



Introduction by Roland Schaer

First, I should like, as coordinator of the CIPAST programme, to welcome you in Naples, and to introduce this workshop with some short thoughts about the challenges involved in the work we are going to perform together, with some remarks about the background of our meeting.

The studies, experiences and proposals that the CIPAST network intends to share and develop are based on two phenomena or two major trends in our societies.

- On the one hand, **the desire to renew and enhance the democratic dialogue and decision-making processes** in contemporary society.
- On the other hand, **the need to perform a social assessment of the technological innovation processes** that continuously transform the ways in which our societies operate.

1. In relation to this first point, I have a few comments to make:

Certain people talk openly about the crisis currently gripping representative democracy; it is possible that it is in the nature of democracy to be in crisis, or at least that democracy is a permanent work in progress. What seems certain is that representation can no longer be taken for granted, mostly because **we feel that the power to decide is no longer in the hands of those to whom our democratic system delegates sovereignty**. In particular in the field of business organisation and technological change, the feeling that politics no longer has the upper hand is growing.

At the same time, we are confronted in many cases with the idea that **the level of delegation no longer corresponds to or no longer matches the level at which things are decided**. Which provides a sound argument in favour of a European initiative. We have to face a multiplication of levels at which public policy-making is involved, both beneath and beyond a national level, and the question of democratic procedures increases according to those different scales. Perhaps we will have to consider that the issue of participation should not be approached in the same terms, depending on where we are on the local, regional, national or international level and that the methods must be adapted to these different levels.

This brings me to a second remark: I think that we must avoid considering the participative procedures that we are going to explore here as miracle remedies to democratic ills. One reason is the following : these procedures can be assessed according to two dimensions, let's say on two levels: on the one hand that of **the formation of opinions and positions, the building of citizenship**, on the other that of **decision-making processes**. Now, these two dimensions, as you know, are extremely complex and cannot be reduced to questions of procedures and methodologies.

But at the same time, we must remind ourselves that historically, the inventors of democracy in Ancient Greece could not conceive of it other than on the model of the exercise of decisions made by the people as an assembly or, where there was delegation, magistrates who were drawn by lot. The founders of modern representative governments made no mistake about this: at the end of the 18th century, Madison in the US and Sieyès in France considered the representative system as an alternative to democracy and founded this regime on a critique of democracy.

2. Concerning my second point, **the place of science and technology in the public debate** are also worthy of comment. We must, it seems to me, base our exploration on two presuppositions:
 - a. Science has become a powerful means of transforming our world, both in our relationship to nature and our social relationships. The idea is not new, it was formulated in the 17th century, and systemised after the industrial revolution. But we must admit that this power has changed its scale, that the transformations that it brings about are accelerating and, overall, that they influence new dimensions of our existence: the production of knowledge has now little independence in relationship to the social transformations that it produces. Consequently, for very large areas of its activity – including a major part of what we call “basic” or “fundamental” research – scientific work must be seen as part of an indissociable “bloc” in which the search for knowledge is enmeshed in the question of its ends and impact, its values, its “governance”, its uses, effects and applications; a bloc that we might call “techno-science”. In other terms, **most scientific work has lost its “innocence” by losing its independence in relation to the overall process of transforming the world.**
 - b. The second presupposition, which is closely linked to the first, touches on the very meaning of the process in question, I mean the **crisis of**

progress. The idea according to which the growth of knowledge mechanically brings about advances in well-being, happiness and freedom, has collapsed. It can no more be considered as a law of history. We know now that the powers of production might also be destructive powers and that innovation carries risks comparable to natural risks. Above all, the criticism of the idea of progress carries with it this consequence that, in the transformation processes that are affecting our world under the influence of research and innovation, nothing is automatic, that there is an element of **contingency**, things can turn out well or badly; we know that, in this process, there are conflicting interests, and therefore choices to be made that depend on us: in short, there are **areas of responsibility** that the social body must grasp, and in which scientific communities are stakeholders among others.

c. This opens up a new field that provides a context for the exchange of heterogeneous messages (“strictly” scientific knowledge, the promotion of economic interests, ethical values, concerns over freedom, equality, the environment, health, etc.) formed by stakeholders from different backgrounds, who must work to develop a common language : a work that is made all the more complex because, in this field, the balance of power and conflicts of legitimacy are important factors. At any event, if the sharing of knowledge produced by scientific communities remains a major component of these exchanges between “stakeholders” who are each legitimate, the single model of “dumbing down”, which brings with it unilateral condescendence, will not be sufficient to form the basis of satisfactory representation. A “vertical” top-down model, is replaced by (or exists alongside?) an **interactive multipolar model** that demands deliberative co-construction, and which has recently entered the field of democratic debate.