

Should democracies implement suffrage by lottery?



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Abstract

This paper will present different predominately instrumental arguments for and against suffrage by lottery. The paper will be based on some normative claims, namely the competence principle and the corollary of the competence principle as presented by Jason Brennan in "Against Democracy". The paper consists of three main parts. Part one will be dedicated to discussing whether universal suffrage produces incompetent decisions, while part two will be dedicated to discussing whether epistocracy is feasible according to the demographic objection and the epistemic objections made by Julian Reiss. The last part of the paper will discuss whether suffrage by lottery would produce more competent policies, and thereby being justifiable according to the competence principle to a larger degree than suffrage by lottery is.

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1. Introduction

In 2016, Jason Brennan wrote the highly relevant book “Against Democracy”, where he argues that democracy isn’t justifiable according to what he calls the competence principle. Brennan essentially argues that the average voter is too ignorant to vote in a matter that produces good political decisions and that this makes universal suffrage unjustifiable. The notion of widespread ignorance in the electorate is a somewhat widespread concern within political science. As Ilya Somin writes: “The reality that most voters are often ignorant of even very basic political information is one of the better-established findings of social science” (Somin, 2016, s. 17). Whether democracy is justifiable according to the competence principle depends on the actual levels of political knowledge and ignorance in the electorate. For democracy to be justifiable, the electorate don’t only have to be relatively competent, democracy also has to be as Brennan put it in his pretty pig contest analogy: “the less ugly pig” (Brennan, 2017a, s. 207), meaning the best of the alternatives.

The competence principle states that “It is presumed to be unjust and to violate a citizen’s rights to forcibly deprive them of life, liberty and property, or significantly harm their life prospects, as a result of decisions made by an incompetent deliberative body, or as a result of decisions made in an incompetent way or in bad faith” (Brennan, 2017a, s. 141). It further states that “political decisions are presumed legitimate and authoritative only when produced by competent political bodies in a competent way and in good faith” (Brennan, 2017a, s. 142). This implies the corollary of the competence principle, which states that “we ought to replace an incompetent political decision-making method with a more competent one” (Brennan, 2017a, s. 142). Brennan also make a comparative institutional claim, that “universal suffrage tends to produce incompetent decisions, while certain forms of epistocracies are likely to produce more competent decisions” (Brennan, 2017a, s. 142). Because of the corollary of the competence principle, we should discuss and maybe also experiment with alternatives to democracy, such as variants of epistocracy and lottocracy.

Brennan argues that the reason universal suffrage tends to produce incompetent decisions, is that voters don’t have a instrumental reason to be rational (Brennan, 2017a, s. 48). This is called rational ignorance. The argument goes that because the influence of an individual vote is low, the voter lacks incentive to make an informed decision (Brennan, 2017a, s.

49). Brennan defines epistemic rationality as “forming beliefs with the goal of seeking truth and avoiding error, using a scientific evaluation of the best available evidence” (Brennan, 2017a, s. 48). Citizens often get punished for being epistemically irrational. Some examples Brennan provides are the belief that buying penny stocks is a key to financial success and the belief that prayer will cure pneumonia (Brennan, 2017a, s. 49). In politics however, Citizens usually don’t get directly punished by being epistemically irrational. If a voter votes in a way that hurts his or her own interests, he or she probably won’t notice anything.

If widespread ignorance in liberal democracies is a problem, the problem either have to be circumvented or solved completely. As universal suffrage arguably incentivizes ignorance and irrationality and political bodies ought to make competent choices, we either have to mitigate the effects of ignorance in the electorate, enfranchise and disenfranchise based on knowledge or change the political system in a way that to a larger degree incentivizes voters to vote competently. This paper will first discuss whether universal suffrage and democracy in the traditional sense produces relatively incompetent policies. Then it will be argued that most epistocratic proposals are unviable. The last part of the paper will discuss whether suffrage by lottery is a viable solution to the problem of ignorance and whether it is the “less ugly pig”.

2. Methodology

This paper builds on pre-existing normative arguments within political theory. Because of the normative scope of the paper, the methodology includes literature search and discussion. The arguments are primarily instrumental, which Encyclopædia Britannica defines as “the view that the value of scientific concepts and theories is determined not by whether they are literally true or correspond to reality in some sense but by the extent to which they help to make accurate empirical predictions or to resolve conceptual problems” (Neufville, 2020). This means that the arguments included in the paper are primarily centered around which institutional configurations works best given the goal of the paper that political decisions should only be produced by competent political bodies.

3. Is democracy producing incompetent decisions?

3.1 Are voters incompetent?

Somin uses voter ignorance about economic inequality as an example when he writes: “surveys consistently shows that most Americans and citizens of other democracies have little or no understanding of either the extent of inequality or whether it has been increasing or decreasing” (Somin, 2016, s. 19). One survey from 2009, that Somin sites found that only somewhere between 12 and 29 percent of Americans can place the shape of the income distribution when they are given a choice of five different sample diagrams to choose from (Somin, 2016). This is despite the fact that economic inequality had been a major political issue for many years (Somin, 2016, s. 19). Without knowledge about economic inequality, it is difficult to form informed opinions about how progressive the tax system should be or the extent of social services.

There are several empirical studies conducted on voter ignorance. One quite daunting finding Brennan cites is that US citizens neither generally don't know what party controls congress, limiting the possibilities of the voters to assign blame and credit for policies (Brennan, 2017a, s. 25). Another, arguably worse finding Brennan cites is that a majority of seventy-three percent of Americans don't understand what the cold war was about (Brennan, 2017a, s. 26). What adds context to this finding is the possibility of MAD or mutually assured destruction though the cold war. Although there are more studies on voter ignorance in America than in most other nations, some global studies have also been carried out. Ipsos MORI has for example found that voters globally generally overestimate the population over 65 years old and the number of people who are unemployed and seeking work (Duffy, 2015).

Somin presents three aspects of voter ignorance that he argues deserve particular attention. The first is ignorance about the basic structure of government and how it operates (Somin, 2016, s. 20). Knowledge about the structure of government is crucial in assigning credit and blame for policy outcomes to the right officeholders (Somin, 2016). Because of this, parties with thoroughly debated and evidence based political programs may do worse than they would do otherwise, affecting which policies get adopted. Voters may also have an inaccurate picture of the powers of elected official given constraint imposed by constitutional laws (Somin, 2016, s. 21). This may give populist candidates the opportunity to make false claims on what they will be able to do if elected. Voters may also lack knowledge about the reasons given for why elected officials face the constitutional constraints they do, opening up for the possibility that populist leaders may remove some

of these constraints through constitutional changes, without facing scrutiny from the wider public.

The second aspect of ignorance is that voters often seem to lack an ideological view of politics, making it harder to integrate political issues into a single framework (Somin, 2016, s. 21). This may have some advantages, as an ideological view of politics can act as a restrictive force on cognition and deliberation. This is because of the role cognitive schemas plays in cognition. A cognitive schema is defined by Encyclopedia Britannica as “mental structures an individual uses to organize knowledge and guide cognitive processes and behavior” (Michalak, 2019). Priorly acquired schemas affect the processing of new information, meaning that voters with stronger ideological identities and worldviews may process social scientific facts in a more biased way. Some overview of the ideological landscape is nevertheless useful, as political parties often are based on distinct ideologies, like social democracy or conservatism. This means that ideology may function as a shortcut to predicting the policy positions of political parties competing for office (Somin, 2016, s. 21).

The third aspect of ignorance is that the level of political knowledge has only increased modestly since the beginning of mass survey research in the latter part of the 1930s (Somin, 2016, s. 21). This is despite massive increases in educational attainment and an unprecedented expansion of the availability of information available at low cost (Somin, 2016, s. 21). Information channels, like the internet and television has to a larger extent been used for entertainment than for learning political information (Somin, 2016, s. 21). This is entirely predictable according to the rational ignorance hypothesis. The fact that IQ scores have risen enormously in the same timeframe, while levels of political knowledge has remained constant, further illustrates the point that political ignorance is entirely rational (Somin, 2016, s. 74).

Brennan gives some potential explanations for why political knowledge has increased modestly and why some people know more than others, even when it is irrational. One of these is hearing more and forgetting less. As education levels have increased worldwide (Barro & Lee, 2013), and some political knowledge are included in most curriculums, it is expected that even if students forget most of what they learn, they still are more knowledgeable with an education than without. The effect of education should however not be overstated: the effect of political interest has an bigger impact on political

knowledge than a master's degree (Brennan, 2017a, s. 36). The levels of education have seen much larger increases than the levels of political knowledge, which may mean that education is less effective than previously assumed (Somin, 2016, s. 198-199). In addition to this, Somin also points out the danger of indoctrination, as the curriculum often is politically determined (Somin, 2016, s. 200).

3.2 The problems with various information shortcuts

There has been proposed several different ways citizens can use so called information shortcuts to acquire information with less effort. If information shortcuts are sufficient, political ignorance will not be a major concern within political theory (Somin, 2016, s. 106). If an information shortcut is to work, it will need to lower the cost of acquiring information sufficiently enough that it is worth it for the voter. This is because of rational ignorance caused by the low expected benefit of acquiring the adequate and correct information required for voting, as mentioned in the introduction. It will also need to provide correct information. The minimum requirement here should at least be that an information shortcut provides more correct than false information. This is because of the concept of rational irrationality, as proposed by economist Bryan Caplan (Somin, 2016, s. 94).

According to Caplan, rationally ignorant voters may both limit the information they acquire and how rationally they process this information (Somin, 2016, s. 94). Citizens have two desires when they interpret information: their desire for happiness and their desire for an accurate view of the world (Somin, 2016, s. 95). Because of the low benefit of possessing correct information when it comes to voting and political behavior, citizens have an incentive to process information in a way that maximizes happiness, often at the cost of accuracy (Somin, 2016, s. 95). The claim that most knowledgeable voters tend to be rationally irrational and seek information in search of own happiness, is supported by a 2006 study showing that more knowledgeable voters tend to process new information in a more biased way (Somin, 2016, s. 95).

One shortcut frequently used by voters is information from daily life, as this information is virtually free (Somin, 2016, s. 107). Voters may for example acquire information about the economy through personal financial transactions (Somin, 2016, s. 107). Information from daily life, however, should be considered far from adequate to base political opinions and voting preferences on. Somin lists three limitations of this shortcut. The first is that this

information is of no help when dealing with issues that the voter do not encounter in daily life (Somin, 2016, s. 107). Voters generally should consider information about minority issues, the foreign policy and defense policy. The second is that information about the effects of incumbent policies often can't be used in predicting the effects of policy proposals from the opposition (Somin, 2016, s. 108). Lastly, voters need substantive knowledge to figure out if their personal experiences is the result of public policy and which political actors are responsible (Somin, 2016, s. 108). Because of rational irrationality, voters could also in theory be motivated to blame incumbent politicians, irrespective of how well incumbent policy has worked in practice (Somin, 2016, s. 109).

Voters may complement information from their daily lives, with information about political actors' performance in the past. This is called retrospective voting and may require less of voters than prospective voting (Somin, 2016, s. 117). With retrospective voting, voters are often able to punish incumbent policymakers for disastrous policies, making things like famines or politicly instructed mass murder less likely to happen (Somin, 2016, s. 120). This is one major advantage of democracy compared to dictatorship (Somin, 2016, s. 120). However, this shortcut may be rendered less effective as an effect of political partisanship and biases. Partisans tend to be biased towards a favorable evaluation of their own parties and ideologies, meaning that political actors may get unproportionally much or little opposition for policies (Somin, 2016, s. 121).

Voters may also listen to opinion leaders when deciding who to vote for. If voters listen to political activists or other prominent people in society of their own value orientations, they may not have to keep a close track of issues themselves (Somin, 2016, s. 114). There are some problems with the relationship between opinion leaders and voters, however. These arise from the fact that this relationship is a principal-agent relationship. Principal-agent problems occur when "... the person who delegates authority, the "principal", has difficulty monitoring the performance of the person he delegates to – the "agent"" (Somin, 2016, s. 115). Opinion leaders and voters do not necessarily have the same socioeconomic interests and are not necessarily members of the same subcultures. They are incentivized to exaggerate the political issues they are concerned about, to promote their own interests in the form of increased social status (Somin, 2016, s. 115). It has also been found that they tend to be more extreme in their views compared to the general public, meaning that they in theory could pose as an obstacle to deliberation and compromise as moderate views get less attention (Somin, 2016, s. 115).

The last information shortcut that is going to be presented is issue publics. Voters often have some policy areas of special interest for them, such as environmental politics or labor politics. This has been theorized to make up for some of the ignorance of policy areas in general (Somin, 2016, s. 122). According to Somin, ignorance undercuts the utility of issue publics in two ways. The first is that it often is difficult to tell which policy areas that are part of or relevant for the issue of interest (Somin, 2016, s. 123). Issue publics as a shortcut, may also lead to a “tragedy of the commons”, where the general interest is neglected in favor of particular issues (Somin, 2016, s. 124). If different issue publics advocates for their specific interests, this may lead to neglect of other important issues. It may also allow political parties to focus on a limited set of specific issues and get rewarded for this, while neglecting public opinion in other areas.

As mentioned before, universal suffrage does not discourage or punish epistemic irrationality in the same manner as in other life situations. As information shortcuts cant be used to solve this problem, irrationality may be a problem regardless of the hypothetical effectiveness of various shortcuts. Although it is more difficult to study irrationality than ignorance, there is some signs that can indicate irrationality and motivated reasoning. One arguably clear sign of irrationality is partisan biases. In the US, Republicans and Democrats on average have different beliefs of whether income inequality has increased or decreased the last 20 years (Chong, 2013, s. 111). This is not an opinion, but a belief about an objective fact. There is, however, evidence that strong bias among voters can be overcome with an accumulation of evidence and strong counterarguments (Chong, 2013, s. 115), although this may be gradually over time, as opinions often polarize when challenged (Chong, 2013, s. 110). This could allow for gradual change of public opinion over time, despite eventual resistance from prominent ideologies or parties.

3.3 Potential factors that can mitigate the effects of ignorance

As political ignorance seems to be extensive despite information shortcuts, Somin argues that the dangers of political ignorance could be limited by decentralization of power to local governments and limiting the power of the government (Somin, 2016, s. 136). This, he argues, is because “federalism enables citizens to “vote with their feet”” (Somin, 2016, s. 136). If a voter is able to acquire information about better living conditions in another jurisdiction, he or she could simply move there (Somin, 2016, s. 138). This creates a much stronger incentive to acquire information about other jurisdictions, enabling citizens to get

better living standards. In this way, larger differences between different jurisdictions may encourage more competition, incentivizing politicians to compete with other jurisdictions by enacting better policies.

Federalism may give individuals more freedom to choose which laws and economic policies they want to live under, while encouraging greater innovation within politics and government. It may also make the most central levels of government less complex, with federal and national governments having fewer responsibilities. Federalism as an answer to political ignorance has however some problems associated with it. One problem is that it relies on universal suffrage, with its associated problems. If political ignorance is a big instrumental problem, a local electorate may not be more informed than a national electorate. One study cited by Somin, showed that 39 percent of Philadelphia adults could be characterized as “know-nothings” in regard to local politics, compared to 38 percent in regard to national politics (Somin, 2016, s. 140). This would mean that federalism and local government, at least to a certain degree, do not fulfill the demands of the competence principle, as all levels of government still could be partly incompetent. Federalism and freedom of movement would still decrease the potential harm the government could do to individual citizens.

There are also some inherent institutional advantages of democracy that somewhat reduces the risk for dangerously incompetent policies. One of the most important advantages is formulated by Robert Michels as “the ideological tendency of democracy towards criticism and control” (Drochon, 2020). Amarta Sen argues that a free press and an active political opposition constitute an early warning system (Sen, 1996). This is because a democratic system provides incentives for both the press and the opposition for revealing embarrassing and critical facts about incumbent policy (Sen, 1996). One comparison Sen provides is how India has avoided any large famine since it got independence and a democratic multiparty system was installed, while China and large parts of sub-Saharan Africa has experienced significant famines in the same period (Sen, 1996). The tendency of democracy towards criticism and control is however better at preventing disasters than it is promoting competence, meaning that democracy still might not be the best of the alternatives.

4. Why most forms of Epistocracy could be unfeasible

4.1 The demographic objection

According to Brennan, a political regime is epistocratic to the extent that political power is formally distributed according to competence, skill, and the good faith to act on that skill” (Brennan, 2017a, s. 14). The idea that political power should be based on competence stands in contrast to the traditional ideal of political equality. According to the demographic objection, most forms of epistocracy will result in a voting poll in which the electorate has different demographics from the population at large (Brennan, 2016). According to this definition of epistocracy, suffrage by lottery or enfranchisement lottery as it is called by Brennan, may be defined as a variant of epistocracy (Brennan, 2017a, s. 15), and may be a version of epistocracy that surpasses this objection. This is because voters under some versions of this proposal could be required to participate in competence building exercises, such as deliberative forums (Brennan, 2017a, s. 15).

Brennan presents two versions of the demographic objection: the unfairness version and the bad result version (Brennan, 2017b). The unfairness version states that epistocracy would lead to unequal representation, which would be inherently bad (Brennan, 2017b). The bad result version states that epistocracy would lead to overrepresentation of some groups at the cost of others and that this would lead to unjust outcomes that tend to favor advantaged groups (Brennan, 2017b). As this paper is instrumentally oriented, the unfairness version is somewhat irrelevant. The bad result version, however, may have some merit. However, the demographic objection may also be used as an argument against certain forms of representative democracy, as most electorates in liberal democracies don't perfectly represent the population (Desilver, 2020). Suffrage by lottery may avoid this problem, as it selects the electorate randomly.

Unequal representation may have several consequences. One of these is a failure to consider different perspectives. Voters with relatively more knowledge often lives under significantly different socioeconomic circumstances than voters with relatively little political knowledge. Voters do not necessarily only need information about politics – they also need knowledge about living conditions for different segments of the population. Counterintuitively, Patric Flavin has found that voter turnout among the poor don't necessarily lead to more equal policy representation (Flavin, 2012). There is evidence that voters vote in a sociotropic manner, where they evaluate the national economy rather than

their personal economic conditions (Chong, 2013, s. 101). A possible explanation for this may be that voters often are unaware of the implications of policies on their own living conditions (Chong, 2013, s. 102). Disparities in information may therefore be more detrimental to the political interests of poor voters than disparities in voter turnout.

Most forms of epistocracy, such as restricted suffrage and epistocratic veto either disenfranchise voters completely or gives additional votes based on competence criteria, such as answers on tests. Among the variants Brennan lists, restricted suffrage disenfranchises voters deemed incompetent, while plural voting and government by stimulated oracle empowers voters deemed especially competent (Brennan, 2017a, s. 15). One potential problem with these proposals is the problem of what the proposed exam should contain and how the questions should be formulated. If the exam only tested for basic social science facts, this probably wouldn't make an impact on the levels of ignorance in the electorate. Voters would probably need more knowledge than knowing party platforms, for example, to make a competent choice. If the exam were to include more advanced questions, such as questions about microeconomics, this would also be problematic given the contested nature of much of the social sciences. As Paul Gunn notes: social scientists tend to disagree with each other and there is a strong link between political knowledge and ideological dogmatism (Gunn, 2019). It may be better to implement solutions that increase the incentive to seek information and deliberate with others than it is to disenfranchise voters based on predefined criteria.

4.2 Epistemological problems with defining “superior political judgement”

The comparative institutional claim that “universal suffrage tends to produce incompetent decisions, while certain forms of epistocracies are likely to produce more competent decisions”, is somewhat vaguely formulated. While the first part of the claim about universal suffrage may hold some truth because of ignorance among voters, the latter part is more problematic. As power is formally distributed in accordance with competence within an epistocratic system, the claim implies that competence in theory could objectively be defined and identified and that one could obtain true and uncontested social scientific knowledge. Brennan implies that some people have superior political judgement because they possess more social scientific knowledge.

According to Julian Reiss, this premise is problematic in three ways. First, Reiss argues, is the fact that a political judgement involves trade-offs between different social goals (Reiss,

2019). The competence principle is a good example of this, as it makes the judgement that individual freedom is more important than representative democracy and equality. Secondly there is uncertainty in the application of a goal in a concrete context (Reiss, 2019). There is, for example, disagreement and uncertainty about what indexes and measurements should be used. Thirdly, there is uncertainty in the means-ends relationships, even in the cases where there is agreements about which goals to pursue (Reiss, 2019). If one wants a more sustainable economy, for example, there is considerable social scientific and political disagreement on how society could accomplish this.

Another point Reiss points out is that there is few facts or theories that there is consensus about. Reiss uses the example of free trade, which often is presented as a solution for growth, as he presents the argument that a free trade policy prevented growth within the textile industry in Portugal, leading to lower economic growth as a result (Reiss, 2019). Reiss argues that the perceived consensus in economics exists due to conformism. One of the reasons for this proposed conformism is common acceptance of bad methodology (Reiss, 2019). Reiss argues that “evidence-based” paradigms are dominant in contemporary social policy and that most philosophers of science is critical of this (Reiss, 2019). Another proposed reason for conformism is selection bias, where potential academics self-selects themselves into scientific communities based on personal worldviews and values (Reiss, 2019). One example Reiss lists here is that few conservatives study gender studies(Reiss, 2019).

The objections of Reiss do not however mean that competence is irrelevant or that any search of social scientific knowledge is futile. As Reiss puts it “Scientific conclusions – theories, concepts, facts – are enormously useful for individual and political decision making, but only if they are regarded as that: tools for thinking (and not as commands for action)” (Reiss, 2019). It should intuitively be a premise of the debate that truth to a certain degree is obtainable, but social scientific generalizations are more problematic – at least when there is a diversity of competing explanations. The objections of Reiss do also not mean that the competence principle is irrelevant. Deliberation and the acquiring of knowledge makes a difference, at least when citizens are properly motivated. The crucial difference between competence criteria and the value of competence is that the former must be defined and would per definition be political, while the latter is a goal or an ideal.

5. The case for suffrage by lottery

5.1 Suffrage by lottery and political ignorance

If democracy produces incompetent decisions and if we ought to replace universal suffrage with a mechanism that produces more competent decisions, suffrage by lottery may be the least problematic form of government of the alternatives. Suffrage by lottery could both be considered as an epistocratic and non-epistocratic form of governance, depending on definitions and institutional arrangements, such as competence criteria. Suffrage by lottery, without any competence test is arguably less problematic according to the demographic objection (Brennan, 2017b). It is arguably also less problematic according to the objection made by Gunn, that social science is contested and that knowledge requirements should not be used because of this (Gunn, 2019). If suffrage by lottery then produces more competent decisions and to a larger degree is compatible with the competence principle than democracy, while it to a larger degree is compatible with the demographic objection and the objections made by Gunn and Reiss, than democracy and other forms of epistocracy, suffrage by lottery should replace universal suffrage.

Umbers defines suffrage by lottery as “the abolition of universal suffrage in favor of the enfranchisement of some randomly selected proper subset of the population” (Umbers, 2018). By reducing the numbers of voters, the expected value of voting increases and in turn, the expected value of gathering information (Umbers, 2018). This could mitigate voter ignorance and realize higher quality decisions by voters (Umbers, 2018). Besides generally increasing the incentive to gather political information, it would likely have an especially large effect on the incentive to processing this information in a more rational manner. This is because the randomly selected voters would have a relatively smaller incentive to be rationally irrational, because they would weight the desire for a factually accurate world higher than the desire to maximize their personal happiness (Somin, 2016, s. 95). Because of this, randomly selected voters would likely be less biased than voters within a democracy with universal suffrage.

Brennan presents three types of voters in a democracy: hobbits, hooligans and vulcans (Brennan, 2017a, s. 4-5). According to this typology, hobbits are people with low interest and knowledge about politics, hooligans are partly informed political partisans and vulcans possess a broad amount of scientific knowledge (Brennan, 2017a, s. 4-5). In a democracy, most of the informed voters are probably hooligans: they are informed on

politics because it brings them joy. Citizens may for example be updated on politics because it brings them joy to discuss current events and policy proposals with likeminded friends and family (Brennan, 2017a, s. 35-36). They also may be political geeks and inherently like learning about politics (Brennan, 2017a, s. 36). The problems according to Brennan is that these motivations only weakly discipline voters to be factually correct.

If most of the informed voters in a democracy consists of hooligans, then the knowledge they do possess is likely to be biased and, in some instances, false. If this is true, this would be a strong ignorance-based argument against both democracy and some forms of epistocracy, such as restricted suffrage, plural voting, while being a potential argument in favor of suffrage by lottery. A competence test that disenfranchises incompetent voters would incentivize voters to become knowledgeable about what the test tests for, but it would not incentivize voters to be epistemically rational. A competence test that gives extra votes to more informed voters, could in theory give the biases of hooligans a bigger impact on public policy.

Under a system of suffrage by lottery, there would be a certain tradeoff between representativeness and minimizing incentives for rational ignorance and rational irrationality (Somin, 2016, s. 210). Because the group would be randomly selected, certain error margins could affect whether smaller groups are represented as well in the group as in the electorate from which the group is selected from (Somin, 2016, s. 210). The representativeness of suffrage by lottery should not be held against the standard of perfect representation, but rather the representativeness of modern democracies and proposed forms of epistocracy. Electoral circuits contain natural electoral thresholds, through there being more voters than electoral seats. Epistocracy is also as formerly mentioned unrepresentative through disenfranchisement or extra votes.

In a sample of 400 respondents, the error margin is expected to be at five percent. If this is reduced to 200 the error margin is at seven percent (PennState). Depending on how much emphasis there is on representativeness, these results arguably don't seem that daunting, when compared the rather unrepresentative results of some elections. In first past the post systems, only the biggest contender gets represented by a seat in congress. In more representative systems, the situation is a bit better, but most electoral systems do per definition contain natural electoral thresholds. Voters in a sample of 400, for example, would nevertheless have a much stronger incentive to cast an informed and rational vote. A

small amount of unrepresentativeness could arguably be justified according to both the competence principle and the demographic objection.

5.2 Discrimination and suffrage by lottery

Suffrage by lottery may also lead to greater intergroup contact, as it effectively would create a microcosm of society. This may mitigate any hostility among different groups in society and reduce the probability of discriminatory policies being adopted. One meta-analysis of over 500 studies found a significantly negative relationship between intergroup contact and prejudice ($r = -.22$, $p < .0001$) (Ramiah & Hewstone, 2013, s. 905). This relationship is comparable to the relationship between passive smoking and the incidence of lung cancer at work. There is also evidence that intergroup contact can lead to what Pettigrew calls the “Secondary Transfer Effect”, whereby the attitudes one have towards one out group could generalize to other outgroup through attitude generalization (Ramiah & Hewstone, 2013, s. 906). This could potentially mean that minorities in some cases could benefit from suffrage by lottery without being directly represented, given that there is adequate intergroup contact among the selected voters.

5.3 Secondary benefits that are unique for suffrage by lottery

A system of suffrage by lottery would also provide some secondary benefits in addition to solving the problem of rational ignorance. In such a system, voters may be provided better opportunities to educate themselves. If voters were to be selected half a year before the election and the voters were motivated to use this time period to the fullest, this would constitute an enormous improvement in the average time spent on considering political options compared to modern liberal democracies. Such a system could for example include free, accommodated, and specialized college courses by different experts on relevant topics for those interested. This would be much more cost effective than contemporary political education because the effort would be more concentrated.

There are several potential arguments against this. One central concern Somin has regarding political education is the problem of incentives. If the educational offers and content of these courses are government mandated, this could create possibilities for indoctrination (Somin, 2016, s. 200-201). There is also a somewhat similar principal-agent relationship between voters and experts, as voters would depend on experts to gather and convey relevant knowledge. This could be solved by ensuring that voters have diverse

information sources, like the possibility to talk to union representatives, journalists, business leaders or politicians. There is also a strong argument to be made for a strong emphasis on deliberation among voters. This would likely provide alternative information sources, mitigating the power of these “agents”.

Deliberation may benefit from the representation of different issue publics, as voters that are knowledgeable within specific policy areas would have the possibility to raise awareness among the others. Somin cites studies, however that shows that political knowledge is highly intercorrelated (Somin, 2016, s. 122). Previously low information voters may therefore have to rely on high information voters that have been selected and external experts. There is the possibility of different configurations when it comes to contact with politicians. If the value of macro-deliberation among citizens in general and contact between citizens and politicians should be emphasized, laws preventing political candidates and the public from knowing who the chosen voters are could be put into place. This would have the disadvantage of making direct deliberation between voters and politicians impossible.

5.4 Contemporary evidence

There is some evidence that shows how suffrage by lottery could work in practice. Brennan cites some worrying results from a comprehensive study on deliberation from Tali Mendelberg, that shows some detrimental effects of political deliberation. Mendelberg has among others found that in cases where groups are of different sizes, deliberation tend to exacerbate conflicts (Brennan, 2017a, s. 63). This is arguably because of group membership, as self-identification towards groups have been found to have negative effects on the quality of deliberation (Brennan, 2017a, s. 62). Even more daunting is the finding that deliberation over more sensitive matters, such as pornography laws frequently leads to hysteria, with participants booing and hissing at each other (Brennan, 2017a, s. 65). In cases where deliberation do not lead to hostility, it may actually cause apathy towards politics (Brennan, 2017a, s. 65).

There is one flaw in this research, however. In most contemporary deliberative experiments, the participants do not have decisive political power. As a result, participants do not have any incentive to be epistemically rational, as they don't get punished for being irrational. In a system with suffrage by lottery, deliberation may therefore produce better results. This is also not an argument against all configurations of suffrage by lottery, as

deliberative forums are optional. There is also evidence that deliberative forums increase knowledge about politics, even though it may lead to polarization (Barabas, 2004).

Somin points to Juries as an indicator on how suffrage by lottery may work in practice. Although the arguments include sortition in general, which would include representation by sortition, juries can still give valuable information. Somin argues that while Juries do reasonably good at specific cases where they have to figure out whether the person in question has broken the law, they encounter serious problems in more complex cases that include complex scientific evidence or sophisticated policymaking (Somin, 2016, s. 209). In more complex cases, juries have been found to act in a more irrational and ignorant manner (Somin, 2016, s. 209).

Somin argues that the cognitive challenges for randomly selected public policy juries likely would be greater than for traditional juries, as governments addresses a multitude of policy areas, like inflation, environmental policies and defense against terrorism among others (Somin, 2016, s. 209). This may be a good argument against representation by lottery, but it is arguably insufficient against suffrage by lottery. In a system with suffrage by lottery, the randomly selected participants would only be required to vote for representatives. This would not require higher cognitive demands than voting under universal suffrage does.

5.5 Retrospective voting and suffrage by lottery

Voters under a system of universal suffrage, would not necessarily meet the requirements of retrospective voting, for example. Even though this is considered to be the least demanding theory of political participation (Somin, 2016, s. 49), it might be a reasonable standard. Retrospective voting has four major knowledge requirements. They must have some understanding of which problems are caused or can be alleviated by government policies (Somin, 2016, s. 50). They must know which incumbent officeholders are responsible for different issues (Somin, 2016, s. 50). They must know a minimum about developments before the current officeholders got elected and lastly they must determine whether current incumbents or the opposition could have done better (Somin, 2016, s. 50).

In modern democracies, under universal suffrage, voters often do not meet these criteria. American voters, as noted earlier, do for example not know which party controls congress. This means that voters fail to meet the first and second knowledge requirements. In a lottocracy, voters would fare a lot better, as the knowledge required by retrospective voting, is acquirable over a short period. The most demanding knowledge requirement that

voters have to determine whether the opposition would fare better than the incumbents is still difficult to fulfill, but a relative argument can be made, that voters would fulfill this demand better under suffrage by lottery than universal suffrage.

Conclusion

Whether suffrage by lottery should be implemented depends on the strength of several arguments. The competence principle should weigh heavy in the discussion because incompetence has the potential to result in unjust and significant harm to citizens liberties and life prospects. As more and more evidence support the argument that voters in a universal suffrage regime casts their vote while being ignorant of relevant facts and arguments, the reasons for experimenting with other forms of governance grows in significance. As replacing universal suffrage with suffrage by lottery would require few other institutional changes, this further increases the significance of these reasons.

Most forms of epistocracy should be considered as unfeasible, as it is very difficult to define correct knowledge in a way that justifies disenfranchisement or giving extra votes. Both epistocratic proposals like restricted suffrage and suffrage by lottery have the burden of proof, but it is far more permissible to disenfranchise randomly than based on scientifically or politically defined criteria. Selecting for competent voters also only work if the voters who are selected for actually is competent. Evidence for rational irrationality among citizens who are especially politically interested casts doubt if this would work as well as intended. Suffrage by lottery solves this problem by changing the incentives.

Suffrage by lottery also have some inherent advantages. In a system of restricted suffrage or universal suffrage, voters do not have to physically meet the ones they are going to impact through the ballot. This is not the case with suffrage by lottery either, but in most configurations of such a system, voters will meet representatives for other groups. This may create increased inter group contact, reducing the dangers of discrimination. This is probably an undervalued argument, as incompetent or irrational policies tend to disproportionately affect minority groups. This advantage is exclusive to mechanisms who uses sortition. Because of all of these reasons, suffrage by lottery should at least be experimented with.

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