

BANQUE PT
EPREUVE DE LANGUE VIVANTE A -SYNTHESE DE DOCUMENTS (3 heures sans dictionnaire)

En vous appuyant *uniquement* sur les documents du dossier thématique qui vous est proposé, vous rédigerez une synthèse répondant à la question suivante :

Is the rise of direct democracy good news for modern societies ?

Votre synthèse comportera entre 450 et 500 mots et sera précédée d'un titre. Le nombre de mots devra être indiqué à la fin de votre copie.

Liste des documents :

- **document 1** – un éditorial du Washington Post, "Direct democracy is thriving, democracy doomsday prophets are missing this critical shift", publié le 8 mai 2018,
- **document 2** – un éditorial de The Economist, "Let the people fail to decide", publié le 9 mai 2016,
- **document 3** – un article de medium.com, "Artifacts of Democracy: How the Government Worked in Ancient Athens", publié le 28 octobre 2015,
- **document 4** – une photo publiée dans The Guardian le 21 octobre 2018
- **document 5** – un document statistique du Pew Research Center daté du 16 octobre 2017

Document1

Direct democracy is thriving, democracy doomsday prophets are missing this critical shift

By **Bruno Kaufmann** and **Joe Mathews** , *The Washington Post*, May 8, 2018

STOCKHOLM — The new conventional wisdom seems to be that electoral democracy is in decline. But this ignores another widespread trend: direct democracy at the local and regional level is booming, even as disillusion with representative government at the national level grows.

Today, 113 of the world's 117 democratic countries offer their citizens legally or constitutionally established rights to bring forward a citizens' initiative, referendum or both. And since 1980, roughly 80 percent of countries worldwide have had at least one nationwide referendum or popular vote on a legislative or constitutional issue.(...)

That is just at the national level. Other major democracies — Germany, the United States and India — do not permit popular votes on substantive issues nationally but support robust direct democracy at the local and regional levels. The number of local votes on issues has so far defied all attempts to count them — they run into the tens of thousands.

This robust democratization, at least when it comes to direct legislation, provides a context that's generally missing when **doomsday** prophets suggest that democracy is dying by pointing to authoritarian-leaning leaders like Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Russian President Vladimir Putin, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte and U.S. President Donald Trump.

Indeed, the two trends — the rise of populist authoritarianism in some nations and the rise of local and direct democracy in some areas — are related. Frustration is growing with democratic systems at national levels, and yes, some people become more attracted to populism. But some of that frustration is channeled into positive energy — into making local democracy more democratic and direct.

Cities from Seoul to San Francisco are hungry for new and innovative tools that bring citizens into processes of deliberation that allow the people themselves to make decisions and feel invested in government actions. We've seen local governments embrace participatory budgeting, participatory planning, citizens' juries and a host of experimental digital tools in service of that desired mix of greater public deliberation and more direct public action.

There is a back-to-the-future quality to this trend. In ancient times, democracy simply meant an assembly where citizens could discuss and decide public issues. Today, that sort of direct deliberation is only one piece of democracy, a term that stands for a much more comprehensive set of principles and procedural rules, including human rights and the rule of law.

Indeed, direct democracy, along with the right to vote for representatives, is itself a human right. According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, everyone has the right "to take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives."

Confusion about the meaning of democracy and direct democracy is one reason for the myth that democracy is in decline globally. When we say direct democracy, we are actually talking about two different families of democratic votes.

The first is the citizen-initiated forum, in which people propose new laws or popular referendums intended to stop (or amend) legal decisions taken by elected officials. To do so, citizens gather support from a certain number of citizens to trigger a vote.

The other form of direct democracy involves government-initiated, or top-down, votes on issues. These can include mandatory referendums based on a change of legal provision or other kind of decision — on a bond issue, a treaty or even territorial status or independence.

There can also be government-initiated popular votes voluntarily put forward by elected or non-elected rulers. Such referendums are called plebiscites and can be highly problematic, like in Venezuela when they are manipulated to consolidate the rule of a government with waning legitimacy. The systems surrounding initiatives and referendums are often much newer than our representative systems and are not particularly well-developed in many countries. (...)

There seems little doubt that direct democracy will become a more dominant feature of self-government, which complements representative democracy but also compensates for its waning legitimacy in our age of the distributed power of social networks.

The key challenge ahead will be to design new practices and institutions to ensure that this form of governance is properly mediated so that it enhances the public good, is not captured by organized special interests or does not merely express the prejudices or immediate wash of voters' emotions.

Bruno Kaufmann and Joe Mathews are co-presidents of the Global Forum on Modern Direct Democracy.

Document2

Let the people fail to decide, *The Economist*, May 19th 2016

Putting big political issues directly to the voters is not more democratic, and usually gets worse results

REFERENDUMS are supposed to get citizens engaged in politics and make governments responsive. If they worked, Europeans ought to be feeling particularly satisfied with their democracies. For referendums are on the rise. Not counting Switzerland, which has always run lots of them, big plebiscites are three times more common in Europe now than they were in the 1970s. Britain is preparing one on withdrawing from the European Union. Dutch campaigners have just won a referendum against the EU-Ukraine association agreement, and plan to take on EU trade treaties with Canada and America. Italians are to vote on changing their constitution, and Hungarians on the EU's refugee-sharing scheme.

Despite this direct democracy, Europeans are alienated from politics and furious with their governments. Referendum-mania has not slowed the rise of populist, Eurosceptic parties which attack the establishment as corrupt and out of touch. Plebiscites meant to settle thorny issues instead often aggravate them: after Scotland's independence referendum failed in 2014, membership of the Scottish National Party quadrupled, suggesting another confrontation is coming.

Referendums, it turns out, are a tricky instrument. They can bring the alienated back into politics, especially where the issues being voted on are local and clear. On rare occasions they can settle once-in-a-generation national questions, such as whether a country should be part of a larger union. But, much of the time, plebiscites lead to bad politics and bad policy.

The most problematic are those on propositions that voters do not understand or subjects which are beyond governments' control. In 2015 Alexis Tsipras, prime minister of Greece, called a referendum on the bail-out offered by his country's creditors. His citizens—many of whom did not realise that refusal meant **default**—voted no. Mr Tsipras had to take the deal anyway, exacerbating the public's cynicism about politics.

Plebiscites that ask a country's voters what they think of a policy set by other countries often disappoint. The Dutch rejected the EU-Ukraine agreement, but may be stuck with much of it unless the EU's other 27 members agree to changes. Switzerland does domestic referendums well, but is in hot water over one that restricts immigration from the EU. That requires changes to its trade deal with the EU; Brussels will not budge.

Because referendums treat each issue in isolation, they allow voters to ignore the trade-offs inherent in policy choices and can thus render government incoherent. California, which has had referendums for a century, has been crippled by voters' simultaneous demands for high spending and low taxes. A second danger is that fringe groups or vested interests use referendums to exercise outside influence, particularly if few signatures are needed to call one and voter turnout is low.

These dangers can be mitigated. Requiring minimum turnouts can guard against the tyranny of the few. (Italy's 50% threshold is about right.) But the bigger point is that plebiscites are a worse form of democracy than representative government. James Madison was right when he wrote that democracies in which citizens voted directly on laws would be torn apart by factions. The founders of democratic states created parliaments for a reason.

Today's fashion for plebiscites has similarities to the optimism of the early internet age, when everyone thought that more communication meant better democracy. Social-media echo chambers and armies of trolls hired by repressive governments have cured that illusion. More scepticism is warranted about referendums, too. Fewer would be better.

Document3

Artifacts of Democracy: How the Government Worked in Ancient Athens,

By Federico Ast, medium.com, Oct 28, 2015

“Software is eating the world”, says Marc Andreessen. It is also eating politics. Digital disintermediation affects representative democracy, where the representants are in the position of intermediaries. Thanks to the Internet, there is no technical obstacle for citizens to discuss and vote on every subject.

But then come the critics of direct democracy: *“Citizen aren’t knowledgeable to decide on complex issues”*, they say. *“The ignorant majority can be manipulated by populist leaders”*. Such arguments are usually made in the abstract without a clear understanding of how direct democracies really work. The best way to do it is be going where it all started, Ancient Athens. Let’s study Athenian democracy as archaeologists, by analyzing their artifacts. The truth is that, since Cleisthenes democratic reforms in the 6th century B.C., the *polis* had quite sophisticated information technologies for managing its political institutions.(...)

In defense of representative democracy, it is commonly argued that representatives have greater knowledge of the issues at stake, which favors decision making. The Athenians, however, had another answer.

The *polis* had two legislative bodies: the Council of 500 (*boule*) and the Assembly (*ekklesia*). The Council was composed of 500 members elected by lot for one year. It was in charge of daily government management and preparing the agenda for discussion at the Assembly where all citizens participated and met every ten days.

The geometry of the ekklesiasterion, where the Assembly met, was optimized for each participant to see everyone else. Citizens decided their vote by the reactions they saw in their trusted experts. It was a reputation system. Nobody knew everything on finance, foreign policy and construction. But they all knew who were the experts in each subject.

Plato (*Protagoras* 319b–c) claims that when the subject before the citizen Assembly was shipbuilding, the “wise Athenians” refused to listen to anyone lacking expertise in naval architecture. Thus, the Assembly took decisions on complex issues without representatives.(...)

Ostracism was a key reform by Cleisthenes. It was designed to avoid the risk of rising tyrants. Every year, the Assembly decided whether an ostracism vote needed to be held. If the majority of a quorum of 6,000 citizens voted yes, an ostracism vote was carried out with a very specific procedure.

An area with 10 doors was enclosed, one for each of the Greek tribes. Citizens came in with an *ostraka* (a piece of pottery) where they had previously recorded the name of the citizen they thought was more dangerous to the state. Officials collected the ostraka at the door and kept the citizens in the enclosed area until they had all voted. The citizen who had more votes was sent into exile for 10 years.

Ostracism was a safeguard against tyranny. It was used to cut the political career of rising populist leaders.

Document 4

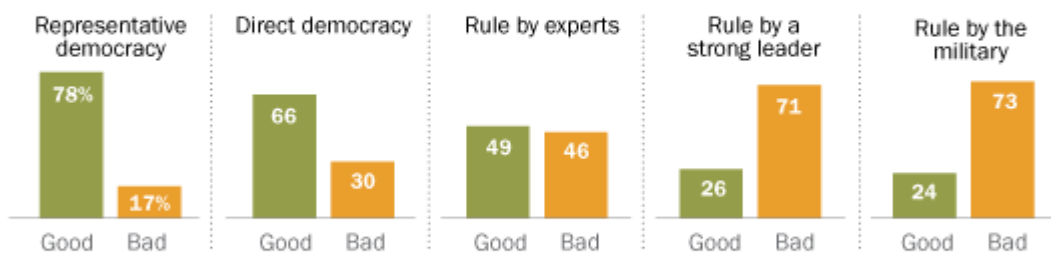


People's Vote march: '700,000' rally for new Brexit referendum, *The Guardian*, 21 October 2018

Document 5

Widespread support for democratic systems of government, but many open to nondemocratic alternatives

Would ___ be a good or bad way of governing our country?



Notes: Percentages are global medians based on 38 countries.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Pew Research Center, 16 October 2017