mode of governance.’ The mode of governance called after Jean Monnet was based on consensual decision-making by elites, and strategic economic instruments for political integration...” (Liebert, 2001: 7). It is secretive, rather than transparent, and so on.

kinds of participatory patterns with traditional electoral rights is a widespread movement and it has clearly not been ignored by the authors of the White Paper. Yet, it is important to note that it is precisely this “wide-spread movement” that is altering the national state itself, moving it away from practices of democratic participation and relations between state and civil society that characterised it in the heyday of party and parliamentary representational forms, and when there was stronger belief in the subordination of public administrations to elected governments and parliaments.

Therefore, rather than assessing whether the White Paper proposes that the EU become a state-like object or not, we prefer to take its title seriously, and explore the possibility that by proposing new forms and practices of *governance*, the White Paper actually is positioning the EU quite close to national states, because they themselves are becoming more like the European Union. This is because, among other things, they are the chief participants in making happen the evolution in citizenship practices to which Paul Margette refers in the above quote. In other words, we now move to the second claim of this paper, which is that the governance model proposed by the White Paper positions the European Union closer to the current situation of Member States, as well as other national states, because they themselves are changing. Thus, the *Paper on European Governance* sketches a future for the Union that would significantly change its status from one of *sui generis* to one quite similar to national governments, but for quite different reasons than are often mentioned.

Governance: Simply a synonym or something different?

Often in ordinary political discourse or even that of social scientists the word “governance” is used to describe the actions of governments. This conceptual confusion should be avoided. Government and governance are not synonyms. Rather, a large part of the appeal of governance as a concept is its capacity, unlike the narrower term government, to reveal a shift from one way of governing – and therefore making choices and decisions – to another. Nor is governance a synonym for democracy. It is simply a term that stresses the ways in which governing may involve a range of institutions and actors (Pierre and Peters, 2000).

It is important to be clear from the beginning, therefore, how we distinguish between government and governance. This distinction is captured by these two simple definitional phrases (Lemieux, 2000):

- “Government” is defined as public institutions with the legitimacy to impose collective decisions, and includes representatives in the legislature as well as the executive, both elected and appointed.
- “Governance” involves the processes of governing by public policy networks that include both public and private sector actors.

From this simple distinction we can see that governance denotes ways of co-ordinating collective resources that transcend both the hierarchy of traditional public institutions and the privacy of market-based or other types of non-state decisions (Rhodes, 1994).³

³ The structural trends and broad patterns of economic and social transformation that have contributed to the concept’s increased popularity affect the EU as well as national governments. The capacity of governments to control events within the nation state is being influenced by the flow of power upwards to transnational bodies and

Rather than governments acting alone, they are increasingly engaging in co-regulation, co-steering, co-production, co-operative management, public/private partnerships and other forms of decision-making that cross the boundaries separating government from society and between public and private actors. In this way, the tasks of steering, managing, controlling or guiding are no longer the exclusive preserve of government; they are carried by a wide range of agencies in the public, private, and voluntary sectors, acting in conjunction or combination with each other. For example, in the last few years there has been a veritable explosion across Europe and North America of formal agreements between representatives of the voluntary sector and governments. These are intended to acknowledge publicly the relationship across public and private sectors, as well to regularise it. Service development and implementation have also been decentralised, everywhere from federal countries such as Canada to traditionally centralised ones such as France (Jenson and Phillips, 1996; Ullman, 1998).

Such practices then generate governing styles in which boundaries are blurred both within and between the public and private sectors. There is an increased involvement of the private and voluntary sectors in strategic decision-making as well as service delivery. Responsibilities for policy conception and development that were previously the domain of government are now shared via contracting-out, but also by partnerships and citizen engagement. State financed and regulated social services - in the areas of childcare, eldercare, training and life-long learning, for example - are frequently not only delivered but also designed by private actors in the voluntary and para-public sectors, rather than by state employees.⁴ These have become the reality of public policy-making in many countries.

Such governance practices involve what might be termed “the return of civil society.” Such attention to civil society comes from the convergence of a variety of analyses of the current social and political challenges. One line of analysis promises that new governance forms, founded on active citizenship, will contribute to labour market activation, thereby increasing employment rates and minimising social exclusion.⁵ A second line of analysis promises that modern governance, via better co-ordination among a range of actors, both public and private, and a lively civil society will provide the social underpinnings for effective economic and political performance.⁶ Enthusiasts of more co-ordinated and transparent policy-making, involving citizen consultation and engagement, as well as social dialogue, also contribute to the

downwards to regions and communities. The state can no longer assume to hold a monopoly of expertise or of the resources necessary to govern. In this situation, governments have begun to rely on a number of interdependent institutions and actors drawn from within and beyond government. For some them, the concept of “governance recognizes [that] the capacity to get things done which does not rest on the power of government to command and use its authority. It sees government as able to use new tools and techniques to steer and guide” (Stoker, 1998: 18).

⁴ An interesting example is the contracting-out of the redesign of government, in the move towards the new public management in the 1990s. Governments around the world called on management consultants from the private sector to develop and implement new management forms (Saint-Martin, 2000).

⁵ France’s social inclusion measures, including the *Revenu minimum d’insertion*, are based on such a notion of reinserting marginalised individuals into the mainstream, via a programme to suit their needs and a contract that they sign to follow the programme (Palier, 2002: 199-303). So too is, for example, Quebec’s focus on the social economy.

⁶ This is, for example, Robert Putnam’s (1993) argument about the importance of social capital for political performance in Italy. This argument has led to a multitude of efforts to foster social capital so as to foster economic and political performance. See, for example, the World Bank programmes.

convergence.⁷ A fourth position that contributes to the convergence around a return to civil society is the contemporary resurgence of the Catholic notion of subsidiarity. Supporters of this principle claim that organisations operating in civil society (or the third sector) should be recognised for the scale and scope of their contributions to tackling collective concerns without reliance on market forces or bureaucratic mechanisms.⁸ Fifthly, “Third Way” thinking contains a vision of civil society as a generator of social capital and solidarity and as an alternative to market and state.⁹

Most of these positions also contribute a belief in participatory forms of citizen involvement intended to transcend the limits of traditional, liberal democracy (Philips and Orsini, 2002). The governance literature highlights the development of a plural and differentiated pattern of connections among state agencies and individual citizens. These connections are viewed as providing greater flexibility and sophistication than the blunt instrument of voting in elections or the supposedly hierarchical relations of traditional party politics. Such attention to participation is also often promoted a cure for the high levels of disengagement with politics observed.¹⁰ New links between state and citizen appear to respond to the current limits on democratic accountability in complex societies.

Of course, the merits of these ideas about governance can be disputed. They are by no means as benign as their supporters suggest, nor is it clear that they always generate improvements on past political forms.¹¹ Our purpose here is not, however, to enter into these debates. Rather, it is simply to point out that such ideas are sweeping through the public administrations of many countries, and in consequence their citizenship practices are changing.

Even this brief overview of the principles and practices of governance reveal that a commitment to governance will have consequences in several traditional areas of citizenship. Forms and sites of participation are clearly implicated, but so too are the division of responsibility between public and private sectors. One of the most significant dimensions of citizenship, since the time of the Greeks, has been designating the boundary between those things that are decided privately - and are therefore beyond the scope of citizenship - and those which depend upon respect of collectivity, and in democratic societies are decided by citizens for citizens.

⁷ The Social Union Framework Agreement (SUFA) signed by the government of Canada as part of a major social policy reform, the first in 30 years, promises significant citizen engagement will be part of the process (Mendelsohn and McLean, 2000). Such commitments to citizen involvement also characterize New Zealand, where neo-liberal governments promised “citizen engagement” but the Labour government is instituting “partnerships” with voluntary sector organisations (Larner, 2002).

⁸ Most obviously Germany makes a large contribution to the way of thinking about the role of the third sector, with its assignment of responsibility for much social service delivery to associations in the voluntary sector, in the name of subsidiarity. But NZ too is establishing such arrangements, exactly as a reaction to fears of both too much centralisation and that downsizing the state in the 1980s and 1990s eliminated too much capacity from the public sector (Larner and Craig, 2002).

⁹ As Anthony Giddens puts it, “the fostering of an active civil society is a basic part of the politics of the third way” (1998: 78).

¹⁰ Comparative research initiated in the 1960s has shown that citizens not only want to hold their leaders accountable through elections once every four or five years, but that an increasingly large proportion of them also intend both to scrutinize and to try to influence their leaders during their term of office (Magnette, 2001: 26).

¹¹ For critical reviews of the democratic and other limits of such forms of modern governance see, inter alia, Phillips and Orsini (2002)

A commitment to governance practices, or to what some like to term “modern governance,” shifts forms and sites of participation and reassigns public and private responsibilities. Therefore, as a organising heuristic for examining the proposals of the *White Paper on European Governance*, we will use four categories of the concept citizenship regime.¹² These are:

- the *responsibility mix*, defining the boundaries of public and private responsibilities.
- *rights and responsibilities* of membership.
- the institutional mechanisms giving *access* to the state, the modes of participation in civic life and public debates.
- the definition of *belonging*.

The White Paper’s proposals for a new model of governance, read through a citizenship lens

If the EU and especially the Commission were to follow the proposals of the White Paper, it would be moving toward consolidating a “governance” style citizenship regime, with new forms of access, new rights of social citizenship and particularly with a new responsibility mix.

The Responsibility Mix

The *White Paper on European Governance*’s proposals for a responsibility mix based on multilevel governance, closer ties with sub-national levels of government and civil society organisations reproduce the mainstream practices of many governments engaged in redesigning their citizenship regimes. Governance models, as Peters and Pierre (1998) stress, include a structured mix based on networks and shared competences, rather than on clear divisions of competences or powers. The role of the state is quite different from when it could both command and control.

The five principles of good governance – according to the White Paper – can be achieved only with a break from traditional governmental practice. “... the linear model of dispensing policies from above must be replaced by a virtuous circle, based on feedback, networks and involvement from policy creation to implementation at all levels.” (Commission, 2001: 11). This means a larger role for markets and communities, as well as governments.

In all this, the voluntary sector as well as sub-national governments and market-based actors have a major role, building around on-going partnerships (Commission, 2001: 32). Delivering better information – which is described as the foundation for openness and a “pre-condition for generating a sense of belonging to Europe” (Commission, 2001: 11) – will involve “networks, grassroots organisations and national, regional and local authorities.” In particular, and beyond the outreach to local and regional governments, the White Paper emphasises the importance of the voluntary sector, that which it labels “civil society”, and which includes everything from the social partners to NGOs and professional associations. Singled out are “churches and religious communities [that] have a particular contribution to make.” (Commission, 2001: 14).

¹² This concept was developed in Jenson and Phillips (1996).

This new responsibility mix is quite explicitly detailed in a subsection entitled *With better involvement comes greater responsibility*, in which the statement is made that “participation is not about institutionalising protest. It is about more effective policy shaping on early consultation and past experience” (Commission, 2001: 15). The White Paper goes into detail about the need to establish a code of conduct setting minimum standards (Commission, 2001: 17). In fact, such a Code of Conduct was issued in December 2002. It identifies a set of eligibility criteria defining who has “access to consultation processes” in the EU. In order to be able to participate in the policy process, an organisation must demonstrate its capacities, by showing that it can:

exist permanently at Community level; provide direct access to its members’ expertise and hence rapid and constructive consultation; represent general concerns that rally the interest of European society; comprise bodies that are recognised at Member State level as representatives of particular interests; have member organisations in most of the EU Member States; provide for accountability to its members; have authority to represent and act at European level; be independent and mandatory, not bound by instructions from outside bodies; be transparent, especially financially and in its decision-making structures (Commission, 2002: 11).

In this way, civil society is called on to follow the principles of good governance, especially accountability and openness (Commission, 2001: 15), because it is no longer simply a “private actor.” It is one that is actively engaged in and shares responsibility for public decisions.

Such a compact mimics quite closely those that are being signed by national states as they redesign their own responsibility mixes along the lines of modern governance. The first government-voluntary sector agreement was signed in the UK in 1998, when New Labour agreed to Compacts with the voluntary sectors in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Since then, the instrument has been at least discussed and frequently accepted in at least 14 other jurisdictions. These include Canada, Estonia France, Germany, New Zealand, Quebec and Spain (Phillips, 2002: 1; Phillips, 2001). The European compact, as do the national ones, involves both recognition and regularisation of the relationship with civil society, insisting that if it is to have greater responsibility in collective choice mechanisms - that is the role of the state is less directive - then the third sector should become more self-consciously accountable to the “public interest.”

Thus, as national governments have moved from “rowing” to “steering” in their visions of the responsibility mix,¹³ they have become more similar to the self-styled role of the Commission, and thereby provide a shared language for talking of the role of multiple levels of government as well as multiple actors.

Access

The second important change in thinking about citizenship that the White Paper proposes touches on routes to representation. Given its origins as a Common Market, the European Community gave a privileged status to the social partners, represented by union confederations and employer associations. The basis of this status is their capacity to *represent*, to provide access to the desires and goals of their members, from the grassroots to the decision process.

¹³ As Peters and Pierre (1998: 231) put it: “Steering, in this perspective, is largely about setting priorities and defining goals.”

The White Paper, however, downplays this special status in two ways. First, while the White Paper does not reject the Social Dialogue process, it does fold the social partners into the broad category of civil society. Second, it seeks to enhance the conditions for the involvement of individual European citizens in the policy process, in order to achieve its goal of providing political leadership. Citizens are called on, as individuals and through their associations, to provide information via structured consultation processes. These will then allow the institutions of the EU to generate coherence in policy-making and thereby provide “political leadership” (Commission, 2001: 10).

The White Paper puts great store in good information. It sees it as a two-way street. Information flows up to the European Union, so that it can make policy judgements. But in addition public involvement, for the authors of the White Paper, depends primarily on the diffusion of information.

Democracy depends on people being able to take part in public debate. To do this, they must have access to reliable information on European issues and be able to scrutinise the policy process in its various stages. Major progress has been made in 2001 with the adoption of new rules giving citizens greater access to Community documents. (Commission 2001: 11).

The White Paper sees the third sector as being partially responsible for maintaining the conditions of healthy democracy as well. It identifies key contributions that networks linking businesses, communities, research centres and regional and local authorities can make to policy-making, particularly as “multipliers spreading awareness of the EU” (Commission, 2001: 18). This notion of “spreading awareness” is key to understanding the White Paper’s notion of democratic access, which it insists should be individual as well as via associations, social partners, and so on.

In finding ways to promote this citizen involvement, the White Paper falls back on the same proposals we find national governments making: improvements in Websites, use of new technologies to foster citizen debate, and so on. Governments around the world are working hard to “wire” their societies, with the goal being to enhance access to information and direct involvement. Thus, access to policy process for individual citizens no longer needs to pass either by a political party or a public servant; opinions can be sent directly to the centre, and information obtained from the same centre. In this, then, the White Paper’s proposal for citizen access and involvement follow closely on those already being undertaken in national states.

Rights and responsibilities

The White Paper is not a document about social citizenship, and therefore it does not have much to say on the *content* of citizenship rights. It does, however, embrace the focus of contemporary governance models much more than the notion of basic and standard citizenship rights that informed post-1945 citizenship regimes. Thus, the White Paper calls for greater flexibility in implementation, legislation limited as much as possible to “essential elements”, “leaving the executive to fill in the technical detail via implementing ‘secondary’ rules” (Commission, 2001: 20). Again this implementation would involve the range of actors – not termed stakeholders in the White Paper but usually called that in the governance literature. These notions are

underpinned by the call for greater flexibility, in which target-based, tripartite contracts would be employed, for achieving particular objectives under the umbrella of the “primary legislation” (Commission, 2001: 13).

This idea of differential programme content adhering to common general standards or norms is a familiar component of citizenship regimes anchored around notions of governance, and directly challenges the post-1945 model of strong, centralised government (Peters and Pierre, 1998: 224). Partnerships vary according to who is involved, regional specificity meeting local needs is a positive value, and so on. Thus, governance thinking gives the principle of subsidiarity another leg for legitimacy (Commission, 2001: 10).

Belonging

The White Paper begins from a concern about the belonging dimension of European citizenship. Dissatisfaction, disengagement, and distance plague European institutions, as they do national states. Therefore, the motive for reforming European governance, the reason for undertaking the exercise, is to reduce the fact that “many Europeans feel alienated from the Union’s work” (Commission, 2001: 7). Here the prescriptions for addressing citizen alienation is what we find in many other cases as well – greater public involvement, new forms of civic engagement and better social inclusion. In particular, policy must be more “inclusive and accountable” (Commission, 2001: 8). This turn to improving public involvement is a constant theme, especially in those countries where participation rates in elections have been steadily and dramatically declining.

Concern about the belonging dimension underpins the White Paper, and therefore is provided as a justification for the proposals about the responsibility mix, access and so on. As the Concluding Section of the White Paper puts it (Commission, 2001: 32):

Alienation from politics is not just a European problem, it is global, national and local. But for the Union it presents a particular challenge. Given the deep level of integration already achieved, people have similar expectations for the Union as they have for domestic politics and political institutions. But the Union cannot develop and deliver policy in the same way as a national government; it must build on partnerships and rely on a wide range of actors. Expectations must be met in different ways.

Conclusion

This paper has begun to document the ways that the White Paper’s proposals for governance – and the impact they would have on a European citizenship regime, if implemented – are not very different from those being pursued by national governments also engaged in redesigning the four dimensions of their citizenship regimes. The White Paper’s proposals are innovative in the context of the Union, as many authors have already pointed out. They mark a significant shift in the way that the EU would construct its legitimacy, based on the direct contact with citizens and their associations that has until now been almost exclusively reserved to national states. Thus, we agree with those who see the *White Paper on European Governance* as a significant document in the on-going process of building Europe.

As we have also argued, we see the notions of governance deployed in the White Paper as undermining the description of the EU as *sui generis*. It is becoming like a national state, but we differ from many of the critics (or enthusiasts) of the White Paper in one major way. Rather than seeing the EU becoming a *state-like* object, taking on the trappings of a 19th - or more correctly 20th - century state, we see national states moving towards the EU, adopting many of the governing practices advocated by the White Paper. They are, therefore, building citizenship regimes in which responsibility is shared with NGOs and market-based decision-makers, in which new forms of citizen involvement in and access to policy-making are initiated, in which rights are defined in general and flexible ways, to be given content in decentralised processes, and finally in which the crisis of identity and commitment are supposed to be resolved by resort to good governance.

Whether all this is a “good thing,” will generate stronger democracy or even solve the problems identified, is left for another analysis. Rather, our very limited goal here is to provide a description of the White Paper, and to identify the points of intersection and proximity to what is happening in national-level citizenship regimes, in order to demonstrate the convergence we believe exists.

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