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Improving Democracy (I) and Robots

Edited by
Manfred J. Holler



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This Volume Needs a Preface

This volume sets out with a discussion of the Dutch project of improving democracy and ends with work published in memoriam of two “true scholars.” It contains an article by Claude Hillinger, who died on March 19, this year, and a comment by Christian Klamler on Hillinger’s suggestion of utilitarian voting relating it to empirical evidence. The volume ends with a review of John Hudson’s last book “The Robot Revolution” by Bruce Morley and a discussion of “Robots: Present and the Future” by Chris Hudson. John Hudson passed away on July 13, 2018.

Already in 1978, Hillinger, together with Klaus Schüler, published an article on “Cyclical Fluctuations of the German Economy: A Continuous-time Econometric Model” in the Munich Social Science Review. I was one of the editors then. During this period, I was Hillinger’s assistant at the University of Munich – and we became friends. I visited him at Berlin on February 1, this year, a few weeks before he died on March 19. He asked me whether I have written another book “in order to confuse the profession.” He did not try to confuse the profession but to contribute to its progress, in which he seriously believed, publishing in journals like *Econometrica*, *Journal of Political Economy*, *Review of Economic Studies*, *Behavioral Science*, *Economocs Letters* – and *Homo Oeconomus*.

John Hudson already contributed to Volume 1 of the *EURAS Yearbook of Standardization* (EYS), hosted by the quarterly journal *Homo Oeconomicus* (now with Springer). Together with *Philip Jones* he analyzed “The Gains of Standardization from Reduced Search Costs.” This was the first of several contributions to EYS. Standardization was a major interest of his research, and this is where we met and became friends. We even edited Volume 6 of the EYS together, and it turned out that this was the last one getting published in the regular way. The advantages and disadvantages of standardization was one of John’s concern, another was to reflect upon the economics profession. In the symposium “Letter to the Queen,” of 2010, which I edited for *Homo*

Oeconomicus, he contributed a challenging “Letter Reminding the Profession of its True Tasks.” And he was thinking ahead. See his “The Robot Revolution.”

The major part of this volume is dedicated to contributions concerning “improving democracy.” This section sets out with an article by Peter Brouwer and Klaas Staal on “The Future Viability of the Dutch Democracy,” discussed in what follows by Hannu Nurmi, George Tsebelis and Jesse M. Crosson, and Ryan Kendall. Nurmi points out that “due to the systemic nature of the Constitution it is difficult to improve the performance of one component without deteriorating that of another.” There are trade-offs. Tsebelis and Crosson suggest an electoral system for the Netherlands which can be understood as a cross between the current system and approval voting. Kendall argues that some of the measures proposed by the State Commission (created to address the future of the Dutch parliamentary system) point in the wrong direction – and do not improve the democratic system.

Peter Emerson asks the question “Can Rights Be Wrong?” proposing a “Less Majoritarian More Inclusive Democracy.” It seems that “Alternative Voting,” suggested by Jan Oreský and Prokop Čech with respect to the 2018 presidential election in the Czech Republic, could be a procedure that creates more “inclusion” than majority voting. In his “Stalemate by Design?” Peter Swann demonstrates “how binary voting caused the Brexit impasse of 2019” – the disastrous impact of a voting procedure. In a way related to the Brexit outcome, the improvement of the relationship between citizens and politicians is Florian Follert’s concern. He has chosen an agency-theoretical perspective for this analysis. Concluding this section of the volume, Sascha Kurz and Matthias Weber comment on the Public Good Index – one of the instruments which should give us a better understanding of the power relations inside voting bodies, of course depending on the chosen voting procedure.

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