**The de Borda Institute: 2020 ANNUAL REVIEW**

ca - (Ireland’s) Citizens’ Assembly ceps - Centre for European Policy Studies

CiviQ - <http://www.civiq.eu> dcc - Dublin City Council

dcu - Dublin City University deb - de Borda

dup - Democratic Unionist Party mbc - modified Borda count

qbs - Quota Borda System td - *Teachta Dála,* a Deputy in *Dáil Éireann*.­­­­­­­­

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; and the former td, Trevor Sargent (Dublin).

(ii) Serving board members: Professor Katy Hayward (Queen’s), Edwin Graham, Mark McCann**,** Phil Kearney and Vanessa Liston; and some former members: Alan Quilley, Grace Walsh, Roseann Seale and Sieneke Hakvoort.

(iii) Copies to Profs. Don Saari (Irvine), Fuad Aleskerov (Moscow), Hannu Nurmi (Turku), John Morison (Queen’s), Peter Stone(tcd), Sonny 盧兆興 Ló Shìu Hīng (Hong Kong), and 送迎发Sòng Yíngfǎ (Xúzhōu), along with Joe Humphreys of the it, Andy Pollak, Wes Holmes, Charles Stanley-Smith, Rob Fairmichael, Tommy Sands, dcc’s Cllr. Dermot Lacey and dcu’s Deiric O’Broin, Elca Stigter and Leo Joosten in Leiden, Jeremy Wates and Michael Emerson (no relation) in Brussels, 方英 Fāng Yīng in Beijing, Marcin Gerwin in Gdansk, Jan Oreský in Prague while Pavel Dufek and Vera Stoyarová are in Brno, Nato Kirvalidze in Tbilisi, Paddy McEvoy in Cambridge and Valery Perry in Sarajevo, old and new but all good friends of deB.

**(And those named in the text are shown in bold.)**

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Dear Everyone,

CHINA Following on from seven book launches last year – the 7 th was in Dec. ’19 in Moscow State University with Fuad and Irina – I performed the 8 th in Jan. ’20 in Xúzhōu with Yíngfǎ, {a great host, with lots of báijiǔ, (Chinese liquor, 50%)} and, after a visit to Hong Kong where I was published in the South China Morning Post, the 9th in Taiwan National University. I then took the ferry back to mainland China, with one night on the island of Matsu – great cycling – which, along with Quemoy, was the centre of much military activity in 1958.

2020, the year of the rat, (but China has nice rats; even their dragons are nice). I’d been invited to celebrate the New Year, 25th Jan, on an organic farm in a little village, not too far from Zhāngyè in Gānsù. Happy New Year was the cry, another glass of báijiǔ, and the food of course was excellent. But then, bingo, or bìngdú (the Chinese word for coronavirus), China was in lockdown, the two roads linking the village with the outside world were barricaded, and I was stuck… until compulsorily, though very politely, evacuated to Beijing. (Better to have all the foreigners in the city, rather than scattered all over the place.) From there, I rushed to Hong Kong for my 10th launch in the Foreign Correspondents’ Club. Surface travel was not an option; so I flew to friends in Kuala Lumpur, and did another book launch in the Gerakbudaya Bookshop.

DUBLIN Arriving back in Dublin, I was stuck again, now on Phil’s farm in Co. Wicklow – isolation at its most splendid. The Irish general election was on Feb 8th and, as in 2016, [binary] majority rule was in trouble: this time there were 3 parties on 20%, the Greens on 7%, a few smaller parties + many independents. Mathematically, there were lots of possible combinations or concoctions; Joe tweeted a line about the matrix vote which deB (Phil, Vanessa and I) had demonstrated with the Irish Times, Joe, CiviQ (Vanessa) and DCU in 2016. The Greens, now with 12 TDs, called for a unity government… but they didn’t say how that ‘unity’ was to be effected. So that idea died, stillborn. Basically, nobody knew how, neither in the Greens and (apart from Joe) nor in the media. So everyone changed the subject and spoke about that which they did understand: [binary] majority rule. Principles? Democracy? No no, these were not discussed.

Phil and I got to work, writing, bombarding, the TDs, the President, the PSAI, and the press of course. We argued that the Dáil should elect its cabinet, that the Greens themselves should use the Borda methodologies when choosing policies, setting priorities, and selecting negotiators. Absolutely everything was in vain. The Party then set about changing its constitution, so we tried here too; again, almost nothing. Life was a little more successful with An Taisce (of which Phil is the chair), and they have used an MBC.

BELFAST The Covid restrictions were relaxed in May, so I went home to (pick plums and)

proof-read. In negotiating with Johannes (my editor in Springer), we spoke about the need for the rather expensive hardbacks to be accompanied by a cheaper soft-back, a ‘punter’s guide’ to decision-making. Umm, €42? But the latest Democratic Decision-making is cheaper than the hardback Catalyst book, at €62! The original plan was to ‘launch’ in Dublin, with an official presentation to President Michael D Higgins – as a ‘mere’ TD, he’d been the keynote speaker at a 1991 consensus experiment in Belfast – but Covid said ‘no’ and that next meeting has been (not cancelled but) postponed. We did a zoom instead, three of them: ‘in’ Queen’s in Belfast with John (Barry), ‘in’ Brno with Pavel (and Leo joined us on zoom), and then ‘in’

TCD with Peter (Stone) and Vanessa, (and Irina and Sonny on zoom – that’s keen, 7 pm in Ireland is 3 am in Hong Kong). Other zooms are planned: in England with the CRS on Jan 14 th is definite; in the European Parliament in Brussels perhaps; in France with Vicky and Hall tbc; in Leiden maybe, with Elca and Leo; in Turku with Hannu definitely, but only when Covid again permits face-to-face seminars; in Moscow I hope with Fuad… and maybe too in China with Lóng and Yíngfǎ, and Sonny in Hong Kong.

The Dublin launch deserves a special, mention. There were 28 participants with, yes, China, HK and Russia included, as well as Germany and Spain, and several Greens. The media were there, Andy (retired, of the IT) and Mick Fealty (of the NI blog, Slogger O’Toole). It has been incredibly difficult to persuade the media to think outside the binary box. Indeed, I think the BBC has decided not to discuss decision-making, at all, doubtless because of Brexit – let sleeping dogs lie. But maybe, now, something will percolate…

WHAT ELSE? 1. The UCL set up a working group, with Katy amongst others, to look into how

any second NI referendum could perhaps be conducted. They asked me to write a submission. They’ve just published an Interim Report, which ignores my submission, totally. Very disappointing (if not rude). Their first webinar was also stuck in a binary bind. But one of them ‘zoomed in’ to our Dublin launch.

2. We launched a taxonomy on decision-making. As you know, many people argue at length about electoral systems… and say little about decision-making systems. So the taxonomy – and thanks to John (Baker) for his considerable help on this – might help to break the mould.

3. The North Belfast Greens used a matrix vote at their AGM.

4. Vanessa is promoting the MBC with her local council.

5. St Columb’s Park House (in Derry) is also asdvocating the MBC. 6. Anna Visser in Dublin wanted to use an MBC but got an American company instead; a pity, it uses the BC, not the MBC.

7. The TEDx talk is now up to 40,000 downloads, doubling in the last year.

8. I’ve published a few pieces with Paul on their pro-democracy blogs https://www.wethepeopleofhk.com/post/american-ranked-choice-voting-versus-modified-

border-count-mbc (they’re very keen on the MBC, by the way), and an article in the Munich Social Science Review – many thanks to Hannu on that one.

9. I’m now a fellow – well you knew that – but a fellow of the RSA. It cost me rather a lot, but hopefully it’s a good investment, because I have one huge project in mind. It’s to get a Chinese translation of Democratic Decision-making published, by a Chinese publisher,

in China. This, I think, is only fantastic. Yīng, a friend in Beijing, is doing a translation. Another friend, originally from Hong Kong but now in Belfast, will do the proofs, and SCIRP (based in Wǔhàn) will do the rest. They’ve already published some articles, including my criticisms of Máo’s policies, so we’re hopeful of a fair result. It’s open access, so we have to find about £2,000. I’ve applied to the RSA for funds.

All in all, then, it’s been an interesting but, as usual, frustrating year. My thanks of course to the stalwarts: to Rob, who proofed the book; to Marc, who always helps this e-diot when I have e-problems; to Phil and Wes who ply me with whiskey; to Vanessa who zooms ahead of the posse; and to all of you for your continued support. Seasons greetings; thanks to everybody, everywhere; and fingers crossed for 2021.