

Foreword

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Many analysts have pointed to the critical importance of ‘democratic deficits’ of various stripes, ranging from those in the United Nations and the European Union to the communities in which we live or teach. Do such deficits really matter? For those who believe that they do, we finally have a cohesive edited volume that addresses a complex, but indispensable and often overlooked, challenge for scholars who truly care about the future of global governance, namely its democratic legitimacy.

Global Governance and Democracy is an essential first step in the right direction of framing a problem whose solution will not miraculously appear based on abstract models about how best to increase democracy for the planet. Instead, and as this book’s subtitle, *A Multidisciplinary Analysis*, informs us, interdisciplinary perspectives should be applied when mapping the terrain for what is an arduous and unfinished journey. As the conclusion (Chapter 10) admonishes us, we will be engaged for the foreseeable future in an ongoing conversation. The basic disciplines that affect the relationship between global governance and democracy are brought to bear in the pages here: political theory, international relations, international political economy and international law.

What better group to address these intertwined and complicated issues with transdisciplinary perspectives than the impressive team assembled by Jan Wouters, a group of senior and junior researchers based at the University of Leuven’s Centre for Global Governance Studies? Those of us who have been fortunate enough to spend time and enjoy the intellectual spark in Leuven, as I was able to do as the final chapters of this book were being written in the winter of 2013, will not be surprised to find good (although certainly not definitive) answers to the question, ‘Can the world be governed democratically?’

Historically, affirmative answers to that query have disappointed because the hoped-for empires that resulted (Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Ottoman, British, Soviet, United States) or religious equivalents (in particular, the Catholic Inquisition and the Islamic Caliphate) normally were not well received by those who were under the boot or sandal of foreign or religious

occupiers. There remain contemporary proponents for political and religious hegemony, but such backward-looking and nostalgic pleas have a hollow ring. 'Democratic global governance' and 'cosmopolitan democracy' have a more attractive and pertinent tone for our endangered planet.

As the ten chapters that follow are careful to underline, we are seeking better insights about a variety of pathways for democratization. These chapters are thoughtful reflections about the fledgling steps that could be taken here and now that nonetheless encompass the enormous and growing diversity of actors and agendas pertinent for contemporary global governance. The editors in their introduction (Chapter 1) point to the 'elusive' nature of global governance. I often use a more scientific term. The chapters here go a long way toward making global governance less 'mushy'; in particular, they not only diagnose democratic gaps in existing governance arrangements, but also signal concrete measures to improve democratization in a variety of arenas.

The book is ambitious; what ground-breaking effort does not bite off more than it can chew? The wide-ranging chapters move from investigations into such theoretical concepts as representation and accountability to such bread-and-butter issue areas as climate governance, security governance (the Security Council and the war against terrorism), human rights governance (including corporate social responsibility), and economic governance (focusing on the European Union's ongoing struggles and the G20's challenges to traditional intergovernmental organizations).

Perceptive readers will discover what is especially innovative in this volume: every chapter insists on ensuring political visibility and political staging as a precondition for meaningful democracy in global governance. Too many previous designs for governing the globe have ignored that politics should take place in the limelight at centre stage and not in the wings. If we have learned anything from past failed experiments, it is the necessity of including and involving 'We the peoples', the United Nations Charter's clarion call at the outset of its Preamble.

If you are interested in democracy and global governance – and there should be no one who is not – read this book from cover to cover. It is essential reading for those interested in the future of our troubled and fragile planet.