

“The 24” An integrated scheme for democratic participation.

THE SCHEME

This scheme has its origins in a proposal made by Ségolène Royal as part of her presidential campaign in 2007. This was that elected representatives should be accountable to constituency-based, randomly-selected citizens' juries. It is also a reaction to the UK MP's expenses scandal of 2009 and the general sense that the gap between citizens and their political representatives in many developed democracies is too large and that this is not good for democracy.

The central premise of this scheme is that a group of 24 randomly-selected citizens in each constituency in an elective, constituency-based democracy should have oversight of the MP's activities and actions in office. They should also act as intermediaries between the MP and the wider constituency, monitor the MP's financial affairs and should have some capacity to initiate proceedings for misconduct. The 24 could also have the duty of receiving petitions and could therefore act as a two-way active link between the citizens and their representatives. The period of office for this group would be one year, with 2 members taking full-time responsibility each month – hence the size of the group: 24.

This constituency-based arrangement then has the capacity to become the central point in a further series of democratic measures. Former office-holders could form the nation-wide pool for the selection of citizens for a second legislative or amending chamber. Previous members of this group could also stand for elected office – thereby creating a credible non-party route into the body politic. Out-going members could hold an annual conference to share their experiences, discuss problems and consider possible improvements. The 24 could also be actively linked to deliberative forums held in the constituency or convened from a wider area and would thus serve as a pathway between citizens' initiatives and parliamentary decision-making.

This short sketch shows the potential of this type of arrangement to develop participation of the citizenry in an official capacity between elections, to increase transparency and understanding within the political system, to facilitate communication between citizens and their representatives and to inhibit corruption and “insider” dealing. It also has the capacity to develop practical links between the existing forms of democratic decision making and new forms of citizen participation.

THE PROJECT.

The project is envisaged in two parts. This application for assistance from newDemocracy is based mainly on the first part but with a forward-looking planning element that points towards the second.

Part one. To make a short feasibility study - an exploration of issues and problems - that builds on the outline of the scheme as presented above.

This would form the basis of part two and would be written and presented with this in mind.

Part two. To plan and hold two simultaneous (or almost simultaneous) pilot trials based on this scheme, one in the UK and one in Australia. These would involve deliberative forums firstly to discuss, amend and approve the terms of the pilot trials before they take place and secondly to discuss and evaluate the pilots after completion. These pilots would involve a group of citizens undertaking some of the duties that the “24” might be involved in. This would, of course, be dependent on finding two MPs who would be willing to participate. My intuition is that these pilots should be of about 3 weeks in length.

This application for funding is for the research and writing of the study and for some of the logistical expenses for the planning of part two, particularly the recruitment of teams to work on the

pilots and the enlistment of two willing MPs. I would undertake this work myself. I would aim to complete the written element by April 2016 and to do most of the logistical and planning work between April and July 2016.

The plans for part two would then form the basis for funding applications from June 2016. At this stage the main elements for the pilots: the teams and the MPs should be in place awaiting the outcome of the funding efforts.

THE STUDY

The method I propose to use in this study is to formulate key questions relating to the scheme. These would then be explored in theory and some indication could be given as to how they might also be explored in practice during the pilot studies. The aim is to present various options and ideas in such a way as to provide the agenda for further discussion (this could take place during the pre-pilot deliberative sessions for example.) As a principle I would work within the basic framework (24 participants, 2 with greater responsibility per month, one year period of office) but would include some discussion of alternatives or explore scenarios where alternative arrangements might prove useful.

The key questions would include:

What would be the exact role, responsibilities and status of the 24?

What powers could they have?

What would constitute misconduct a) by the MP, b) by members of the 24?

What procedures could be used in the event of misconduct?

How could the non-partisan status of the 24 be maintained?

What should the relationship be between the 24 and a) The citizenry, b) civil society groupings in the constituency, c) political organisations within the constituency, d) the press and the media?

Should the 24 be paid?

How would the 24 be recruited? What sort of training should be given?

How would such a scheme relate to existing electoral arrangements (British and Australian)?

How could the 24 scheme work within the wider context of promoting citizens' democracy?

The finished form of this study would be a paper of about 9-10,000 words covering the basic case, the key questions and attempts to answer them. This would be followed by a number of appendices dealing with certain questions in greater detail. The study could be published as a pamphlet or used as a discussion document (or both).

PLANNING FOR PART TWO.

The main part of this would involve creating two teams and finding interested MPs. The main item of expenditure for this would be travel to Australia to have discussions with possible members of the Australian contingent. This would also enable me to make first-hand contact with recent developments in citizen participation in Australia.

Should it prove difficult or impossible to fund or undertake part two, the attempt to form teams, contact MPs and plan the second part will act as a means of disseminating and spreading the ideas contained in the study. As such it would be commensurate with the nDF criteria.

PROPOSED BUDGET.

Research for and completion of study (based on six months part-time work).	£ 5,000	\$10,334
Travel in UK for research and team-building: (30 trips to London + equivalent of 3 trips to Scotland)	£ 720	\$ 1,448
Travel to and in Australia (10 day trip)	£ 2,500	\$ 5,167
Accommodation in Australia	£ 800	\$ 1,653
Total	£ 9,020	\$18,602

PERSONAL DETAILS

Oliver Dowlen is a scholar specialising in the random selection of citizens for public office. His doctoral thesis (New College, Oxford) was joint winner of the Sir Ernest Barker prize for best thesis in political theory for 2006-7; it has since been published (*The Political Potential of Sortition*, Imprint Academic 2008) In recent years he has been joint organiser of the CEVIPOF seminar series on the political use of sortition funded by Sciences Po, Paris. In October 2012 he took up an ISRF Early Career Fellowship at Queen Mary College, London to study the benefits of using randomly-selected citizens in transitions to democracy. In early 2015 he affiliated with CEVIPOF, Sciences Po in Paris as a Chercheur Associé and is part of their working group on democratic procedures.

Recent Conference and Seminar Attendance and Papers

May 2015 *Modern democracy and the randomly-selected citizen*. Nanyang Technological University Singapore.

February 2005 Planning meeting for conference on rejuvenating democracy, Bibliotheca, Alexandria.

February 2015 *Modern democracy and the randomly-selected citizen* presentation at Southampton University.

July 2014 *Sortition and the Constitutional Design of Democracies* IPSA Conference Montreal.

October 2013 Collective Intelligence and Democratic Procedures Seminar, University of Lausanne.

October 2013 Organiser of Sortition and Democratic Consolidation Seminar QMUL London. Papers: *An Introduction to the Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*, *Sortition and the Consolidation of Democracy*.

September 2013 *Selection by Lottery: Citizen Recruitment of a Special Kind* ECPR Conference, Sciences Po, Bordeaux.

July 2013 *Le tirage au sort et la consolidation démocratique*. AFPS Conference, Sciences Po, Paris

May 2013 *Modern democracy and the Randomly Selected Citizen; directions and perspectives*
QMUL.

Selected Publications

August 2011: "Le triage au sort en politique: la method et ses raisons profondes." *Esprit* 8-9 2011.

August 2010: "Sortition and Liberal Democracy" in Delannoi, G., Dowlen, O.
(eds) *Sortition: Theory and Practice*. Imprint Academic

July 2009 "Sorting Out Sortition: A Perspective on the Random Selection of Political Officers."
Political Studies. Vol. 57 no.2

September 2008. *Sorted: Civic Lotteries and the Future of Public Participation*. Pamphlet
produced for MASSLBP (Canada)

August 2008: *The Political Potential of Sortition: a study of the random selection of citizens for
public office*. Imprint Academic, Exeter.

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