

Essays and articles

Models of Participation and Territorial Governance: Perspectives for Municipal Participatory Processes “After” the Elimination of Districts (p. 193)

Umberto Allegretti

Reflecting on the elimination of decentralization districts in municipalities with less than 250,000 inhabitants, the author addresses, with a historical-evolutionary perspective, citizen participation, highlighting the need to overcome the tendency to confuse district decentralization and popular participation, and thus more correctly contextualizing citizens' concerns about the fate of the functions previously assigned to districts and the participation activities carried out within them. Emphasizing the idea that the municipality is “necessarily participatory”, the author examines the possibility of developing innovative forms of participation, suggesting a set of guiding principles and aims.

Participative Democracy and Dialogue: Emilia-Romagna's Law No. 3/2010 (p. 215)

Marco Ciancaglini

The article examines the recent Emilia-Romagna regional law No. 3/2010 on popular participation in regional and local public decisions. After having outlined the features of the main concepts of participation, the author analyzes the normative text through the use of the conceptual instruments of participatory democracy and dialogue processes, which seem to inspire the law, giving it a marked originality with respect to the Tuscan regional law No. 69/2007 which represented the first attempt at organic regulation of participatory democracy.

Democratic Ideas and Participatory Governance's Political Dimensions: A Model and a Comparison between Two Regional Laws (p. 255)

Gianluca Mengozzi

After a brief re-examination of participatory and deliberative democracy, criticisms and challenges of those normative democratic proposals are dis-

cussed and a coherent pattern of participatory governance is outlined. That model has inspired the initial draft of the Emilia-Romagna law on participatory processes. On the basis of this model, key elements of the two recent regional laws promoting participatory processes, enacted in Tuscany and Emilia-Romagna, are discussed and compared.

The European Union and the Road to Participatory Democracy (p. 297)

Delia Ferri

The emergence of “participatory instruments”, i.e. dialogue channels opened by the EU institutions promoting engagement of civil society, which differ from representative modes, dates back to the beginning of EU “history” and is closely linked to the lengthy “democratic deficit” debate. This short essay aims to critically analyze the nature and effects of civil society involvement in EU policy-making and offers an overview of actual participatory practice. Through a discussion of current “soft law” – and in the almost total absence of relevant case law – the author argues that the limited “positivization” of participatory instruments has overcome traditional representative procedures and expresses the desire to shake off the constraints of classic normative production. The author also considers the role of international rules in this field and the new EU constitutional framework as regards participation, in order to address the question suggested by the essay’s title: is the EU, in its attempt to deal with its obvious democratic deficit, moving towards a real participatory democracy?

Convergence and Essential Service Levels (p. 341)

Michela Passalacqua

This article examines the Convergence Pact, established by article 18 of law No. 42/2009 on fiscal federalism, which aims to ensure a gradual convergence, among various levels of government, of costs incurred to perform their functions. The costs should gradually become as efficient as possible – and therefore minimal – with respect to the achievement of the goal (effectiveness) of meeting basic performance standards. Given a first definition of the concept of convergence and through its comparison with the European definition, the author analyzes relationships and constraints that may come to pass between the determination of minimum costs, un-

derlying the provision of benefits relating to civil and social rights, and the identification of essential service levels under the Constitution, also taking into account the reform's initial implementation decrees. The second part of the article is devoted to critical evaluation of the role played by the Convergence Pact in so-called dynamic coordination of public finance, involving procedures that facilitate loyal cooperation between the central administration and local government.

Notes and comments

Piecing Together the Normative Framework for Local Public Service Management Companies: In Search of Ariadne's Thread (p. 381)

Giampaolo Rossi

Observations on So-Called Administrative Federalism and Its Evolution and Developments (p. 395)

Piera Maria Vipiana Perpetua

Regional Observatory

Valley Communities: First Attempts at Implementing Institutional Reform of Special Autonomy in Trentino-Alto Adige (p. 423)

Sara Parolari and Alice Valdesalici

