THE DE BORDA INSTITUTE: 2019 ANNUAL REVIEW

CRS - Conflict Research Society CIVIQ - http://www.civiq.eu

DCC - Dublin City Council DCU - Dublin City University

deB - de Borda DUP - Democratic Unionist Party

IT - The Irish Times FPTP - first-past-the-post

MBC - modified Borda count NIGP NI Green Party

PSAI - Political Science Assoc. of Ireland QBS - Quota Borda System

TD - Teachta Dála, a Deputy in Dáil Éireann. UCD University College Dublin

To: (i) Patrons: Professors Angela Mickley (Potsdam), Arend Lijphart (California), John Baker (ex

UCD), Maurice Salles (Caen), Paul Arthur (UU) and 杨龙 , Yáng Lóng (ex Nánkāi, Tiānjīn); Doctor Judith

Stephens; the former TD, Trevor Sargent (Dublin); and Irina Bazileva (Moscow).

(ii) Serving and some former board members: Alan Quilley, Edwin Graham, Grace Walsh, Katy

Hayward, Mark McCann, Phil Kearney, Roseann Seale, Sieneke Hakvoort, Vanessa Liston.

(iii) Copies to Profs. Don Saari, Hannu Nurmi and John Morison, along with Wes Holmes, Joe

Humphreys of the IT, Charles Stanley-Smith, Rob Fairmichael, Valery Perry, Andy Pollak, Tommy Sands,

DCC’s Cllr. Dermot Lacey and DCU’s Deiric O’Broin, Profs. John Barry &amp; Muiris MacCarthaigh in Queens,

Paddy McEvoy in Cambridge, Leo Joosten and Elca Stigter in Leiden, Jeremy Wates and Michael Emerson

in Brussels, Vicky Selwyn in France, Helmut Reithmüller in Berlin, Marcin Gerwin in Gdansk, Tanya

Gibbs in Prague, Nato Kirvalidze &amp; Prof. Sasha Rusetsky in Tbilisi; Prof. Alexander Markarov in Yerevan;

Prof. Fuad Aleskerov in Moscow; and Prof. Benny Tai in Hong Kong, all good friends of deB, old and new.

(Any of the above named in the text are shown in bold and underlined.)

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Dear Everyone,

1 Brexit. Bloody Brexit. It has dominated everything. And we’ve done our best. Last year, I did an

interview with Evan Davies on the BBC’s Radio 4 PM programme. Then the Today programme came to

Belfast for a live broadcast, so down I went, and afterwards I asked Justin Webb the presenter if… and sure

enough, I then did an interview on Today. (After only 25 years: I first wrote to them in 1994.) That’s it, I

fear; it seems the BBC thinks such a small organisation like deB deserves only a small mention and, it seems,

we’ve now had our fair share. So despite predicting shortly after that interview that the proposed indicative

votes would, if taken by umpteen majority votes, indicate nothing, the BBC had had &amp; has had enough.

Elsewhere, however, we have appeared in articles and blogs various:

+ on the Brexit Institute’s site: http://dcubrexitinstitute.eu/2018/10/a-better-measure-of-the-will-of-

the-people/

+ on Queen’s University’s: http://qpol.qub.ac.uk/brexit-a-meaningful-vote/

+ two on PSAI’s: https://politicalreform.ie Decision, decisions. Binary or multi-option and/or

preferenctial votes, and Does Brexit demand non-binary decision-making?

+ in The Ecologist: https://theecologist.org/2019/jul/02/preferential-voting-and-political-consensus

+ which Phil and I wrote for The Irish Times: https://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/indicative-

voting-an-irish-solution-to-the-brexit-problem-1.3840063

+ for the German journal, Perspektive Mediation: Brexit wrecks it,

+ for the RSA: https://www.thersa.org/discover/publications-and-articles/rsa-blogs/2019/11/general-

election-binary/

and the occasional letter to The Guardian and The Irish Times.

I’ve also written “Indicative (sic) Votes” for Representation. In 2005, I wrote on the madness of multi-

option majority votes for House of Lords reform; there was no reaction at all. But maybe now. It will be on

http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00344893.2019.1696393 shortly.

So, like so many, we’ve been pretty busy. A year ago, the TEDx broadcast had been downloaded 7k times; it

is now on at least six web-sites (but not yet on the NIGP web-page) and has been seen by over 22k folks…

not least by The Economist, which invited me to their Open Future Festival in Manchester on 5 th Oct. So I

was on their web-page programme; but then dropped, no word, no apology, nothing. So I asked… “oh

sorry,” they said. I was re-instated. Three days to go, and dropped again. On the day itself, another “oh

sorry,” I’d be on after lunch. They said. But I wasn’t. Dropped for a third time. No explanations, no

expenses, no apologies until long afterwards… all very unprofessional. But they may yet do something…

2 Other publications not related to Brexit include:

+ The Rights (and Wrongs) of Majority Rule and Self-determination – in the Beijing Law Review, Vol

10, № 4. http://www.scirp.org/journal/paperinformation.aspx?paperid=94818

+ and for Participatory Budgeting: https://pbnetwork.org.uk/what-is-democracy-anyway-why-voting-

systems-matter-in-participatory-budgeting/

3 An Taisce. On Phil’s initiative, An Taisce’s Climate Change cte. took an MBC on flying, with

Vanessa, Judy Osborne and I as the consensors. It went well, but the turnout was a little disappointing.

4 Prague. On a hint from Hannu, I went to a conference in Prague, organized by Tanya and H.21.

https://www.ih21.org/blogen/international-symposium-democracy-in-the-21st-century-challenges-and-new-

frontiers-in-the-senate It was lovely, hopes are high for the future; and there was Fuad, see below.

5 The Book. Majority Voting: the Catalyst of Populism (Springer, Heidelberg). As you all know,

from Sept. ’17 to ’18, I went from Belfast to Beijing and beyond. I issued a press release on my return –

after all, it’s not every 75-year-old who goes by bus, bike boat and train, to give a TEDx talk in Vienna and

lectures on democracy in Iran and China. There was no response. I read a few books on Trump, Brexit and

the death/demise/destruction/dissolution/downfall of democracy – most of which critiqued the dreadful FPTP

electoral system, but not the even more dreadful binary decision-making – and then… the result is the

above, my fourth book from Springer, and many thanks to Rob for his proof reading. After an initial event

in the CRS annual conference in Brighton, it was duly launched in Belfast in Sept, (not in Dublin nor London

this time), but in Leiden and Brussels, thanks to the efforts of Leo and Jeremy. Only at the fifth event,

which Valery organised in Sarajevo for 24th Oct were copies of the book available. Next came Tbilisi with

Sasha, &amp; then (after HUGE problems getting a Russian visa) in Moscow on 18 th Nov with Fuad and Irina.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

We are now 22 years old, and it’s high time we found some new folks to take over. Vicky might be able to

set up an affiliate in France, which would be right and proper of course, if only for the sake of Jean-Charles

himself. I dropped a few hints to Elca and Leo in Holland as well, so you never know… but we have only

about £200 in the bank. It is of course great to be able to punch above our weight, and…

…we keep going, not least because, with Brexit here and Trump there, surely people will now realise that

binary politics is dysfunctional if not downright dangerous. The world is not just under threat from foolish

individuals: the bigger problem is our continued use of foolish electoral systems and foolish decision-

making procedures, by which the likes of Johnson, Trump, Bolsonaro, Putin, Erdogan et al get ‘elected’,

and then threaten us all with war and/or extinction.

So thanks to you all for your continued support: to Don for his fine and fulsome foreword for the book; to

Mark who maintains our web; to Vanessa and the decision-maker app (although it is still not being used at

anything like the rate we had hoped for); to Katy who is also beleaguered by Brexit; to Angela for her good

contacts; to Jeremy and Leo for much good hosting; to Long 龙 who’s spreading the word in China; to

Nato and her discombobulated cats in Tbilisi; to Irina, my host, again, in Moscow; to Valery, my host, in

the nicest flat in Sarajevo; to Jeremy, Leo, Valery, Sasha and Fuad for those book launches; and lastly to

Phil whose consumption of whiskey, alas, is at last beginning to subside. So greetings from the Trans-

Siberian railway: I’m heading to Beijing, somewhere near Omsk, Tomsk and Novosibirsk – (Russia’s

answer to NI’s Augher, Clogher and Fivemiletown) – and Happy Christmas everyone. Peter.