

EUROPEAN CIVIC ACADEMY

2022



Capturing the winds of change:

*How can democratic civil society
drive systemic change?*

10-11 November 2022
Scuola Normale Superiore
Firenze
Italy

VENUE:

Scuola Normale Superiore
Palazzo Strozzi
Piazza degli Strozzi
50123 Firenze
Italy

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HOW CAN DEMOCRATIC CIVIL SOCIETY DRIVE SYSTEMIC CHANGE?

Large-scale crises have repeatedly affected Europe and the world in recent decades, with the Covid-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and the energy crisis the most recent examples. These multifaceted crises showcase the systemic nature of the challenges we face today: climate change and the related natural and humanitarian disasters, social injustice and rising inequalities, and the long-term consequences of conflicts.

During the Covid crisis, we witnessed a widespread popular desire across Europe for deep, structural change to ensure decent living and a sustainable future for all. Democratic civil society has been at the forefront, raising the alert on issues to be tackled, and delivering services to people in need. But we have also witnessed societal despair caused by socio-economic hardships and uncertainty for the immediate future. These are two sides of the same coin: on the one hand, hope and solidarity are in evidence; on the other, fear and pessimism towards the future are on the rise.

The war in Ukraine exacerbated the worst in humanity but we also witnessed immediate and widespread popular opposition to the war and solidarity to those fleeing the invaded country. At the same time, in too many instances these acts of solidarity have been selective based on race and ethnicity. The political responses and narratives in relation to the war also show a paradox: securitisation and militarisation are receiving a new push to answer the need of building an inclusive space for long-lasting peace and a shared future between people.

The climate crisis also poses its challenges. Tackling the huge unfolding environmental and social consequences, particularly extreme in the global south, requires immediate and radical action. But we need to rely on and trust democratic mechanisms and consensus-building dynamics, which is particularly challenging in the current climate of deep polarisation and soaring mistrust.

As a result of these crises that affect our daily lives, the wind of change is blowing. It could blow in a progressive direction, with the common good of all people at its core, or in a regressive one, along the path of destructive nationalism based on exclusion, xenophobia and reactionary politics, serving the powerful and leaving many behind. Too often civil society finds itself in a reactive mode, having to oppose the direction of the change, instead of being in the forefront, driving it. In the face of many challenges and few, sometimes overlooked victories, there is also a challenge of sustaining civic mobilisations and energy.

How can we sustain mobilisations when democracy and the urgency of the issues at stake seem to be following different timeframes? How can we be resilient when we experience many defeats? What are the factors that can support the creation of progressive change in society and in policy-making? What lessons can we learn from civil society's successes? How can we conceive of "victories" in a way that takes into account the non-linear path of progressive change? What skills, capacities, resources and infrastructures does civil society need to achieve its goals in a coherent manner?

PROGRAMME

10 November 2022

17:00 Introduction and welcome to the event

- **Jean-Marc Roirant** Co-President, European Civic Forum
- **Donatella della Porta** Full Professor at the Faculty of Political and Social Sciences, Director of Centre on Social Movement Studies, Scuola Normale Superiore, Florence, Italy
- **Oonagh Aitken**, Vice-President, European Civic Forum

17:30 Plenary discussion Then and now: 20 years since the European Social Forum

- **How can we sustain mobilisations and civic resilience when democracy and the urgency of the issues at stake seem following different timeframes, when we experience many defeats and challenges?**

- **Raffaella Bolini**, Co-President, European Civic Forum; member, national steering committee of ARCI; member, promoter committees of 2002 European Social Forum and 2022Firenze
- **Lorenzo Zamponi**, Research Fellow, Centre on Social Movement Studies, Scuola Normale Superiore, Florence, Italy

Interviewed by Filip Pazderski, Vice-President, European Civic Forum, Head of the Democracy and Civil Society Programme, Institute of Public Affairs

19:30 Opening of Art of Fundamental Rights Exhibition and celebratory dinner with the 2022 Civic Pride Laureates at Società Mutuo Soccorso Peretola

11 November 2022

09:30 Keynote on the discussion paper

Donatella della Porta, Full Professor at the Faculty of Political and Social Sciences, Director of Centre on Social Movement Studies, Scuola Normale Superiore, Florence, Italy

- **How can we conceive of "victories" in a way that takes into account the non-linear path of progressive change, including setbacks and defeats? What skills, capacities, resources and infrastructures does civil society need to achieve its goals in a coherent manner?**

10:00 Plenary on the discussion paper

Moderated by Alexandrina Najmowicz, Secretary General, ECF

- **Anika Jane Dorothy**, Fellow, Young African Leaders Programme, European University Institute; East Africa Coordinator, AMPLIFY Girls
- **Laura Sullivan**, Executive Director, We Move Europe

[Read the discussion paper!](#)

PROGRAMME

- **Kalypto Nicolaidis**, Chair in Global Affairs, School of Transnational Governance (EUI); convener, EUI Democracy Forum
- **Christophe Aguiton**, sociologist; union and political activist; founding member, Attac
- **Janmejai Tiwari**, Secretary General, Global Young Greens

11:20 Coffee break

11:40 Small group discussions What lessons can we learn from civil society's successes?

Group A Culture of care: How can we remain resilient and joyful in our activism in the face of growing challenges?

Moderated by **Giada Negri**, Research and Advocacy Coordinator, ECF

- **Poland** **Marta Lempart**, Co-founder, Polish Women's Strike

Rapporteur TBC

Group B Successful outcomes: What are the factors that contribute to civil society's victories

Moderated by **Alessandra Lo Piccolo**, PhD candidate in Political Science and Sociology at the Scuola Normale Superiore, member of COSMOS

- **Poland** **Karolina Dreszer**, Our Ombudsman (*Nasz Rzecznik*) initiative; President, National Federation of Polish NGOs (OFOP)
- **France** **Nathalie Tehio**, Policy Observatory in France; national committee of the Ligue des Droits de l'Homme

Rapporteur TBC

Group C Resistance and cultural hegemony: What are the factors to create power and agency to shape the collective imagination in a progressive direction?

Moderated by **Karlo Kralj**, PhD candidate in Political Science and Sociology at the Department of Social and Political Sciences of the Scuola Normale Superiore, and a member of COSMOS

- **Italy** **Victoria Oluboyo**, Human rights activist; member of Parma City Council
- **Serbia** **Irena Fiket**, Senior Research Associate, the Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory, University of Belgrade; member, Standing Group on Democratic Innovation, European Consortium for Political Research
- **Serbia** **Dr. Jelena Vasiljević**, Senior Research Associate, the Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory, University of Belgrade; Associate Professor, Faculty of Media and Communications, Singidunum University

Rapporteur TBC

13:00 Lunch break

14:00 Keynote Precarity, populism and the future of progressive alternatives

Albena Azmanova, Professor, Brussels School of International Studies, University of Kent

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14:20 **Small group discussions** Civil society and political representation

Group A To make or not to make the electoral jump? What can we learn from the experience of those who decided (or not) to join the electoral political competition?

Moderated by **Frank Heuberger**, German National Network for Civil Society (BBE)

- **Croatia** **Teodor Celakoski**, cultural worker and activist, Zagreb je NAŠ
- **Spain** **Luca Gervasoni**, Founding Co-director of NOVACT - International Institute for Nonviolent Action

Rapporteur **Daniela Chironi**, Research Fellow, COSMOS

Group B How to oppose an illiberal government

Moderated by **Jacopo Custodi**, PhD candidate in Political Science and Sociology at Scuola Normale Superiore

- **Hungary** **Veronika Mora**, Civilisation coalition; Director of Okotars - Hungarian Environmental Partnership Foundation
- **Slovenia** **Tija Jakič**, Member of the Programme Committee and Field Coordinator, Institute 8 March; Go Out and Vote campaign

Rapporteur **TBC**

Group C How to oppose the far-right's influence on the agenda of our institutions

Moderated by **Grigorij Meseznikov**, president of the Institute for Public Affairs in Bratislav

- **Bulgaria** **Denitsa Lyubenova**, Lawyer; Co-founder, Youth LGBT organisation Deystvie
- **Denmark** **Mette Müller**, Global Focus

Rapporteur **Angela Adami**, PhD candidate in Political Science and Sociology at the Scuola Normale Superiore; member of COSMOS

15:50 **Coffee break**

16:10 **Groups report back to plenary**

Conclusions

Jan Robert Suesser, Vice President, European Civic Forum

Donatella della Porta, Scuola Normale Superiore

17.00 **END**

17.30 **Evening side event: Rethinking alter-globalisation: the advent of planetary politics?**

Location: School of Transnational Governance, European University Institute, Via Camillo Cavour, 65a, 50129 Firenze

A public meeting of the European University Institute Transnational Democracy in the 21st Century Interdisciplinary Research Cluster in collaboration with European Civic Forum. The meeting will be followed by a cocktail reception for participants (19:00-20:00 CET).

Important: Participation in this event requires separate registration. Those registered to attend ECA 2022 can register [here](https://apps.eui.eu/EventRegistration/?eventId=554691): (<https://apps.eui.eu/EventRegistration/?eventId=554691>)

ABOUT THE EVENT

European Civic Academy (ECA)

ECA was launched by the European Civic Forum in 2016 to build bridges between civil society and academia. It provides a space for civil society actors and academics to exchange and to identify priorities and possibilities for strengthening efforts to enhance civic and democratic spaces in Europe.

ECA 2022 is organised in cooperation with the Centre on Social Movement Studies (**Cosmos**) of the Scuola Normale Superiore, Florence. It brings together laureates from past editions of the Civic Pride Awards, leading civic actors and academics to discuss lessons learned from inspiring mobilisations and victories.

This year's event will also take place in the framework of **2022Firenze**, an event marking the 20th anniversary of the first European Social Forum in Florence, Italy.

2022Firenze

The European Social Forum (ESF) was a regular conference held by members of the Global Justice Movement. Just one year after the harsh state repression at the Genoa Social Forum, and despite repeated attempts to criminalise the movement, in November 2002 the European Social Forum was born in Florence, bigger, broader and stronger. It was welcomed by an open, supportive, committed and courageous city.

Now is not about celebrating the past, but about keeping alive a memory that can help us to move toward the future. Florence was a moment of great strength and convergence of social movements and collective actors coming from all over Europe: a similar moment is very much needed today, in the face of the immense and dramatic challenges of the present, starting from the need to raise a strong and unified voice for peace and against war on a European scale.

From 10-13 November, European social movements and collective actors will gather in Florence as a step towards reconstructing a network of communication, collaboration and possible convergence able to face the tragic times we are living in: war, environmental crisis, increased social and gender inequalities and democratic crisis.

Overcoming the great geographical and thematic fragmentation that has characterised mobilisations in recent years is now more necessary than ever, and the very process that will lead us towards "Florence 2022" can become an essential part of this reconnection.

The first two days are dedicated to self-organised and self-financed activities put in place by the national and European networks, with the aim of involving as many activists as possible from all over Europe. Then, on 12 - 13 November, all participants will gather in a large and common European discussion meeting.

Art of Fundamental Rights Exhibition

Over time, art has created democratic formation within people of all ages, because it is a form of communication that helps spread and reinforce the general knowledge about current trends in our society. The **Art of Fundamental Rights** exhibition aims to inspire a broad public to interact in the debate on our common fundamental rights.

The exhibition's organisers want to raise awareness about fundamental human rights through art, because they continue to be under attack in several countries. We are seeing these developments all over the world, including in Europe, where authoritarian regimes exercise power over minorities and vulnerable groups.

The **Art of Fundamental Rights** consists of seven artworks done by professional artists from across Europe, each interpreting the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights through different art forms.

ABOUT THE ORGANISERS

The **European Civic Forum** is a pan European network that brings together over 100 associations and NGOs across 28 European countries: a great variety of civic organisations ranging from big federations of associations deeply rooted in local constituencies, national platforms of NGOs uniting hundreds of thousands of NGOs across different sectors, human rights advocacy and campaigning organisations, or smaller groups working at community level or engaging with the public on local issues around the democratic values of Equality, Solidarity and Inclusiveness.

The **Centre on Social Movement Studies** (Cosmos) is a network based at the Faculty of Political and Social Sciences, Scuola Normale Superiore, Florence. It focuses on social movements as part of broader contentious politics. It promotes theoretically-driven empirical analyses on forms, dimensions, causes and impacts of social movements, in established democracies as well as authoritarian regimes. Particular attention is given to social movements as promoters of democratisation processes.

Civil Society Europe (CSE) brings together 29 European networks of civil society organisations (CSO) working towards regenerating the European project around the shared values of Equality, Solidarity, Inclusiveness and Democracy. Our main objectives: to facilitate and enable horizontal and vertical dialogue between European civil society organisations and policymakers and help strengthening CSOs in their activities and relations with the institutions. The organisation was founded in December 2014 in Rome at the close of the European Year of citizens as an initiative of organisations that had worked together in the European Year of Citizens Alliance.

[Read the discussion paper!](#)

For more information, please contact:
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