



DIRECT DEMOCRATIC EURO-VISION NEWSLETTER

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WORLDWIDE DIRECT DEMOCRACY NEWSLETTER **DIRECTCRACY**

Democracy - the two stages

(by Jiri Polak)

The whole world celebrates the revolutions taking place in North Africa. At last - dictatorships crumble and, hopefully, they will be replaced by systems of (parliamentary) democracy. However, according to the ideology of the global DD movement, parliamentarism is not a democracy. This term should be reserved for systems where grassroots citizens can directly participate in government through processes of I&R and deliberation.

We should keep in mind that genuine, i.e. participatory (direct) democracy can only be established in societies which have reached a certain, rather high, level of development. In North Africa and the Middle East, such a level has not yet been reached.

History shows that premature attempts to establish DD systems is bound to fail. In 1917, the Russian Soviets (councils) were true DD institutions. Nevertheless, they were soon invaded by the Bolsheviks and became instruments of the red dictatorship. Similarly, in Libya, the system put in place by colonel Ghadafi was labelled "an Arabic type of Direct Democracy". If you read his Green Book, you might get a favorable impression. Although rather primitive, the system described there does seem much better than the surrounding dictatorial regimes. However, recent weeks have shown that this has been a coulisse hiding the ugly face of a devil.

Although not really democracies, multi-party parliamentary systems are the necessary first stage in the development from dictatorships to genuine democracies. We must welcome and support these systems. In the contemporary world, owing to the spectacular development of electronic technology, the duration of this post-dictatorial first stage can probably be much shorter than in the case of ancient dictatorships, feudal or other.

Although no country - except, to a great extent, Switzerland - has reached the second stage yet, several countries are approaching a level of development where the inclusion of elements of participatory democracy is becoming a realistic possibility. In Europe,

INFORMATION

the key
to success
in fighting
oligarchies



Julian Assange

Germany, Greece, Italy, The Netherlands, Belgium, France, the UK, Spain, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic - all these countries stand on the threshold beyond which radical democratic reforms loom on the horizon.

Obviously, the strongest DD organization is the German *Mehr Demokratie*. The *I&R Institute Europe* plays an important role in the field of publicity and promotion. However, there is a potential risk there: The focus on I&R alone might give people the impression that if only the right to Initiative and Referendum is included in the system, all's well and nothing much more is to be done. But how have the respective

systems been put in place? Obviously by Constitutions written and approved by party politicians in Parliaments. As a consequence, all power between elections has been given to political parties. Even if now and then, the citizens enforce a referendum on this or that issue, the basic oligarchic party-based structure remains intact. In a true democracy, the Constitution itself must be written and approved by the citizens, or their representatives possessing an ad hoc mandate, without meddling on the part of political parties. This is the watershed we are facing, a watershed which must be crossed to make real progress.

INTERNATIONAL

UK

15 November, in reply to *DJ Taylor*, The Independent 14 Nov 2010. *I&R - GB* wrote, "Ferdie Mount was a member of the Power Inquiry, which worked from 2004 until 2006 to study political power, democracy and governance in the UK. Their report "Power to the People", still available on-line, (cited at <http://www.iniref.org/poWER.prelim.html>) identified and spelled out around thirty reforms of the ways in which we govern ourselves. To assess how much progress we have made, it is useful to scan the short version of this list.

Your assessment, that "to most UK citizens the link between a vote and what gets done as a result of it is so convoluted as to barely exist" would be confirmed by many. One of the recommendations of the Power Inquiry was, not to abolish "them" (government, civil service and related) but to introduce "partial" direct democracy of the sort steered by citizens. The relevant section in "Power to the people" is, "Recommendation 24: Citizens should be given the right to initiate legislative processes, public inquiries and hearings into public bodies and their senior management".

16 November, *I&R-GB* wrote, "Andy Kirk, currently working on "take back parliament" and a project about regional television, has sent the following suggestions for our "Campaign for direct democracy in Britain".

"Ideas for taking campaign forward"

People interested in direct democracy could set up a committee of members of different parties in each city. These could then coordinate local campaigns such as raising awareness of the issue, getting advocates of greater participatory democracy elected to public office.

Build links with community groups, residents associations etc. This could be useful for getting together petitions for local referenda & campaigning on issues specific to that community.

Organize talks on direct democracy as political party conferences. The fringe of the conference is usually open for groups independent of the party to run events.

More use of online media. Put information out on Facebook, Twitter etc. Also possibly submitting articles to political sites such as OpenDemocracy, CommentisFree & OurKingdom. One of the ideas I'm working with on the online TV projects I'm involved in is for each city to have their own TV channel. At the moment most of the coverage is entertainment based but if people were interested in producing political/current affairs based material this would be a good idea."

20 November, *I&R-GB* wrote, "According to the Guardian on-line (19th Nov.) the Conservative/Libdem government proposals for reform of local democracy and governance will be presented next week. The Guardian's political editor P.Wintour writes, "An

outbreak of direct democracy in local government, including referendums for directly elected mayors in England's big cities, will feature in a wide-ranging localism bill due to be published next week." and further, "The bill will also include plans for people to be able to petition for referendums on any local issue, including pay of chief executives. But the bill will have to set out precisely what issues can be voted on and whether the results are advisory and binding. There will also be powers to build ballots to block large council tax increases."

To set the new Tory/Libdem proposal against a democratic benchmark please review our assessment of their democracy reform promises:

Season for change in Britain? Citizen-led democracy Conservative/LibDem coalition programme. Shift of "power to the people"?

See <http://www.iniref.org/>

31 January, *I&R-GB* wrote, "Deep below the surface of the government's Localism Bill and strewn across other policy areas there may be some "hidden treasures" which if "refined" and improved could bring us stronger and better democracy. Major problem is that the Con/Libdem proposals are imperfect, offering weak and ill thought out procedures.

So why not take the Coalition partners at their word and demand what they promised, "power to the people", now!

Let's push for improvement before the new laws and regulations are finally passed! (This would not be the first time that a weak conservative government has "allowed" better democracy through an error of judgement.)"

3 February, Memorandum submitted by Dr. Michael Macpherson (L 40)

From the memorandum: "British people have in repeated surveys shown that they embrace the principles of a participative democracy which goes beyond consultation, panel or citizen-jury systems. These principles cover the citizen's right to initiate a binding referendum on any public issue and to be given the choice to decide directly about vital international treaties, in plebiscite."

13 February, *I&R-GB* issued a Ballot proposal:

BALLOT FOR DIRECT DEMOCRACY IN BRITAIN

16 February, a letter from *Dr. Myron Stagman*, (a British professor currently living in Malaysia) "I want to inform you that I have a new *Free Thinkers website*, www.vitalissues.info. The website presents 18 info-sheets/leaflets (almost all are designed to be handed out), they all contain graphics, and all stress populist, Direct Democracy & Direct Action activism.

The very explanatory introduction / Table of Contents and the ensuing 18 info-sheets insist that the indirect, abysmally cor-

rupt Representational corporate-political System is IMPOSSIBLE TO REFORM in any meaningful way. That only measures of *Direct Democracy*, and an *informed, sparetime-activist (participatory) General Public* can bring the world social & political Justice - a System such as the Ancient Athenians possessed. (see www.MyronStagman.com, the books on Socrates and Aristophanes describe in detail that marvellous System of participatory democracy that the Athenians had for 150 years before it was crushed by an empire.)

"When I was living in the UK, campaigning and dealing frequently with MOs and Lords and could feel the pressure from their corporate bosses, I tried to calculate just how many people in the UK formed the Oligarchy that dominated the country whose population was 60 million. I came up with the figure of 500. It's not really much more than that..... Millions of informed, participating citizens against 500 - that's no contest at all."

(I hope we'll meet Prof. Stagman at the Prague conference and have the opportunity of discussing with him his fruitful ideas! JP)

GERMANY

Zeitschrift für direkte Demokratie Nr. 4/2010 - Sections: Warum mehr Demokratie? Bundesweite Volksentscheide: Argumente; Mehr Demokratie hat viel erreicht; Direkte Demokratie in den Gemeinden; Direkte Demokratie in den Bundesländern; Demokratisierung der EU; Direkte Demokratie Weltweit; Weitere Demokratiethemata; Wichtige Partner; Wir über uns

GREECE

24 January, Mr. **Giorgios Kokkas** wrote, "I am happy to read your recent interesting comments on DD affairs influenced by our wish for "MANY ACTIVE MEMBERS AND VOTERS", but completely unhappy that in Tunisia, the people have won to push out their corrupted oligarchic government and although they continue asking for better democratic developments, sacrificing people in this struggle, nobody tells or helps them to ask for a direct democratic governance as an alternative choice! And we, the members and friends of WDDM, ten years since our birth in Delphi, do not have a concrete clear proposal and "Roadmap to Direct Democracy" to tell them! Unfortunately, so many discussions have been held through the Internet on several DD topics and also, more ideas have been expressed theoretically in our site, but all remain vague and not practical to be used by revolutions or even DD political Movements all over the world. Yesterday in Albania, three active citizens were killed in a demonstration asking for more Democracy against their corrupted politicians, but we still look like having nothing clear and inclusive to advise them to do for an authentic Democratic Reform!

I think that in my country, Greece, we'll soon face the same revolutionary conditions against the rules that IMF in cooperation with Greek Oligarchies press us to accept, but even if our government fails, there is no chance to make a real change from Oligarchies to Direct Democracy, if we will not have a plan and serious international assistance to make it happen!

Therefore, we begun recently to shape alternative institutions made by citizens in order to find our way for a DD change in Greece soon! WE first began establishing an alternative Citizens Parliament (you can watch its work in our site www.dimpopolis.gr) and now a Citizens Court, called "NEA HELIAIA",

inspired by the ancient Athenian People's Court with 5000 judges, and we move rapidly forward offering you a new site for international DD cooperation: <http://www.3ddemocracy.eu/>. Please enjoy and use it for your articles or advices, using it as a tool for shaping an International ROADMAP to 3D (Direct, Deliberative, Digital) Democracy!"

(George, these ideas can be discussed at the coming Prague Conference. JP)

CZECH REPUBLIC

The planned international conference on Participatory Democracy has been postponed to **28-30 October 2011**, in order to have more time for preparations, and also because this term is more suitable for the host - *The Center of Global Studies*.

Preliminary information about the conference is at http://www.participedia.net/wiki/Participedia:Current_events



SWEDEN

10 November 2010, Mr. **Fred Blomson** wrote, "It is no good idea to give our vote to representatives, politicians, delegates, secretaries, presidents and leaders of any kind to rule over our heads! We united humans give our vote only to create basic e-laws (one human one vote). We united humans accept only our e-law as the only leader and owner of everything. The rule of law (nomocracy), is the only right global governing ever! Compare: In Latin **LEX REX** (the law is the king). <http://unitedhumans.wordpress.com/>

New Publications:

Folkinitiativ - a Handbook of Direct Democracy

Authors:

Peter Eriksson, one of Sweden's leading politicians, spokesperson of the Green Party, MP, chairman of the Parliament's Constitutional Committee

Bruno Kaufmann, journalist, politologist, active in the Council of Europe, Korea Democracy Foundation, International IDEA and the Initiative and Referendum Institute Europe



An **IDEA** publication:
International IDEA Publications Catalogue 2010 - with a DVD enclosed - www.idea.int
 Electoral Processes
 Political Participation and Representation
 Constitution Building Processes
 Democracy and Development
The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA)
 is an intergovernmental organization that supports sustainable democracy worldwide.

EUROPE

EUROPA-MAGAZIN 2/2010 - <http://www.europa-magazin.ch>
 Edito by **Paul Ruppen**
 Forum für direkte Demokratie und EUROPA-MAGAZIN
 Contents:
 Norwegische Erfahrungen mit dem EWR by *Sigbjørn Gjelsvik*
 Die Schweiz - ein verlässlicher Handelspartner auf Augenhöhe mit der EU by *Josef Schmid* and *Gerit Müller*

Kurzinfos: Der schweizerische Bundesrat zum Europäische Wirtschaftsraum (EWR); Avenir Suisse - kleine Übung in orwellischer Semantik; Gewerkschaften und EU: Lohnfrage im Zentrum; SP-Widersprüche

Buchbesprechungen:
 Von der Provokation zum Irrtum; Steuergerechtigkeit - umverteilen!
 Europäische Friedenspolitik; Auf Kosten der Armen: EU-Kommissionspräsident: ohne Sparprogramme drohen Militärdiktaturen; Peru: Freihandelsvertrag mit der EU; Festung Europa

Paul Ruppen: Interdiction de minarets, Droits de l'homme et Démocratie

Kurzinfo: Gericht tadelt die EU wegen Terroristenliste
Das neue deutsche Europa In <http://www.german-foreign-policy.com>

Kurzinfos Umwelt; Kurzinfos EU-Institutionelles

A new **IRI** publication:
THE EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE HANDBOOK - Your Guide to the World's First Transnational Direct Democratic Tool

Main author: **Bruno Kaufmann**

USA

Owing to advanced age, one of the classics of contemporary American political thought, Mr. **Lee Gottlieb**, is partially retiring from active promotion of DD.
 Lee, we hope you'll stay in touch!

13 November 2010, Mr. **David Frank** wrote to the WWDD discussion channel: "It is time for another "Tea Party". This time the "T" stands for "Technology". **If we all start thinking the same thing, at the same time, we can all change America together.** All that we need is a tool and a plan to give us all a "voice". If you are really interested in "Direct Democracy", please check you the book that is now available at Amazon called "**300 Million Minds Changing America Piece by Piece**". The book outlines a plan to give **all people a voice via present day communication technology**, rebuilding America from the ground-up, allowing 300 million voices to over-ride the 535 dictating voices in Washington D.C. Please check this book out and suggest it to your friends that are truly interested in seeing a better and more efficient America. The politicians cannot fix America, only the "people" can.

USA-EUROPE

3 February, Mr. **Alexander Kassios** wrote to the WDDM discussion channel, "The "**Debate-Arguments**" phase in the Flowchart is based around the **Deliberative Polling** described by Stanford University: <http://edd.stanford.edu/>
<http://edd.stanford.edu/polls/docs/flyers/deliberative-polling-flyer-en.pdf>

Deliberation changes voting results by an important percentage, so we do not include it into our small parliament experiment. We have special deliberative forms that we hand out to our participants. They are enhanced to the ones used by EU's Euro-polis project: <http://www.europolis-project.eu>

CANADA

21 February, a letter sent to the CICDD and WDDM channels: "My name is Jean-Francois Frenette and I am a member of the "Online Party of Canada" - a new Internet-based political party (pending registration) founded on the principle of electronic direct democracy: <http://www.onlineparty.ca>
 We are pleased to inform you that **Electronic Direct Democracy (E2D) Manifesto** is currently being collaboratively written by members of E2D Parties worldwide:

* Demoex in Vallentuna, Sweden (locally): <http://demoex.net/en>

- * Online Party of Canada (national): <http://www.onlineparty.ca/>
- * Citizens for Direct Democracy, Belgium (national): <http://directdemocracy.be>
- * Senator Online, Australia (national): <http://senatoronline.org.au/>
- * Aktiv Demokrati, Sweden (national): <http://aktivdemokrati.se/>
- * Partido de Internet, Spain (national): <http://partidodeinternet.es/>
- * Online Reglemented Party, Romania (national): <http://partidulo.ro/>

.... and many more to come...

Many of you have been involved with promoting the idea of direct democracy since the First International Congress on Direct Democracy was held in 1998. That being said, we could REALLY use your help and expertise in promoting our movement in your respective regions.

If you would like to get involved, please send an email to e2d-international@googlegroups.com

As you may have noted, not much has changed in the last 10 years... you were using Yahoo! Groups, we are now using Google Groups... however, we now have political parties registered and ready to run in national elections with a single promise: direct democracy.

Now we just need to spread the word, educate people on the benefits of citizens' sovereignty and inform our elected representatives that Aki Orr's vision of "Politics without Politicians" is coming!"

THOUGHTS ON THE SYSTEM

14 November, Mr. **Nicholas Georgantzas** wrote, "What if, structurally speaking, authentic democracy requires voting less and assigning parliamentarians and other control officials by lot? This is a rather small detail, but might be vital to the very functioning of authentic democracy.

People must elect, i.e. vote for, our governors, i.e. prime minister and other government heads and officials. But what if, instead of electing or voting for the rest of our parliamentarians or officials, we the people get selected by lot to serve for a short time, in order to control and, if necessary, to immediately recall elected officials?

Elected officials must be the best possible people for an elected government. But the people selected by lot to serve for a short time can be minimally trained and must come from all social strata.

Elected officials will then have to constantly convince people's officials assigned by lot about the elected officials' actions toward our society's common good. This might be the only way to remove ethics from religion and bring ethics back to politics, where ethics belonged in authentic democracy."

17 January, Mr. **Fred Gohlke** wrote (excerpt) ... **Political Parties**. Over two hundred years experience with party politics informs us that, when politics is based on partisanship, the partisans form oligarchic power blocs that become an end in themselves and ultimately transcend the will of the people.

Partisanship is a potent tool for those with a thirst for power but it does not foster government by the people. It results in government by a small fraction of the people. For the people as a whole, the flaws in party politics are devastating. Their cumulative effect victimizes the public by the most basic and effective strategy of domination - divide and conquer.

Parties are important for the principals: the party leaders, con-

tributors, candidates and elected officials, but the significance diminishes rapidly as the distance from the center of power grows. Most people are on the periphery, remote from the centers of power. As outsiders, they have little incentive to participate in the political process.

The challenge of representative democracy is not to divide the public into blocs but to find the best advocates of the common interest and raise them to leadership positions as the peoples representatives.

To meet that challenge, given the range of public issues and the way each individual's interest in political matters varies over time, an effective electoral process must examine the entire electorate during each election cycle, seeking the people's best advocates. It must let every voter influence the outcome of each election to the best of their desire and ability, and it must ensure that those selected as representatives are disposed to serve the public interest."

The above system proposal is described at http://participedia.net/wiki/Practical_Democracy.

*If it gains sufficient support, this system could surely be implemented. It contains both rational election process and deliberation. However, **popular referendum is missing** and that is an indispensable element of truly democratic systems. (JP)*

A similar criticism of party politics (concerning Italy), can be found in the article **Une démocratie irresponsable** by **Ilvo Diamanti**, published in the No 1050, 16 - 21 December 2010, *Courrier international*:

(excerpt) "Les élus peuvent bien passer d'un groupe - et peut-être d'une coalition - à un(e) autre. Proclamer l'intérêt public tout en défendant leurs intérêts privés - et familiaux. Mais ils doivent ensuite en répondre devant leurs propres électeurs. Et devant les électeurs en général. A partir du 15 décembre, les députés qui auront "marchandé" leur confiance - une fois leur heure de gloire passée - retourneront probablement dans l'ombre. De leur côté, les électeurs ont perdu tout pouvoir de choix "personnel", toute possibilité de contrôle direct. Ils ne peuvent pas s'exprimer "personnellement" sur les "personnes" qui les représentent. La faute en revient à notre système électoral: centralisé, à listes bloquées, qui récompense les coalitions. Qui attribue aux directions de partis personnalisés et oligarchiques le pouvoir de choisir et de décider qui faire élire et où. Quel candidat présenter, représenter ou bien exclure. Cette démocratie, toujours moins représentative, assurément "irresponsable", et si peu démocratique, reproduit et promeut une éthique d'irresponsabilité: à la fois civile et personnelle."

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