

## Documentary Treatment (December 2018)

### ***”Engaged Citizens; Beyond Politics”***

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**Producer (edited treatment and creative advice): Andi Reiss**

#### **Logline**

Democracy means literally “rule by the people”. But who are the people who rule? In investigating Democracy’s (hidden) histories, we unearth the potential power of self-governance.

#### **Premise**

It has been said that Democracy is the worst form of Government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time. Even those who think Democracy is the best way of doing things don’t claim it’s perfect or even less that it is easy to manage. This raises two key questions:

- What is Democracy?
- Are we not simply pre-judging Democracy based on representational forms we experience today?

Representation requires elections. Elections are said to be the synonym for Democracy. Elections require a choice. The winner is who gets the most votes.

In the US there are two parties, a more polarized electorate, and thanks to the quirks of the Electoral College, it’s quite possible for someone to be elected President even though another candidate gets more public votes. Yet even other so-called Democracies force us more and more into a ‘black’s white’ mode of

looking at the world: right versus left, nationalist versus globalist, us versus them, for example.

- So, is Democracy not precisely the way to govern based on inclusion of as many colours as possible?
- Could it be that the alleged Democracies we see today are not really Democracies but some twisted form of it instead?

Naturally, any decision making – even in the most inclusive manner – will at the end weigh certain facts more than others and, thus be in its final decision discriminatory. The challenge is to discover solutions that are most acceptable to as many as possible with inflicting as little as possible with the personal rights and freedoms of all.

At this point, further questions to be addressed would include:

- Is an inclusive decision making process not the best guarantee for widely accepted decisions?
- Does this not call for an inclusive governing system?
- Is what we see today in ‘representation’ creating an ever-growing gap between those who represent and those who allegedly are represented?

## **Synopsis**

This project is a proposed ninety-minute feature documentary with the aim of:-

1. Highlighting the long history of Democracy (literally meaning *rule by the people*) from ancient Athens to medieval Italy and Switzerland up to India, Ireland and Iceland.
2. Showing how Democracy cannot solely be attributed to Europe’s historical development.
3. Explaining how Sortition (the action of selecting or determining something by the casting or drawing of lots), was once regarded as a key

- characteristic of Democracy, and where, when, how and by whom Democracy became distorted.
4. Investigating the problems that today's 'representational Democracy' faces, and how we have become challenged with an increasingly dysfunctional political system.
  5. Looking at current examples of people governing (Democracy) throughout the world.

## **Purpose**

This documentary aims to establish a premise upon which to discuss Democracy as governance by the people; and for the audience to understand that today's 'Representational Democracies' are far from what we have been led to believe.

It will start where the documentary '*Tomorrow*' has left off, showing current examples of governance of the people, leading to the issue of 'Representational Democracy' and its inevitable failure, in order to deepen our understanding why we have gotten unacceptable political systems, and how people around the world are re-claiming real Democracy. The solutions are already there, and have always been.

Importantly the documentary will show how such participation has changed people's lives; how they have become (self) empowered citizens. It thus aims to excite people by showing ordinary citizens engaging in democratic processes across the globe, and, therefore, encouraging people to re-claim Democracy by creating initiatives of governance on local, regional, and eventually national levels.

## **Style**

A 'biodiversity' of people (our main characters) will travel to the places where Sortition is already in existence, to meet the citizens who govern themselves. Our characters will speak to experts, breaking down political language to a common

understanding, and using modern technologies to visualize (and simplify) the information obtained.

## **Story Structure**

Our narrative begins with the study of the modern applications of citizen's governance, in order to present them as the way forward, as opposed to continuing to tolerate the 'false trail of politics'.

The film will then explain the definition of Democracy, and notably how it differs from the idea of a Republic.

We will then investigate the idea of Sortation, a practice that was once considered a key feature of Democracy.

From there the film will move to highlighting the shortcomings and failures of the current political system (the system of representation), always bouncing back and forth, addressing the problems herein, and possibly solutions.

The film will conclude by debating a logical way forward, from communal levels to national levels (e.g. using the recent constitution making process in Ireland as an example) introducing models that show us how this can be done.

## **Act 1 *Tired of what?***

It will be key to differentiate the three terms that today are (deliberately) used synonymously: 'representational Democracy' (or democratic Republic) referring to Republics: which are defined by

- Representatives governance
- Governing for the common good (which means the interest of the ruling class)

A 'Representational Democracy' requires elections (electing the representatives) which raises the question:

- Who determines the best selection to be chosen from?
- Who can run for office?

Democracy is under attack. We are told that people are tired of Democracy. If this is true, then what people really are tired of is 'Representational Democracy'! Yet, never in history has there been so much approval for Democracy as a way to govern. A contradiction? Or could it be that the people are not tired of Democracy, but of the politics that go with 'Representational Democracy' instead?

1. What are people really tired of?
2. Has the public been misled when it comes to the idea of Democracy?
3. What is Democracy, in essence, and what does it really stand for?
4. And where does the idea of 'politics' come in?

We aim to create a template of understanding, with history as our guide, yet with a good understanding of our present, we can gauge a solid picture of the future.

## ***Act 2: Representational Democracy and the conflicts within.***

The key question is who represents whom in 'Representational Democracy'? This needs to be addressed when looking at the primary shortcomings of today's so called 'Democracies'. *Figures of the fortunes of parliamentarians in several key countries and comparing them with the income/wealth of the general population of those countries.*

This raises important questions

- Who represents whom?
- Who can afford to become a politician when for example in the US a seat

in the Senate costs about \$250m, and one in the house of representatives about \$40m?

- Can we really say that politicians represent a general public when in all parliaments worldwide a certain class is grossly overrepresented?
- Who is actually represented in 'representational Democracies'?
- Who sets the agenda?
- Who rules?

The 2016 US election exposed an America of deep divides over race, ethnicity and desires — a nation carved into two large coalitions, roughly equal in size but radically different in demographics and desires, in short: a divide of 'political right versus left'. This is what we are told and how the media communicates the current political crisis. But is this really true?

- Can two candidates in a two-party-system (most representational democracies can today be reduced to a ruling party/coalition versus an oppositional party/coalition) even be considered a choice?
- Does a 'left versus right' rhetoric really expose the divide in populations we see today?

Similarly, the United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union is another key event highlighting ideological political warfare (this time that of alleged 'nationalists' versus alleged 'globalists'), and it is fair to say the meaningful vote has been lost. So ...

- Does such simplification really meet public opinion and a nation's needs?
- And why are politicians not able to work with careful differentiations rather than simplifying down to 'all-or-nothing'?

Such toxic simplicity implies we are left with nothing but 'left versus right', 'globalist versus nationalist' and this then raises the following questions:-

- How important are the mentioned polarizations to citizens and do they really address people's realities?
- What role do ideologies play and do they really address today's challenges? In 2000 less than 2 % of the UK population belonged to a political party. Yet 99.5 % of all UK MPs belonged to one. Can we really say that those less than 2 % (ideologists) represent the more than 98 %?
- What is the benefit of politics creating an 'us versus them' mentality?
- What mindset do we see in politicians? What are their motives?
- What behavior is cultivated in a 'Representational Democracy'?
- Do we need politics at all?
- What role do the (mass) media and formal education play in today's politics?

### ***Act 3: Dramatizing our Solution***

Whilst politics has always been a contact sport, based on competition, Democracy is not! Democracy is addressing real issues with the aim to finding solutions. Ideologies and competition are hindering factors in democratic processes where facts and dialogue are the main ingredients.

Today's intense political conflicts are largely based on conflicting ideals and ideologies. We have been so used to them and the dichotomy of extreme positions, notably the political right versus the political left and/or nationalist versus globalist that we cannot see beyond them. However, the documentary will show that such drama – no matter how well staged – is but a red herring and extremely unhelpful in educated societies.

Solutions are most often neither left nor right, and whilst we all live somewhere local (in some kind of community), we all are part of a larger social structure (the world).

This documentary will show that citizens – never mind their personal views and values (ideologies) – are very capable of abstracting problem solving from ideologies in order to identifying appropriate solutions (to even complex issues) in the interest of common good.

### **Format & Production Information**

This documentary is seen to be one for theatrical release, and will be shot with this in mind, in 4K, to broadcast quality. Its initial promotion will be done on the international festival circuit, with a view to a broadcast sale and DVD release after it screen in cinemas.

### **Production Schedule & Timeline**

In order to remain topical within an international marketplace, this film should be ready in time for the next US presidential elections in November 2020, which will then be almost eighteen months after the impending Brexit.

- Preproduction: Early 2019 to summer 2019 (budgeting, production of teaser, fundraising, recruiting the crew)
- Production: summer 2019 to early 2020 (about six month)
- Post-production: 6 months after production (including producing extra material)

### **Funding & Budget**

This documentary should be funded by the public, notably through crowd funding, foundations (for the public good) and sponsorship (individuals and organization) that is credible. *See separate budget.*

## **Disclaimer**

Michael U. Baumgartner signs for idea, treatment, script and strategic story development (also to be used in print form for educational material) and may be one of the main characters. As this documentary project develops, more people will come on board and will deserve appropriate credits for their contributions. The production company is Yellow Production Ltd. With possible partners. Director: tbd by Michael Baumgartner and Andi Reiss (Yellow Production Ltd) This draft might be subject to further developmental changes.

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