

# Fuzzy Democracy for Everyone

Everywhere in Europe, political parties are absolutely the problem, whether left, right or centre. The solution is not to create new political parties. Fuzzy Democracy shows how representative democracy is possible without parties. It explains how everyone can vote for people that they believe in and how each vote can count. This is instead of, as now, often voting for the least bad candidate or party, or voting only to keep another candidate/party out, or, disillusioned, not voting at all.

In a fuzzy democracy there are no constituencies, so you can vote for any candidate anywhere in your country. Voting is done using an electronic voting machine, so even if there are thousands of candidates you need only to type in the name of your chosen candidate and to confirm your choice.

To become a candidate you must collect a few hundred signatures and pay a small deposit. You are given a place on a special website to publish your views and something about yourself. Most publicity is done by your supporters networking via social media sites. Your spending (and spending by your rival candidates) is limited.

There is an important difference to existing systems in that you do not, under full fuzzy democracy, vote someone into the parliament (the legislature, or assembly) but into what may be called the *political class*. To enter this class the candidate must obtain a specific number of votes. If a candidate wins surplus votes, they can transfer these to a candidate who has not won enough. Or else, a candidate who has won only a few votes can transfer these to a candidate who has nearly enough. This way nearly every vote counts.

The next step is not essential, and it is an idea that you may find strange at first, but it has the purpose of making it harder for politicians to manipulate the system since they cannot calculate or bargain so easily. It is also meant to correct for the arrogance displayed by many politicians. It also has other advantages, for example, in combatting corruption.

When it is known which candidates have been successful, and so who all the members of the new political class are, a random selection is made, for example using a roulette wheel, to determine which of them will enter parliament. This is maybe less than a third of the political class.

The parliament can vote on laws and elect people to government (executive) posts. It has to choose from

among the members of the political class. This means that anyone with a government post must have earned a certain level of support among the electorate, whether with direct votes or by proxy votes (i.e. as when a candidate receives transferred votes from other candidates).

Some members of the political class will be neither in the parliament nor in government, but would be held in reserve such that they would have ample time to listen to the concerns and complaints of citizens. In particular, they would be the first port of call for lobbyists from civil society (most moderate lobbying being legitimate and desirable). They would act as a filter, since direct lobbying to the assembly members would be discouraged. But they would also be available as alternate members of the assembly or for appointment to executive posts as these fell vacant. Hence their supporters (i.e. those who have voted for them directly or by proxy) would still see their voice reflected in the political process; and indeed all those elected would carry much more weight than under the present party system, where opposition members are largely sidelined and effectively silenced. Under Fuzzy Democracy there is no formal opposition, only critical voices of independent representatives who must think for themselves, a representative being elected to exercise judgement, not opinion.

There would be common rooms, i.e. facilities where access was restricted to elected representatives such that these could socialise with each other and communicate about matters of political relevance. Hence those who have lost out in the lottery could nonetheless wield considerable influence. In the case of the parliament being unable to reach adequate consensus, a dissolution would be followed by a new lottery such that many reservists would be summoned to hold voting power. This is important since, in times of any crisis, the electoral process would be excessively long.

The abolition of parties does not mean that individuals cannot form *ad hoc* alliances. There would and should be collaboration between those holding voting power and the reservists. The end of parties does not mean the end of partnerships.

This allocation is superior to having a very large assembly because otherwise parliamentarians are restricted to a meaningless short speaking time and each vote counts little. (This is a major problem with the European Parliament.)

It is a general truth that, if you know your vote will likely make a difference (as in a jury of a dozen people), you will be more attentive to the issues than

if you perceive your vote as being of only marginal significance. Responsibility must be targeted. Here there must be no room for fuzziness. Fuzziness makes sense only for large populations.

As a voter you are not expected to study thousands of candidates to find your preference. The system is largely internet-based, but local candidates (i.e. those who live nearby) might make themselves known to you by traditional means such as with pamphlets or meetings. If you are not convinced of any of your local candidates, you can research, for example on the internet, others, choosing perhaps someone from among those who is in your line of work or you share some other interest with. Your task is to find someone whose views or approach you generally support and who you think has integrity, good judgement, and an understanding of the matters to be tackled.

There are many variations on the basic scheme. One is that voters should have three or four votes instead of just one. If you are choosing from among thousands of candidates, you may be glad to have more than one vote. This is also a compensation for the fact that one or more of those you vote for may enter the political class, but not win the lottery for a seat in parliament or else obtain a government post.

The ultimate purpose of Fuzzy Democracy is to achieve better - much better - government. Advocates of Fuzzy Democracy do not need to agree on other matters. They may be left-wing, right-wing or centrist; they can be conservative or liberal or radical or socialist or pacifist or environmentalist or hard-headed business types. All they agree on is that all considered opinions should be represented in parliament and that this is the best guarantee for good government.

## How might Fuzzy Democracy come about?

We might wait until a crisis comes that is bigger than all the other crises put together such that party democracy is finally totally discredited. But it would surely be better to help it on its way to a long overdue death.

Mount a campaign calling for the abolition of all political parties, without exception. You will receive far more support than you expect. If people see that they will be able to vote for individuals they genuinely trust, namely individuals who will be free of party pressure to conform, then they will come over to Fuzzy Democracy in their millions.

If many countries of Europe were not in deep crisis, one might imagine Fuzzy Democracy taking hold slowly, as elements of it were introduced piecemeal. But the economic crisis in many parts is so extreme, the failure of establishment parties so great, the prospect of any new party becoming more than a protest movement so small, that it is surely best to press now for this radical change. Spread the slogan that social justice and economic recovery are impossible as long as we have no democracy; that democracy is impossible as long as there are parties, just as there cannot be free markets while there are cartels; that democracy is more than freedom of speech and more than a culture of discussion; that when arguments have been won, action must follow.

Of course, even in a properly constituted fuzzy democracy there will be conflicts and disputes and even crises, but they will have a different character than today. Fuzzy Democracy holds out the prospect of parliamentarians being won over by force of argument rather than their sticking obstinately to the party line, as mostly happens now. There would no longer be any parties to be loyal to, so representatives could be loyal to their convictions. There would be little temptation to use cheap populist arguments and over-simplifications in order to win points in public opinion.

A final proposal is to be made here, which is not essential to Fuzzy Democracy, but which would much improve any system of representative government. It is ridiculous, indeed insulting, for the electorate to be called on to vote for a single party or an individual to represent it on everything: Criminal justice, Defence, Education, Foreign policy, Health, Social security, Taxation, Transport, and even the handling in law of ethical dilemmas on matters of life and death (abortion, euthanasia, the family and sexuality). Surely we should long since have had separate, directly elected assemblies to deal with these matters, even if there were some need for oversight and coordination by a second chamber. Appointed parliamentary committees on some of these topics are no substitute for proper representation.

Political parties everywhere have chosen for decades to present us with bundles (Latin: fasces) or packages such that we are forced to take all or nothing. Voters have effectively no power to withhold their votes if they agree with party policy in several of these areas, but disagree strongly in other matters. Not even party members have much say. The assumption seems to be that if someone has a certain opinion in one policy area, they must hold (what are considered by convention to be) matching opinions in others. But for any thinking person this is nonsense.

In fact, when an election is held, people are voting on different issues. So a party politician collects some votes for their line on one topic, some more for their line on another, a handful more votes for looking good, and - presto - they claim to have a majority and a mandate for everything. This is how power works. Fuzzy Democracy seeks to destroy power concentrations so that matters can be decided by force of argument alone.

Even if the charge against the party system of gross and persistent malgovernance is ignored, the charges of arrogance and power play would stand. A Europe in crisis needs better.