**The de Borda Institute: 2018 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; 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 Joe Humphreys of the it, Wes Holmes, Charles Stanley-Smith, Rob Fairmichael, Valery Perry, Tommy Sands, dcc’s Cllr. Dermot Lacey and dcu’s Deiric O’Broin, Paddy McEvoy in Cambridge, Leo Joosten in Leiden, Jeremy Wates in Brussels, Helmut Reithmüller in Berlin, Marcin Gerwin in Gdansk, Patricia Lorenz in Vienna, Nato Kirvalidze in Tbilisi, and Professor Benny Tai in Hong Kong, all good old and new friends of deB.

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

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Dear Everyone,

This report starts on a sad note, for two of our most stalwart patrons have died, Professor Emerita **Elizabeth** **Meehan** on 6th January, and on 13th February, Dr. **John** **Robb**. We miss them both, and both of them go back to our very beginning, in 1997. **Elizabeth** attended or even chaired many of our events, and helped to produce the first Springer book; in a nutshell, she was one of those rare academics who actually got out into the community to support local efforts like our little ngo. **John** goes back even earlier… and at the end of the 1986 New Ireland Group *People’s Convention*, the cross-community consensus conference of over 200 which I’ve often spoken about when preferential decision-making was first put to the test – (first for us anyway, and probably first for NI) – he opined that, one day, people will understand the significance of that meeting.

I spent last Christmas in Tbilisi, lecturing in their State University (because they follow the old calendar, and the Orthodox Christmas is on 7th January). In fact, I gave eight talks in Georgia – I was there for longer than scheduled with passport problems – and one talk in Armenia. Then, in Iran, I gave a lecture to an audience, half of whom were wearing burqas – (that’s another first for me) – and also, one evening, with a group of half a dozen, we watched the TEDx talk. As of today, it has had well over 7,000 downloads, which is nicely above the TEDx 2018 mean.

Then came China, where I was due to give a lecture in Anyang University. I arrived on schedule, met the Director on the Monday; yes, he said, it’s all set for the lecture on Friday. But on Wednesday, everything was cancelled. Xi Jinping was meeting in Beijing and deciding that the post-Mao 10-year time limit would no longer apply. The mood changed palpably. But I did give a lecture in Tianjin, where **Lóng** even showed my TEDx talk as a curtain raiser (but U-Tube is meant to be firewalled in China); any questions? and one was on Brexit. I also spoke in two universities in Beijing, and one each in Hong Kong and Taiwan.

My mainly overland journey from Belfast to Beijing and back, Sept 2017 – Sept 2018, was very satisfying, not least because everything seemed to work out so well. The facts that (a) I was an OSCE election observer in Mongolia for their 2017 presidential elections; (b) I was asked to do that TEDx talk; (c) I found two lovely tenants to look after my house; (d) I got a second double-entry Chinese visa when I was in Hong Kong, which meant (e) I could go into North Korea, at the very time that Kim Jong-un was meeting Trump in Singapore; (f) I got only one minor stomach upset and my bike just two punctures; and (g) I popped in to see my publishers in Heidelberg (where my nephew put me up) and, all being well, they will publish my next book. It is to be a tale of how majority voting and the dominant binary-based version of majority rule have caused and continue to cause so many huge problems, pretty well everywhere! So that’s now keeping **Alan** busy, my long-time, faithful and meticulous proof-reader, as well as **Phil** and **Rob**, along with **Don** who may want to write a foreword. The blog, by the way, is on:

https://debordaabroad.wordpress.com/2017/09/07/de-borda-abroad/

The other amazing aspect of the journey is that I was able to do pretty well everything that I would have otherwise done from home. From Armenia, for example, I submitted a piece to University College London Independent Commission on Referendums – that was in January – and their final report was published in July. <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/constitution-unit/research/electionsandreferendums/icreferendums>

And from everywhere, I was writing to the Citizens’ Assembly in Dublin. It is amazing: the Secretariat, lovely people, all doing their best, trying to distil the opinions of 100 ‘citizens’ into one coherent recommendation. They used majority votes, plurality votes, a sort of approval voting and even (though unnamed) a Borda count. But they got their maths into shocking twists, pretending that if a particular number was bigger than the others, that therefore it represented (not just the biggest minority but) an actual majority – because the terms of reference demanded majority support, and because they do not realise a majority opinion can be identified not only by a majority vote. So **Phil** and I were in frequent communica-tion with both the Secretariat + experts – 7 academics who advised on the voting procedures to be used by the ‘citizens’– and while the Secretariat responded fairly regularly, the experts did not. Never mind – and **Phil** was there – the Assembly nevertheless decided to recommend multi-option referendums. Brilliant! Then, in what I think was a rather silly rear-guard action by these ‘experts’, the ‘citizens’ were asked to say how multi-option referendums could be analysed; they had a choice of just 2 voting procedures, one of which was pr (but of course, you can’t have any proportionality when making a single decision). Experts?

In NI, the only achievement of note was St Columb’s Park House publication of a “Consensual Decision-making Manual,” which (originally made no mention at all but now, after some prompting from **Rob** and a lot from **Phil**), contains a nice section on the deB.

In Britain, it was Brexit. People are still talking as if that wretched 2016 referendum identified “the will of the people” but of course, if it had, folks would not be arguing the whole time about what that will actually was. So the Green European Foundation published an article (submitted from Tianjin), openDemocracy (whom I met when I was in London) got two (from Tbilisi and Belfast), People’s Vote campaign published two, (from Moscow and Dublin) and – after only 24 years of press releases and stuff – BBC Radio 4 did an interview: Evan Davies on his pm programme, 12th Nov; lovely, he had done his homework. **Phil**, **Vanessa** and I tried to see if there was any interest in organising an English “citizens’ assembly” on Brexit but despite help from **Alan** with a Quaker venue, the bait was not taken. If anything, though, Brexit and Trump have demonstrated that simplistic binary votes – the usa’s electoral system is almost a binary contest – are not only divisive and inaccurate, they are actually downright dangerous. Springer has agreed that the next book is to be entitled *Majority Voting: the Catalyst of Populism.*

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That’s it. We are now 21 years old and, with about £200 in the bank. But we keep going; in fact, the time could hardly be more opportune. So many thanks to all for keeping the show on the road, to **Mark** who maintains our web; to **Vanessa** who is promoting de B in her CiviQ; to **Katy** who barely has time to think, not least because of Brexit; to **Alan** who still volunteers to do the donkey work of proofing; to **Angela** who is also promoting the Borda methodologies in Germany and the Caucasus; to **Long 龙** who entertained me so well in Nankai University; to **Nato**, the best Turkish-coffee-maker in Tbilisi; to **Irina**, who looked after me in Moscow – we go back 30 years when as co-authors we were publishing articles in *Moscow News* and *Novy Mir,* *Новый Мир, (New World)*; to **Jeremy, Leo, Patricia, Valery, Angela** and **Helmut**, my many continental hosts; and lastly to **Phil**, who still does so much. So Happy Christmas everyone. Peter.

PS I’ve applied for a job in Beijing, running the ni bureau. I should hear in January whether or not I’ve been short-listed and of course, I’ll let you know.