REVIEW OF *INFOMOCRACY*

In this book's world, national governments have been replaced by a system of global "micro-democracy" where every group of 100,000 people (a "centenal") chooses their own government in a decennial election. Notably, the voters vote for a *government*, not for individuals to hold particular offices. Therefore many of the governments are large organizations vying to win elections in as many centenals as they can. This makes them a bit like transnational corporations—in fact the novel implies that many transnational corporations simply became governments when this system was instituted, and they seem to be among the most powerful/widespread governments.

I expected this to be a 'thought experiment' sort of novel, where the story is secondary and the focus is on how the system would (or wouldn't) work. The plot and characters are OK but not memorable. But the system isn't really explored to a satisfying depth, either. I enjoyed the book but I don't think it lives up to its full potential.

One interesting idea that comes up—and gets a clever name—is that governments would allow more immigration as elections neared:

> Opening the borders (such borders as remained, anyway) allowed the new governments to pull in more like-minded people, consolidating their holds on their centenals for the next election and stretching into neighboring ones as populations surged. Some journalist two decades ago dubbed the process **mandergerrying**, although it is also known as reverse osmosis, because it results in greater concentrations of like-minded—and, on occasion, racially or ethnically alike—constituents. [p. 40, emphasis added]

I read this for a book club, and we talked about one possible implication of the system which I find really appealing: it could reduce the temptation to use nuclear weapons. If your own territory and your enemies' territory is all interspersed all over the globe, you can't attack them without attacking yourself. Of course, this assumes that all the major governments are able to win a decent number of elections in far-flung areas, rather than each being concentrated in a particular region. I would guess the system would need to have several decades or even centuries of stability before such global political homogeneity would come to pass.