



DIRECT DEMOCRATIC EURO-VISION NEWSLETTER

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WORLDWIDE DIRECT DEMOCRACY NEWSLETTER **DIRECTCRACY**

Change of Paradigm – a Vital Necessity

Jiri Polak

For the time being, we still live in a paradigm pretending that western multi-party systems are true democracies and that they represent the final stage of western (and presumably global) political development. The existing DD movements and groups, like the German *Mehr Demokratie*, try to improve "democracy" by promoting the inclusion of *Initiative and Referendum* in their respective party-based systems. Obviously, I&R is the most important component of the system we want to establish. But is it sufficient for a transformation of the rule exerted by political parties into real democracy? **No!** And, in my opinion, a one-sided focus on I&R might even be questionable and risky. It might deflect people's attention from the necessity of a more profound structural change which should combine I&R with some other components, particularly *deliberation*.

On reflection, the party as a political steering instrument is **the very opposite of democracy**. In principle, democracy is a system expressing and promoting the preferences of society *as a whole*. By contrast, political party is an organization expressing and promoting short term material interests of *a certain category of citizens*, in some respects even to the *detriment of society as a whole*.

Political parties emerged in societies very different from the current ones. At that time (nineteenth and most of the twentieth centuries), the most important issue was distribution of the wealth of the society *inside the State*. Ordinary citizens were almost only able to get relevant information from the mass media, and such information was unavoidably more or less incomplete and biased. This situation enabled the elected oligarchies to practice large-scale manipulation of public opinion. Hiding behind the positive connotations evoked by the word *democracy*, the party oligarchies have been able – and still are – to manipulate citizens into behavior harming their long- and sometimes even short-term interests.

Today's situation is different in at least two respects: Global issues – environmental, climatic, economic, as

DEMOCRACY: This?



Or This?



Deliberation

well as the danger of over-exploitation of the world's natural resources, growing tension between the rich and the poor provoking terrorism, proliferation of arms, including the nuclear ones – all this is becoming more important than distribution of wealth inside any individual state. And second, thanks to the internet, anybody can now gain unbiased information about anything without the oligarchies being able to prevent it. In such a situation, political parties are increasingly becoming obsolete and dysfunctional. Their power monopoly is approaching an end. We are witnessing a process of a change of paradigm. Round the world, individuals, groups and organizations promoting elements of direct democracy, independently of one another, are making their voices heard. But time is running out. If the mainstream political parties are allowed to continue their criminal rule for a few more years, our civilization might suffer irreparable damage,

The *democratic bluff* is particularly harmful in the sphere of international relations. Islam- dominated and even other less developed establishments hate western "democracy" and often fight against it by terrorist attacks, even able to provoke wars. Hundreds of innocent people are being killed in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria and elsewhere. Those hostile to western regimes do not understand that it is not democracy they are fighting against, but a perverted, oligarchic, party-based system

which, using demagogical propaganda, manipulates and drives nations into false conflicts. If real democracy existed in the West, if ordinary citizens were able, after mature deliberation, to decide on foreign policy, there would be no meaningless killing, no wars, no atrocities of the kind we are witnessing today. There would be no large-scale violence now fomented by parasitic oligarchies whose very existence depends on permanent artificial conflicts among poorly informed people. How long are we going to tolerate these horrors?

Plain common sense should lead us to understand that real democracy must be based especially on these principles:

1. The Constitution must be adopted by referendum, not by parliament. If not, the regime it creates is illegitimate.
2. Candidates running for representative bodies must be elected in single-mandate election districts, i.e. Election of persons, not parties.
3. Possibility of recall at any moment.
4. Separation of legislative and executive power, the latter having to be non-partisan and subject to the former.
5. Right to I&R on all levels.
6. Obligatory deliberation for certain types of issues.

Discussions about these principles should take place in all serious DD groups and organizations.

Quo usque tandem?

INTERNATIONAL

Czech Republic

5 and 6 November 2013:

CONFERENCE (in Czech)

on *Social Change: Revolution and Transformation*

Location: Academic Conference Centre, Husova 4a, Praha 1

Contribution announcements to be sent to cgs@flu.cas.cz
before 15 September

Chief organizer: Ph.D. **Marek Hrubec**, president of the Centre of Global Studies at the Academy of Sciences and the University of Prague



„It will soon be a quarter of a century since the outbreak of 1989 revolutions which took place in Central and Eastern Europe and which resulted in important political and economic transformations. Since then, many, both positive and negative, changes have taken place. Substantial social changes have also taken place in South America, Arab countries and other regions of the world. Another historical watershed is the global economic crisis leading to the expectation of more changes. The purpose of this trans-disciplinary conference is therefore to re-consider the theme of revolution and transformation in social life.”



Among several citizens' initiatives, perhaps the most important is that created and organized by Dr. **Petr Kužvart**. It is called *Initiative for Social Change*. Almost daily, Dr. Kužvart distributes a newsletter under the following headline: "Our purpose and perspective is a citizen and democratic revolution! Without real systemic changes of the establishment, our crisis cannot be overcome!"

UK/Finland

26 July, *Iniref* wrote, "An example of improvements towards more direct democracy, assisted by internet and mobile phones. We should introduce this and better systems in UK and our countries and cities.

In early 2012 the Finnish parliament made law which enables a large number of citizens to put forward a law proposal. The proposers have six months to collect 50 thousand endorsements which is about 1.2 percent of eligible voters.

The proposal can be in the form of a drafted law and assuming that certain standards have been met the parliament is obliged to treat the proposal like a parliamentary "bill".

This is not full "citizen-led" (direct) democracy because even if parliament rejects the proposal and refuses to put it into law, no referendum or plebiscite of the electorate must follow.

So the Finnish citizens' initiative might be termed an agenda-setting tool with small teeth (e.i. parliament must process and debate or consider the proposal and may NOT simply ignore it.). This innovation in governance shows some features of "electronic democracy" (e-democracy). Statements of support from signatories may be collected *electronically or in paper form*. The government has set up an online system to collect statements of support. A self-management system may also be used subject to certification by the Communications Regulatory Authority. NGO named Open Ministry has assisted people and groups wishing to make a law-proposal. Open ministry states that in one case "the threshold of 50 000 supporters needed to pass the initiative to Parliament was met within 9 hours of launching the campaign and by midnight some 120 000 people had signed the initiative with their online bank codes or mobile phone".

A recent successful campaign has produced a law proposal which aims to reduce penalties on small-scale private downloading from peer-to-peer networks. In Finland as elsewhere, strong public opposition has grown against draconian penalties imposed for apparently trivial on-line offences involving "downloads".

Switzerland

7 June, *Iniref* wrote: "Citizens' direct democracy initiative successful – Government announcement June 2013

The federal citizens' proposition (using direct democracy) 'A secure and economic electricity supply (electrical efficiency initiative)' has succeeded and can proceed to referendum.

The Federal Chancellery confirms that more than the required (triggering) number of endorsements have been submitted.

If a majority is obtained in the ballot then the proposition will become law."

Europa-Magazin 1/2013

Preface: *20 Jahre Europa-Magazin* by **Paul Ruppen**

Beneath, in the *Forum für direkte Demokratie*, we read with apprehension: "Die direkte Demokratie gerät in der Schweiz zunehmend unter Druck. Ein eventueller EU-Beitritt droht, sie ihrer Substanz zu berauben."

Swiss people, stand firm!

Articles:

"**Direkte Demokratie in Griechenland**" Interview geführt von Cora Pfafferott, DI

Die Perspektiven der Krise von German-Foreign-Policy.com

Was bei der Schuldbetreibung Griechenlands alles schief läuft von Werner Vontobel

"On ne résout aucun problème par de grandes organisations continentales!" de Paul Ruppen

Leitideen des Anarchismus und EU-Kritik von Chris Zumbrunn

Bundesrätliches Nachgeben bei den Bilateralen Schweiz-EU von Paul Ruppen

Kurzinfos

Jubiläumfest 20 Jahre Europa-Magazin, Samstag, 31. August 2013

<http://www.europa-magazin.ch>

Germany

mdmagazin Nr. 97/2/2013

Editorial by Ralf-Uwe Beck, Bundesvorstandssprecher

Contents:

Wahlrecht

Diese Reform reicht uns nicht

Leserbrief

Bundesweiter Volksentscheid

Die Demokratie-Baustelle anpacken

Unser Team für die Wahlkreisaktionen

Diskussion

Fraktionszwang und Ochsentour

Bundesländer

Ländertelegramm

Volksbegehrensbericht 2012 erscheint!

International

Impressionen von Weltsozialforum

Begegnungen in Mitteleuropa

Rezension

Politik als Beruf mit Transparenz

Omnibus für direkte Demokratie

Nichtwählen reicht nicht aus – Wählen auch nicht!

2. Interview mit Johannes Stüttgen

MD Intern

Sweden

The Swedish party- and organization-based system is still cemented. Nevertheless, there is a tiny DD party called *Active Democracy*. On 9 August, they organize a conference with the following agenda:

To put forward clear objectives

To elaborate a strategy

To set up concrete plans of action, hopefully conducive to the realization of our targets

Thanks to the activities of Dr. **Bruno Kaufmann**, a promising development takes place in the district of **Falun**, Dalarna. On September 25-29, they organize a Democracy week:

falun.se/



Falun Democracy Week 2013

Your Passport to Active Citizenship
Making people power work
in the 21st century

Welcome to a week of inspiration and exchange on participatory democracy at the local, regional, national, transnational and global level.

Spain/Russia

A letter sent by Mr. **Georgy Efrenoff** to Mr. **Luis Miguel Cuervo**: "Hello! My name is Georgy Efremoff. I represent the Internet Party of Russian Federation. I'm a member of the Party's Council so this is a somewhat official letter of friendship. We are working in the same direction as you do and now think that we can all help each other building a better politics around the world using Internet solutions and social networks to bring the power to the people of our countries. We are truly building the future.

We are now creating an "Internet Parties Association" - and we would like you to participate in this project. This organisation could help find and spread the best practices of online democracy. I can send you the details, if you're interested - and I would be very pleased if you do.

Please contact me any time via FB or email: mne@ofigenno.ru
23 July, Mr. **Luis Miguel Cuervo** wrote, "Hello, thank you very much for contacting us, our purposes seem similar and we would be very glad to receive further information about the "Internet Parties Association",

Luis Cuervo, member of the Spanish Internet Party
23 July, Mr. **Pablo Segundo Garcia** wrote, "Hello, as well as the greetings and interest for this new association, I suggest you could contact <http://e2d-international.org/> organization to which the Internet Party of Spain (Partido de Internet de España) is adscribed.

In fact I am resending this email to their mailing list."

USA

Quotation from a letter sent on 12 May by Mr. **David Grant** to the *Democracy Foundation*:

....."One thing that is unfortunate in the U.S. is that the population still thinks that the U.S. is farthest along in democratic systems. There have been strides forward in improving democracy that countries like Sweden have made. (And speaking negatively about the U.S. the Carter Center will not monitor U.S. Elections because they do not even meet international standards!)"

22 May, a letter sent round by Mr. **Sandy Heierbacher**. (excerpt)
"Hi, everyone! I'm excited to launch a new tool on the NCDD website to help you share your success stories in dialogue and deliberation more broadly.

The draft tool is up at <http://ncdd.org/storytelling-tool> and I encourage everybody to take a look and give the tool a test drive by entering one of your dialogue and deliberation projects!

For a long time now, NCDD has wanted to find a way to collect more stories from our members about their dialogue and deliberation projects.. We are working with both the Kettering Foundation and Participedia.net to broaden the reach of your stories - and give you more incentive to tell us about the great work you're doing!"

Sandy Heierbacher, Director, National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation

18 June, a letter from Mr. **Sandy Heierbacher** (excerpt):
"Already, many dozens of NCDD members and community leaders from groups like the United Way, YWCA, and 4-H have stepped forward as partners, hosts, facilitators, and supporters of what our team believes will be a unique opportunity to not only make an impact on a critically important public issue, but to demonstrate to those we usually can't reach that there IS a better way to engage communities on complex issues. This is also a unique learning opportunity for NCDD, and for all of us, to see what we can accomplish when we combine forces."

19 June, a letter sent by Mr. **Paul Nolen** to e2d-international:
"To inform you: it is not in the place of initiatives but it may be an interesting amelioration."

<http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2013/06/18/ballot-initiatives-at-the-local-level/initiatives-are-not-the-best-way-to-bypass-stalled-officials>
Tere's a Better Way to Bypass Stalled Officials

James S. Fishkin, a professor of political science and chairman of the Department of Communication at Stanford University, is the director of the Center for Deliberative Democracy and the author of "When the People Speak: Deliberative Democracy and Public Consultation."

(excerpt) "From ancient Athens to the New England town meeting, direct democracy has long been celebrated at the local level. But the initiative, the most common form of direct democracy in the U.S., is most visible at the state level. Would it serve democracy if the initiative spread more to towns and cities?" "To serve the public interest rather than that of an interest group, let a random sample of voters deliberate under transparent and balanced conditions to conclude whether a proposition should be put before the people."

19 July, Mr. **Miroslav Kolar** wrote, "Whistle-blower Bradley Manning has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. Let's make sure he receives it. [Http://ManningNobel.org](http://ManningNobel.org) "

Australia

28 May, information from Mr. **Sven Mason**:

"Newsletter - May 2013

Great news, Australia's champion of participatory democracy - Senator Online (SOL) - is contesting the 2013 Federal Election!

Senator Online (SOL) Members of Parliament vote in accordance with the clear majority public vote (you) when making laws. Everyone on the AEC Electoral Roll will be able to vote on any - or every - new law, or changes to existing laws in Australia, online. For more information see www.senatoronline.org.au/how-it-works.html.

By using the internet we can return to a system that reflects your positions on important issues, taking back power from politicians and lobby groups and putting it back where it belongs: in your hands - Now We Can!

New Website, New Look

To help get the message out, we've built a great new website for SOL. We've also brightened the place up a bit! Our new colour theme is orange, reflecting the bright and positive future of participatory democracy. The new SOL logo incorporates the Southern Cross.

On the website you can find out more about how the SOL process works, read about the SOL members working on our campaign, check out the latest SOL news and find links for our social media. Check out the new site at: www.senatoronline.org.au.

Canada

13 June, letter sent by Mr. **JF Frenette** to Mr. Sven Mason (excerpt): "On a side note, we are preparing for a meeting with the Chief Electoral Officer and all other federal political parties in Canada tomorrow and Friday, the first time that the Online Party of Canada is allowed to participate AND we will have a chance to discuss Internet voting - although plans to introduce online voting for the next General Election in 2014 have been postponed due to budget constraints (they had originally

planned to have a pilot project for a by-election in 2013) but we are hoping to advance the discussion on the subject and hopefully make it a priority for the near future. Should be interesting nonetheless."

Eng. **George Sagi** is preparing a very interesting philosophical book. Information can be obtained at <http://AtomicPhilosophy.ca>

South Africa

24 July, a circular letter by Mr. **Jim Powell**: "Hi, I just signed this petition – will you join me?"

Next step to freedom in South Africa. To: All candidate politicians and political parties taking part in the 2014 South African elections. See: www.directdemocracy.org.za

The petition is really important and could use our help. Click here to find out more and sign:

[http://www.avaaz.org/en/petition/Next step to freedom in South Africa/?email](http://www.avaaz.org/en/petition/Next_step_to_freedom_in_South_Africa/?email)

Thanks so much

Europe

17 June, INVITATION published by Mr. **Gerald Häfner**.

Citizens First! Improving and Extending the European Citizens' Initiatives

27th July 2013, 8:30-19:00, Brussels, European Parliament, room ASP 1G3



The World

28 July, information from Mr. **Josep LL. Ortega**: "On Sun. Jul 28, 2013 at 12:30 PM, Rasmus Tenbergen <rasmus.tenbergen@worldparliament.org> wrote:

Dear members of the CWC, a group of global democracy activists is organizing a global week of action for a World Parliament, October 17-24: <http://www.worldparliamentnow.org/>

"All over the world, non-partisan electronic direct democracy (E2D) parties have been started independently at local, regional and national levels; inspired by the collaborative potential of the internet to bring true democracy to the political arena; we are fighting to give decision-making power back to the people."

Aktiv Demokrati, Sweden (national): <http://aktivdemokrati.se>

Citizens for Direct Democracy, Belgium (national): <http://www.directdemocracy.be>

Democratici Diretti, Italy (national): <http://www.democraticidiretti.it/>

Demoex in Valentuna, Sweden (local): <http://demoex.net/en>

Direct Democracy Party, New Zealand (cancelled): <http://www.ddp.co.nz>

Direkte Demokrati, Denmark (national): <http://www.ddid.dk/>

Hayeshira, Israel (national): <http://hayeshira.org.il/>

Online Party of Canada, Canada (national): <http://www.onlineparty.ca/>

Partido de Internet, Spain (national): <http://partidodeinternet.es/>

Partidul Romania Online, Romania (national): <http://www.votdirect.ro>

Party of Internet Democracy, Hungary (national): <http://ide-ide.hu/>

Senator Online, Australia (national): <http://senatoronline.org.au/Svoipolitik.si>, Slovenia (national): <http://svoipolitik.si/>

Real democracy is coming soon to a country near you! Get involved today!

There is nothing more powerful than an idea whose time has come"

-Victor Hugo "

25 June, an essay sent round by **Laboratorio Eudemonia**: The EMANCIPATION of the PEOPLES of the WORLD

(excerpts): "Democracy stands out from the tyranny in the fact that every public role, both in the area of DECISION making and in the FUNCTIONAL one (in the educational, fiscal, judicial apparatus etc.) must be periodically returned to the people. Every public job, from the humblest to the highest, contains a certain power and for this reason cannot be owned for life. Otherwise we fall into tyranny. All citizens are SOVEREIGNS and OWNERS of their Res Publica. Those who have monopolized it for life did that against the principle of democracy."

..... "Due to a public apparatus maintained tyrannical, the societies have continued to develop following an organizational model distorted and overturned."

3 July: "In present human societies, the most important roles, the most important functions of our organization, then the public administration, public finance, education, culture, information, health and safety, are assigned for life to certain persons, leaving the citizens disempowered and excluded. As a matter of fact the State appears to be disjoined from Citizenry. These two entities, that for social pact should coincide, should be one only thing, as a matter of fact are frequently at odds and in opposition, both in their aims and in their behavior."

Danilo D'Antonio, Italy, eulab@hyperlinker.com

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