



OMNIBUS for Direct Democracy in Germany

For the past twenty-two years, the OMNIBUS has been working to bring Direct Democracy to the people. Based on the work of the German artist Joseph Beuys, the OMNIBUS speaks to the common citizen and empowers them to effect political change. Essentially, it is a double-decker mobile school of popular sovereignty. The OMNIBUS travels to more than one hundred German towns a year. Working in market-places, pedestrian zones, schools and universities, its staff opens forums for free discussion on issues that shape society. The OMNIBUS gives a voice to the people.

Democracy & the Concept of Extended Art

Beuys defines his visionary idea of a peoples' co-action on a foundation of freedom and self-determination as a "social sculpture". Every person becomes a responsible designer of the entire form, a shaper of a future social order.

In 1971, he founded the "Organization for Direct Democracy through Referendum". During the hundred days of "Documenta 5", he discussed his vision of Extended Art and the necessity for direct democracy as a basis for a successful implementation of "social sculpture".

OMNIBUS = (lat.) for all, by all, with all

www.omnibus.org www.democracy-in-motion.eu

Michael von der Lohe

Artist, born in 1953, working with the OMNIBUS since 1999, since 2004 Executive Director of OMNIBUS GmbH (limited company operating as a public utility)



Stops along the Road to Direct Democracy

The OMNIBUS FOR DIRECT DEMOCRACY IN GERMANY is a citizens' initiative dedicated to the introduction of popular referendums at all levels of government.

The most important inspiration for our work is the artist Joseph Beuys, who founded the "Organization for Direct Democracy through Referendum" in 1971 with an office in Düsseldorf. In 1972, he set up the office at "Documenta 5" in Kassel, and discussed his "expanded concept of art" and "direct democracy" with visitors for 100 days.

1987



One and a half years after the death of Joseph Beuys, the first OMNIBUS FOR DIRECT DEMOCRACY IN GERMANY begins at "documenta 8" (1987). It stays on the road for seven years (737 stops).

1988 - 1990



On 24 February 1988 we attempt to cross the border into East Berlin (Action West /East), but are stopped. Only after the fall of the regime in 1990 are we able to travel to East Germany and support the New Forum and the "Round Tables".

1987 - 1992



We promote the introduction of local and state referendums in seven German states. Today, this is regulated by law in all states. Hundreds of local referendums take place every year. In this way, direct democracy is growing from the grassroots.

1987 - 1992



On 17 June 1992, the old West German national holiday, we fill a column outside the Bundestag in Bonn with 1,074,239 signatures in favour of referendums at the federal level. The occasion was the promise in the preamble of the West German constitution that after reunification, a constitution would be drafted by the entire people.

1993 - 1995



In 1993 we co-initiate the referendum "More Democracy in Bavaria". In just 14 days, 1,196,000 citizens sign to put it to a vote! The 1995 referendum is successful. The people themselves introduce a practicable mode for carrying out referendums in municipalities and cities.

1996 - 2000



We support the popular initiative "Freedom for Schools" (Schule in Freiheit) in Schleswig-Holstein and the referendum for independent judges in Bavaria. In Munich, we initiate the referendum on citizens' participation and transparency in municipal finances.

2001



In April 2001, the blue OMNIBUS parks at Freudenberg Castle, one stop on the tour "Field of Experience for the Senses and Mind" (Erfahrungsfeld der Sinne und des Denkens). The OMNIBUS serves as a depository for 1,074,239 signatures in favour of federal referendums. Seven bee colonies live in the bus and produce honey.

2000



In October 2000, the second OMNIBUS embarks on its journey, and helps the referendum "More Democracy in Thuringia" to victory. A total of 363,123 citizens (18.3 % of the electorate) demand the lowering of the barriers to state-wide referendums.

2001



On 3 May 2001, the white OMNIBUS is visible in the sky over Berlin! With this action, the OMNIBUS, together with the organization "More Democracy" (Mehr Demokratie e.V.) begins collecting signatures for a referendum to establish federal referendums (Referendum on the Referendum).

Since 2001



... the OMNIBUS has been on the road continuously from early March to late November throughout Germany. We visit more than 100 towns annually. Wherever the OMNIBUS stops it opens up a space to discuss the idea it embodies.

2002



In the summer of 2002, our experience with the 17-year-old Jana Li Frank leads us to the idea of offering internships for school pupils in the OMNIBUS. Since then, more than 20 pupils have taken advantage of this opportunity, greatly enriching our work in the process.

2003



On 13 March 2003, in a public action outside the Bundestag together with "Mehr Demokratie e.V.", we present the representatives of all political parties and the vice president of the Bundestag with 100,000 signatures (according to our parliamentary bill, this would be the referendum).

2002 - 2004



In June 2004, the citizens of the city-state of Hamburg vote by referendum to provide themselves with the most modern electoral law of all of Germany's federal states! For the first time, the voters decide how elections are to be conducted! The OMNIBUS is a co-initiator of this referendum and participates actively in Hamburg at all stages of the process.

2006



In October 2006, the federal city-state of Bremen is so successful with their popular initiative for electoral reform on the Hamburg model that the political parties adopt the initiative's proposed parliamentary bill without a referendum.

2009



In April 2006 we started the "Referendum Action", which gives everyone the opportunity to become active immediately on behalf of legislation providing for Volksabstimmung on the federal level. Some 170,000 action cards are already in circulation. Summit will be the election of the Bundestag in fall 2009.

...etc.

