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The Nobel laureate: "In order to work properly society must delegate decisions to its representatives"

MASKIN: "THE WEB DOES NOT MAKE CITIZENS BETTER INFORMED"

However imperfect it is, representative democracy is the model that best guarantees that politicians (above all those who want to be re-elected) pursue the common good. Attending the Festival of Economics in Trento for the second time, Eric Maskin, winner of the Nobel Prize for Economics in 2007 (with I. Hurwicz and R. Myerson) reaches this conclusion at the end, after having developed a mathematical model that is indeed abstract, but with very concrete implications. He does not talk about the "Italian case" but when he is asked about new technology, seen as a tool capable of giving concrete form to the idea of direct democracy, removing decision-making power from politicians in order to hand it over to the people and citizens, he has no doubts: "Modern technology undoubtedly facilitates expression of political thinking by the public, but on its own I do not believe that it can make citizens more well-informed. Indeed, elections are not held every day and thus through the web we can try to gather as much information as possible about politicians and their work, deciding on the basis of this who to vote for and who not, but if we had to make decisions every day, like the politicians who represent us, we would be overwhelmed. Technology would not solve the problem and thus in order to work properly a society must delegate decisions to its representatives".-

So what could be the antidote against the risk that a politician may make decisions for his own personal benefit (re-election for example) rather than the common good and the will of the people? Free information and an energetic and independent press that "does its job well" and which is the only thing that can drive politicians to act in a positive way for society. In truth another useful tool, assuming that one chooses to opt for representative democracy, could be a limit to the electoral mandate. "This could be advisable", Maskin says "in order to avoid the risk that a politician with a long mandate may make decisions that in the end prove to be disastrous. However, the truth is that nobody wants a mandate that is too short or too long". In short, in the best type of democracy, namely representative democracy, nobody can guarantee that an elected politician or public official will make the right decisions, as they may be of one kind in the first mandate and different in an eventual second mandate. It all depends on the desire of the politician to leave a legacy, on calculation of the reward that will result from making one decision rather than another and on the degree of agreement that there may be between the politician and citizens as regards what is good for society. Naturally it is necessary to be aware, as Tito Boeri recalled, quoting the leader of the PPE, Jean Claude Juncker, that politicians know perfectly well what should be done, while what they do not know is how to get themselves re-elected. -

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