

# Chapter 14

## Exploring the Counting of Ballot Papers Using “Delegated Transferable Vote”: Implications for Local and National Elections in the United Kingdom

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Delegated transferable voting (DTV) refers to an approach to counting votes in elections that extends non-preferential voting systems like First Past The Post (FPTP) to include a transferable element similar to Single Transferable Voting (STV) but instead of voters indicating who they wish their votes to go to on an individual level they entrust that decision in the candidate they vote for, who could be from a small political party that might otherwise be deemed a “wasted vote” under first-past-the-post systems where the candidate they least want could win by having the most votes but still have less than 50% of the popular vote. This chapter discusses how DTV might work in practice through an auto-ethnographic approach in which the authors play an active part in elections in order to test the approach. The elections contested in the UK included to local council level in the Pontypridd area and national elections to the UK Parliament and Welsh Assembly. The potential impact of DTV on these election and method of campaigning used at some of these elections might have had on the voting outcome are discussed.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

It is generally accepted that there is a significant degree of apathy in elections to public office. Two of the reasons often given are that there is “no point in voting” because the same people will get in and that there is no one worth voting for. Whilst the last viewpoint has little merit, because there is little stop-

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ping those with initiative standing for election, this chapter hopes to address the last point. One of the main reasons why parliamentary constituencies elect someone from the same party time and time again is because the other parties are fragmented in a way that means they will individually not get elected through the first past the post (FPTP) system of election. Suggestions have been made to replace FPTP with more complex methods of voting based on proportional representation (PR), but many of these have been a failure. The authors therefore argue that it is possible through a pluralistic way of thinking to keep the FPTP method while having the benefits of PR through a way of distributing the votes, called ‘Delegated Transferable Voting’ (DTV). DTV involves losing candidates being able to give their votes to a different candidate they think most represents the views of those who voted for the losing candidate. Delegated transferable voting would mean people could vote how they want to knowing that voting for a candidate from a minor party would not be a wasted vote as it would be given to a party of the choice of the candidate they voted for. This approach would have particular advantage to small political parties, which are often wanted by members of the public but not voted for because of the risk of the alternatives.

President Hollande of France announced several reforms that are supposed to affect Parliament, such as a change of the electoral rules in order to provide a better representation of small political parties, or the total veto of the *cumul des mandats* (Costa, 2013). In Pakistan, politics has actively entered into the corridors of education, such as in colleges and higher education institutions in form of political parties, where small political parties are working (Ahmad, Ali, Iqbal, Ali, & Badshah, 2013). Whilst some researchers have advocated the merits of small political parties, they often restrict analysis to candidates from these three largest parties (Casey, 2013).

## **BACKGROUND**

Government fragmentation, which allows for pluralistic representation of non-partisan interests is an emerging area of discussion. Government fragmentation is useful, as the separation of powers and responsibility is at the core of any democratic system (Gong & Janssen, 2012). Government fragmentation is aggravated by the possibility that small political parties emphasize particularistic interests in their campaigning and legislative activity (Cirone & Urpelainen, 2013).

Thus the strategy of LGBT activists in Mexico has been to launch their own candidates from small political parties while building coalitions with other civil-society groups to pressure the larger parties (England, 2014). In Liberia the small political parties (those with less than 3 per cent of the vote or no representation in the presidential race), and independent candidates, are still prevalent, holding over a third of House seats and half of all Senate seats (Harris & Lewis, 2013). In Latvia, the key actors for the (mostly Russian-speaking) ‘non-citizens’ have been small political parties and interest groups – in a sense, ‘outsiders on the inside’, in but not fully of Latvia or the EU in terms of formal citizenship status (Saward, 2013).

Web 2.0 might move on this debate so that within election campaigns, political participation is not limited to voting (Lilleker & Jackson, 2011). In Africa the Internet has become a valuable tool, not only in helping promote pluralism within the media, and support the existence of independent media, but also in promoting participation of different actors in public debates (Salgado, 2012).

Contemporary politics in democratic states have been profoundly transformed by the fragmentation of public agendas, the rise of single issue politics, the impact of the mass media, the decline of political parties and the theatricalization of the political arena (Ezrahi, 2014). Political interest groups widen the

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