

THE PROGRAMME - DEMOCRACY PUT TO THE TEST

Genova
Palazzo
Ducale



23-25 JAN 2026

DEMOCRACY PUT TO THE TEST

PALAZZO DUCALE, GENOVA

Curated by Fabrizio Barca and Luca Borzani

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THREE DAYS 23–25 JAN 2026

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FRIDAY 23RD JANUARY

5.30 PM WELCOME SPEECHES

Session I. Democracy, State, neoliberalism and authoritarianism: past and present

Main questions:

- What are the essential features of constitutional democracy and how have they been eroded by neoliberalism and undermined by authoritarianism?
- Are there context transformations (such as the increase in complexity) to which democracy has failed to adapt and to which neoliberalism and authoritarianism respond?
- Can the powers and scale of the contemporary state peacefully coexist with capitalism? And under which conditions?
- What are the general features of emerging authoritarianism, and what are its strengths in the battle for common sense?
- How do authoritarianism and neoliberalism coexist? Is their “escalation” sustainable, or are there signs of rupture?

5.45 PM INTRODUCTORY LECTIO

Gaetano Azzariti (Università Sapienza, Roma), **Nadia Urbinati** (Columbia University, New York), **Massimo Florio** (Università di Milano e Forum Disuguaglianze e Diversità).

7.15 PM END OF AFTERNOON ACTIVITY

9.00 PM LECTIO “THE NATIONALIST INTERNATIONAL: FROM NEOLIBERALISM TO AUTHORITARIANISM”

by **Lucio Caracciolo** (Limes).

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STAURDAY 24TH JANUARY

Session II. Democracy, State, neoliberalism and authoritarianism: future

Main questions:

- Big Data, platforms, AI: is it true that digital technology can be redirected to support democracy? Is the tilt of digital technology to suit the concentration of knowledge and wealth truly reversible? If so, how?
- Why did the democratic revolts of the past decade all over the world fail and often lead to authoritarian turns? And now?
- Are there systematic signs of democratic reaction to the authoritarian challenge? Which collective actions and social conflicts could arise against the current concentration of wealth and power?
- Can democracy respond to the growing complexity and uncertainty to which authoritarianism offers an answer—and with what tools? How can the functions of the State and its modus operandi vis a vis capitalist firms and social enterprises be adjusted?
- How can the mechanisms of decision-making, participation and representation be changed to rebuild people's trust in democratic institutions? What do existing experiments tell us?

9.45 AM DIALOGUE ON THE CURRENT AND POTENTIAL DIRECTION OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

Evgeny Morozov (writer), **Ugo Pagano** (Università di Siena, Forum Disuguaglianze e Diversità), **Juan Carlos De Martin** (Politecnico di Torino).

Coordinated by Gea Scancarello (journalist)

11.00 AM LECTIO

by **Vincent Bevins** (journalist and writer), moving from his book *“If we Burn. The Mass Protest Decade and the Missing Revolution”*.

11.30 AM LECTIO ON POLITICS AND POLICIES OF “DEMOCRATIC EXPERIMENTALISM”

by **Filippo Barbera** (Università di Torino, Forum Disuguaglianze e Diversità).

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12.00 PM LECTIO

by **Elena Granaglia** (Università Roma Tre, Forum Disuguaglianze e Diversità).

Session III. First part. New Generations and Democracy

- What ideas and suggestions come from the culture, language, experiments and practices of new generations for renewing democratic spaces and mechanisms?
- Are there new forms of organizations emerging within current movements that explore a compromise between “horizontalism” and “verticalism”?

12.30 PM

Dialogue between **Medea Ferrigno** (Nesti impresa sociale), **Ismahan Hassen** (Dedalus - Centro interculturale Officine Gomitoli), **Alba Lala** (Coordinamento nazionale Nuove Generazioni Italiane), **Carmelo Traina** (Questa è la mia terra).

*Coordinated by **Eugenio Damasio** (No Panic Agency)*

1.45 PM END OF MORNING ACTIVITY

Session IV. United States, India, China

- U.S.: What are the main features of the current authoritarian dynamic? Are antidotes against authoritarianism at work and what is the role of economic elites and civic society? How much is the current trend the result of national specificities?
- India: What is the current situation of the world’s largest democracy? What are the main features and what is the extent of the current authoritarian dynamic? What are the prospects for reaction?
- China: How are strategic decisions taken? Does the decision-making process involve the people and how? What is the ultimate nature of the institutional system and of the coexistence of capitalism and authoritarianism?

3.30 PM LECTIO

by **Jayati Ghosh** (Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi) *in connection from India.*

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4.00 PM LECTIO

by **Federico Masini** (Università Sapienza, Roma).

4.30 PM LECTIO

Lectio by **Susan Stokes** (Chicago University, Chicago), *in connection from U.S.*

5.00 PM

Comments on the three lectio by **Lucio Caracciolo** (Limes), and **Fulvio Lorefice** (Bistoncini Partners).

Session III. Second part. New Generations and Democracy

- What obstacles prevent the ideas, experiments and practices of several new generation avant-gardes from reaching out to a larger share of the new generations themselves and society?
- And how can art and communication help overcome those obstacles and challenge the prevailing common sense?

5.30 PM

Dialogue between **Melissa Aglietti** (freelance journalist and video maker), **Lorenzo Cirino** (Scomodo), **Raffaele Giuliani** (content creator).

*Coordinated by **Eugenio Damasio** (No Panic Agency)*

6.45 PM END OF AFTERNOON ACTIVITY

8.45 PM

Showing of documentary “*Noi e la grande ambizione*” by director **Andrea Segre**, a choral narrative of the key words and the political commitment of new generations. After the screening there will be a debate between the participants in Session III and the director.

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SUNDAY 25TH JANUARY

Session V. Italy: Specificities, Common Sense, and Opportunities for Parties, Labor, and Organized Citizenship

- What are the specific features of the authoritarian dynamic in Italy? What is its relationship with the forms of society and capitalism? Why is electoral absenteeism so high?
- How relevant is the prevailing common sense in driving the authoritarian dynamic? How can it be challenged to rebuild collective hope? Which role for our constitutional principles?
- In what ways can labour unions, active citizens organizations and grassroots movements contribute to the rebuttal of the authoritarian dynamic and to the revival of democracy? How can their local experiences generate systemic impact?
- What form can political parties take—if any—to rebuild trust in institutions, gather and connect local and systemic knowledge, recreate representation, and renew democracy?

9.45 AM LECTIO

by **Piero Ignazi** (Università di Bologna).

10.15 AM

Dialogue on the conflict for the hegemony on common sense: **Serena Mazzini** (digital media expert), **Chiara Volpato** (Università di Milano-Bicocca) and **Alessia Zabatino** (Forum Disuguaglianze e Diversità).

11.15 AM

Dialogue on how active citizens organizations, labour organizations and grassroots movements can contribute to democracy coming back: **Andrea Morniroli** (Assessore alle Politiche sociali e alla Scuola della Regione Campania, Forum Disuguaglianze e Diversità) and **Serena Sorrentino** (Cgil).

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Final dialogue: **Angela Condello** (Università di Messina), **Guido Formigoni** (Università IULM, Milano), **Alfio Mastropaolo** (Università di Torino) and **Lorenzo Zamponi** (Scuola Normale Superiore di Firenze, Jacobin) offer their understanding of the conference messages and react to them.

*With the coordination of **Gloria Riva** (journalist)*

1.30 PM **END OF ACTIVITY**

*The three days will be accompanied by daily commentary from **Mattia Diletti** (political sociologist) and **Franco Monaco** (journalist) and interviews with participants.*

