The Government of Chance

Electoral democracies are struggling. Sintomer, in this instructive book, argues for democratic innovations. One such innovation is using random selection to create citizen bodies with advisory or decisional political power. ‘Sortition’ has a long political history. Coupled with elections, it has represented an important yet often neglected dimension of Republican and democratic government, and has been reintroduced in the Global North, China and Mexico. The Government of Chance explores why sortation is returning, how it is coupled with deliberation, and why randomly selected ‘minipublics’ and citizens’ assemblies are flourishing. Relying on a growing international and interdisciplinary literature, Sintomer provides the first systematic and theoretical reconstruction of the government of chance from Athens to the present. At what conditions can it be rational? What lessons can be drawn from history? The Government of Chance therefore clarifies the democratic imaginaries at stake: deliberative, antipolitical, and radical, making a plaidoyer for the latter.

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The Government of Chance

Sortition and Democracy from Athens to the Present

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Translated from French by Sarah Louise Raillard with help from Patrick Camiller
For Alba, her ability to dream and to seize the occasion
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