**PRESS RELEASE**

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**Because it was binary while the problem was multi-optional,**

**the 2016 referendum was a silly question.**

If the problem ain’t binary, don’t use binary voting!

It should have been a multi-option ballot:

something like “In the EU, EEA, Customs Union or WTO?”

A majority vote on any one option would probably have lost; but a points preference vote could have identified at least the best compromise.

As in New Zealand which held a five-option referendum in 1992, we could have had a multi-option debate, and then a multi-option vote.

As it was, because our referendum was binary, we have had our discussion – or argument – only *after* the referendum.

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| *Majority Voting as a Catalyst of Populism*, (Springer, Heidelberg),  will be launched today, at the de Borda Institute, Belfast, 5-6 pm.  The e-book is available later today: https://www.springer.com/gp/book/9783030202187 |

Binary voting is divisive. England is now more divided than ever. If the 2016 ballot had been multi-optional, it is probably fair to say that Jo Cox would still be alive.

On a year-long lecture tour, the author travelled, mainly by bike, boat, bus and train, via Iran to China, and back on the Trans-Siberian. Alas, it seems, from Belfast to Beijing, many politicians believe in majority voting. It is well over 2,000 years old. In AD 105 in Rome, it was found to be inadequate if and when there are more than two options ‘on the table’. So preferential points voting was advocated: in 1199 by Ramón Llull; 1435 by Nicholas Cusanus; 1774 by Jean-Charles de Borda; 1870 by Charles Dodgson (Lewis Carroll); and 1986 by the author.

With advances in computers, and given the rise of populism in so many countries, the current adversarial nature of politics, in which most disputes are reduced to a binary choice, could and should be replaced by a more inclusive polity based on preferential voting. In each dispute, it would then be possible to identify the option which has the highest *average* preference… so the word ‘majority’ could fade from the political lexicon, as consensus became the norm.

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