



Prof. Hans Geser
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Universität Zürich
Soziologisches Institut



Gemeinde und Verwaltung

Comparing Political Executives Recruited by Proportional and Majoritarian Rules of Election Evidence from Swiss Communities

Hans Geser
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Abstract

On the basis of survey data including about 50% of all members of Swiss municipal executives, it is found that election rules (proportional vs. majoritarian) have manifold impacts on the communal party systems and executive recruitment processes as well as the behavioral dispositions of the incumbents, the activities of the board as well as its position in the community and its political outputs. In particular, it is found that proportional rules go along with more diversified party systems and higher party involvement in recruitment and campaigning, broader representation and larger size of board as well as higher levels of voting turnout, while majoritarian elections are associated with higher qualifications, job commitment and political efficacy of elected incumbents and with more cohesive and politically active boards. As a general trend, many of these regularities are more pronounced in smaller than in middle-sized or larger municipalities: reflecting the basic “consociational” character of Swiss political culture which favors strong parties and multiparty decision making irrespective of electoral rules.

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1. Introduction

A growing number of research studies has shown that electoral systems have important effects on the structures and functioning of political systems: e. g, on the level of political participation (Ladner 1996; Blais (2000)), the number of political parties (Duverger 1954; Rae 1967; Lijphart 1990; Morelli 2004), the recruitment and behavior of individual representatives (e. g. Gagliarducci et. al. 2011; Persson & Tabellini 2004a) as well as on the size and scope of government (Aghion et. al. 2004; Persson & Tabellini 2000; 2004a; 2007), the decision making processes and outcomes of various policies (Miles-Ferretti et. al. 2002; Frederiksson & Millimet 2003; Persson, Roland & Tabellini 2004a; Morelli 2004; Funk & Gathmann 2007; 2008)

On a general level, it usually is assumed that proportional rules favor an equilibrated participation of all significant political groupings at governmental power and responsibility, while majoritarian systems are more effective for creating clear-cut political accountabilities and for increasing the efficiency of such bodies for generating policies and reaching political decisions.

“...there is an inherent conflict between two goals. The ideals of democracy and equality require as proportional representation as possible, while efficient government often requires less proportional representation” (Laakso & Taagepera 1981).

Persson & Tabellini have emphasized that electoral systems are multidimensional constructs comprehending at least three analytically distinct components:

- *electoral formulas*: whether rules of proportionality of majority apply for translating votes into seats;
- *ballot structures* (whether voters cast list votes or votes for individual candidates – or a mix between the two systems as for instance in Germany);
- *district magnitudes* (single seat vs. multiple seat districts; or a mixture of the two systems (Persson & Tabellini 2004a: 78/79).

Up to the present, most scientific endeavors to identify the impact of such features on various political processes, structures and outcomes have focused almost exclusively on comparisons between nations. As a consequence, studies have being constrained by the low absolute number and extreme heterogeneity of cases as well as by the outstanding historical inertia (“path dependency”) of most electoral systems.

Given the manifold differences between nations in historical, legal-institutional, cultural and socioeconomic aspects on the one hand and the small potential for multivariate analysis on the other, it seems hopeless to isolate the causal contribution of the electoral system from all competing factors.

“The observed cross-country variation in constitutions is strongly correlated with stable country characteristics: for example, presidential regimes are concentrated in Latin America, former British colonies tend to have UK-style electoral rules (plurality rule in single-member constituencies), and continental Europe is predominantly ruled by parliamentary systems with proportional representation elections. These constitutional patterns make it difficult to draw causal inferences from the data. Constitutional inertia means that experiments with constitutional reforms are very seldom observed, and cross-

country estimates risk confounding constitutional effects with other country characteristics.” (Persson & Tabellini 2004a: 77).

A *second* handicap of international studies results from the fact that the aforementioned analytical dimensions of electoral systems are in fact highly intercorrelated: especially insofar as most majoritarian systems are associated with single member districts and most proportional systems with closed party lists. (Persson & Tabellini 2004a). Thus, most results concerning the impact on policy outcomes (e. g. Miles-Ferretti et. al. 2002; Persson & Tabellini 2000; 2003; 2004a; 2004b; Morelli 2004; Gagliarducci et. al. 2011) are based on a tight collinearity of these two variables, so that their separate effects cannot be disentangled.

Evidently, only under conditions of geographically segmented districts can majoritarian rules be expected to give rise to representatives with highly particularistic policy outlooks: promoting the interests of their local or regional constituency more than goals of general welfare (Miles-Ferretti et. al. 2002; Persson & Tabellini 1999; 2000).

Thirdly, focusing on nations usually means to narrow the perspective on *legislative bodies* exclusively, because recruitment on the executive level is usually made by appointment rather than by election. A notable exception however are studies comparing parliamentary and presidential executive systems, because while the former are often governed by proportional rules that give rise to coalitions, in the latter case, strict majoritarian election rules evidently apply. Thus, Fumagalli & Narciso have found that presidential systems tend to result in lower election turnout (Fumagalli & Narciso 2011); and Persson & Tabellini (2003; 2004a) have shown that presidential regimes resulted in less public good spending than parliamentary regimes.

A major flaw of pure legislative studies is that they can only focus on the recruitment procedures, attitudes and behavior of single representatives (e. g. their support for various policies), while the macroscopic features of the whole legislative body may only be indirectly affected: either by the sum total of individual decisions or by the party systems and governmental coalitions resulting from the electoral rules. In particular, the hypotheses related to political accountability cannot easily be targeted, because regardless of the way they elected, individual members have a small influence on collective parliamentary decisions or on the formation of executive regimes.

Thus, we would like to see studies *comparing executive bodies constituted by majoritarian and proportional rules* – and preferentially most similar in all other respects: e. g. their size, authority and institutional embedment. Even more, we would like to have large samples of political units, so that crucial third variables (e. g. population size, party constellations or personal characteristics of incumbents) can be easily controlled.

Focusing on *Swiss communities* as a field of comparative studies seems most promising because most of the aforementioned problems can be overcome (or at least considerably reduced).

2. Swiss communities as a field of comparative studies

2.1 Institutional, legal and political characteristics

In 2008, Switzerland was segmented in 2768 municipalities ranging from 22 (!) to 363'273 inhabitants (median: 870), distributed among 26 Cantons encompassing three linguistic regions (German, French and Italian). Each of these units was endowed with an executive board comprising between 3 and 17 members: thus amounting to a total of about 15500 seats.

Apart from a tiny fraction of about 3% (mostly located in larger cities), all incumbents fulfill their duties as a secondary job that provides an additional small income not sufficient to give up their primary employment. As a consequence, competition may be moderate and recruitment will focus on candidates with predominantly intrinsic motivations.

Like in all countries, community research in Switzerland means to study highly dependent local subunits mainly occupied with just executing supralocal policies on the basis of detailed rules. But in contrast to most other nations, Swiss municipalities have at least retained some crucial areas of autonomous political action: e. g., in the fiscal field where they can decide on the level of income tax rates and a large variety of public fees, in the field of land use planning which gives them tools for determining their own course of demographic and economic development, and of course in the wide field of "facultative" tasks ranging from child daycare facilities and swimming halls to public libraries and cultural events. These genuinely "political" fields of municipal activities have motivated the major political parties to generate a dense network of local party sections (mostly founded since the 1970ies) in order to connect community politics to party politics on the Cantonal and National level: thus facilitating the influx of supralocal ideological thinking and interparty polarization (Ladner 1999).

In a sense, Switzerland illustrates most an ideal type of "consociational democracy" where all major political groupings are not only represented on the legislative level, but do also participate in executive decisions. On the federal, cantonal and municipal level, we thus find multi-party executives in which decisions are negotiated and agreed upon in a strict collegial manner: the president acting as a "primus inter pares" without any superior formal power.

In an international perspective, such arrangements are quite extraordinary on supralocal levels, as Switzerland is almost the only country of the world ruled by a "collective presidency": without a single person empowered to exercise leadership and to represent the country authoritatively in international affairs. On the municipal level, however, such power sharing is much more widespread in many countries, because parties are often less developed and less eager to control offices on the communal level, because community affairs are mostly considered to be of a technical or administrative nature; and because there is a tendency for avoiding conflicts and maintaining consensus: so that community politics is generally less subject to ideological polarization (e. g. Vidich & Bensman 1968; Holler 1981; Dahl & Tufte 1973; Black 1974; Denters 1997; Geser 2003; Geser & Meuli 2012).

Given this high preference for proportional representation even on the highest levels of political leadership, it would seem logical that the election of the executives would be subjected to the same proportional rule as they are applied to legislative election, so that its composition truly mirrors the relative strength of political forces. However, we see that in many cases, elections nevertheless take place on a majoritarian basis. As a widespread rule, a first run

takes place for electing the candidates who receive an absolute majority (=more than 50%) of casted votes, and a second run is following for filling the still vacant seats with those who reach just a “relative majority” (=more votes than their competitors).

Evidently, the impact of proportional rules on the executive level is heavily reduced by the small size of the bodies (ranging mostly between three and nine members), so that smaller minorities groupings have no formal chances to win a seat. (In fact, such smaller parties may sometimes have better chances under plurality conditions: by promoting candidates with a wider, transpartisan public appeal.) In addition, the contrast between the two electoral systems is attenuated by the fact that even majoritarian elections are usually constrained by informal rules of “voluntary proportionality” (“freiwilliger Proporz”) manifested in the practice that the dominant parties compete only for a limited number of seats (even if they had a chance to win them all): leaving the remaining mandates to the other parties in order to prevent the establishment of a full-fledged “political opposition” (Ladner 1996).

In communities of smaller or medium size, it is often the lack of candidates which hinders parties to compete for all available (or even: potentially accessible) seats. However, the smaller groupings are nevertheless set under informal pressure to nominate candidate which are “acceptable” to the larger political parties (Ladner 1996).

Even by considering these two qualifications, however, it can be expected that formal electoral rules governing the recruitment of executives are highly consequential for various aspects of municipal political systems. While majoritarian rules may be expected to give rise to *individualized competition* among candidates hopeful to mobilize a broad support across the population, proportional rules may hypothetically be associated with a higher emphasis on pluralistic representation and on *competition between political parties*.

2.2 Data and Methodology

The data analyzed in the following sections stem from various mailed out surveys conducted at the Zurich Institute of Sociology.

1) In spring 1994 and spring 2005, two nationwide mailed-out surveys were conducted that included all Swiss communities in all three linguistic regions. A comprehensive questionnaire was sent to the chief officials (“Gemeindeschreiber”) of each political unit: inviting them to deliver detailed information about the current political processes, administrative organization and policy challenges of their municipality, as well as about its horizontal relationships to other communities and its vertical relationship to the Cantonal and Federal level. While most questions were kept identical in the two waves, others were specifically adapted to different political and administrative spheres. In both waves, the return rates were and outstandingly high: in 1994 69.9% (=2019 units); in 2005, 74.0% (2147).

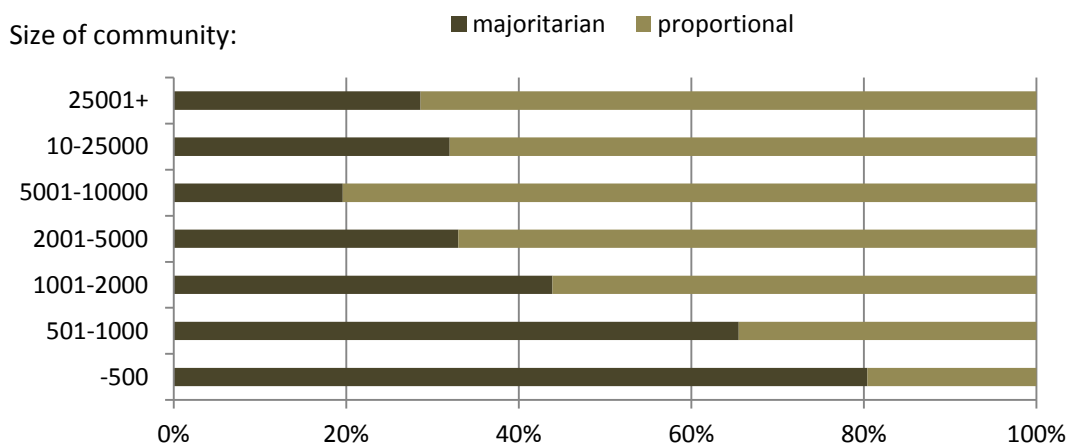
As a basic result, it was found that all communities were governed by an executive board ranging from 3 to 17 members. In the vast majority of cases, these executives were formally charged with comprehensive authority in all policy fields; in several communities, however, they had to share their power with school boards or other more specialized executive bodies.

2) Between September 2008 and March 2009, a nationwide mail survey including all (about 15'500) members of the executive boards in Swiss municipalities was conducted. The return rate (8111, about 52%) was again much higher than originally envisaged: providing a data file

outstanding internationally by its large size and its rich potentials for multivariate statistical analysis. As expected, most of the respondents declared to fulfill their mandates on an honorary or side job basis, while only 211 (109 presidents and 102 ordinary members) were fully employed. The questionnaire tapped many different areas concerning the political background and career patterns of the incumbents, as well as their qualifications, motivations, political opinions and relationship to political parties. It turned out that more than 90% of the respondents were either nonpartisans (40%) or members of one of the four major nationwide parties: the Liberal Party ("Freisinnig-demokratische Partei" FDP), the Christian Democratic Party ("Christlich-Demokratische Partei" CVP), the Swiss People's Party ("Schweizerische Volkspartei" SVP) or the Social Democratic Party ("Sozialdemokratische Partei" SPS).

While most Cantons (17 out of 26) demand majoritarian elections, seven others leave the choice to the communities, and only two (Zug and Ticino) obligate all their municipalities to follow proportional rules. Overall, the ratio of majoritarian communities is about 70%. Evidently, proportional election systems presuppose an established system of actively competing political parties able and motivated to nominate candidates for executive seats. In the case of smaller Swiss communities, such preconditions are often not fully met: either no (or only unstable or inactive) political groupings are available, or they lack members willing to run for such highly demanding and lowly paid municipal offices. By contrast, majoritarian elections are much less demanding, as they can even be enacted in completely nonpartisan environments where the running candidates only represent themselves, and under conditions where active parties are not necessary because no (or only very minor) campaigning takes place. This may explain why smaller Swiss communities are more prone to maintain majoritarian systems when they are free to choose (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Frequency of majoritarian and proportional election rules for the municipal executive body: 977 Swiss communities in seven Cantons where choice is free (2005).



It is important to emphasize that in contrast to the Cantonal and Federal level, the presidency of a community does not rotate yearly among all the executive members, but is kept permanently by an incumbent who is separately elected by majoritarian rules. Thus, he is exempt from the rules of proportionality that may regulate the election of all other members. As a consequence, only the (6481) nonpresidential members will be included in the analysis.

3. Theoretical concomitants and consequences of majoritarian and proportional executive elections

3.1 Partisan and nonpartisan members

Given that proportional systems usually presuppose party lists (which in turn imply the existence of – either communal or supracommunal - political parties), we expect that they are associated with lower shares of nonpartisan members.

In larger communities, election rules may be pointless in this respect, because all major political groupings are formally organized anyway. In smaller municipalities, however, we may well observe that political parties may be inexistent when majoritarian rules apply – or the other way round: that majoritarian rules have been established in order to make political elections easily possible under totally nonpartisan conditions.

3.2 Number of organized political parties

A large body of literature in political science has shown that proportional systems lead to a more fragmented party structure, because even minor groupings get the chances for participating in formal power (for example, Duverger, 1954; Rae 1967; Lijphart, 1990; Persson & Roland & Tabellini 2006). On the executive level, however, only parties with more than 10-15 percent of votes are usually able to win one of the few seats. Nevertheless, Ladner has found in the case of Swiss communities, minor parties (not represented in the Federal Government) have somewhat higher chances to win executive seats when proportionality applies, so that the total manifold of parties represented is increased (Ladner 1996: 16).

3.3 Size of the executive body

As the proportional system indicates a political culture which sees executives primarily as representative bodies, it is to be expected that its size is enlarged in order to provide seats for all major political groupings.

Majoritarian systems instead may be installed when executives are predominantly conceived as leadership bodies endowed with highly qualified members. As a consequence, the number of seats may be kept small in order to ensure an efficient functioning and to increase the likelihood that all positions can be filled with sufficiently competent incumbents.

However, such divergences may be reduced by the aforementioned culture of “voluntary proportionalism” pervading also communities with majoritarian rules.

3.4 Candidate recruitment and campaign support

Under proportional rules, political parties will be the main source of campaign support, because “winning the elections” is equivalent with maximizing the party’s power share in the community. In majoritarian communities, by contrast, it will be more up to the individual candidates to mobilize support from a manifold of different sources (Ware 1996: 290f.).

Specifically, this implies that the selection of candidates is less guided by political parties, but by more informal processes: either dominated by the nominees themselves who bring themselves into play by their own initiative, or by dominant elite circles instrumentalizing the communal executive for their own purposes, or by self-cooption of the reigning executive

body. In addition, the weakness or absence of political parties may give nonpolitical organizations a welcome chance to influence election outcomes by allocating influential means of support: particularly in larger communities and cities where expensive propaganda and media coverage is crucial. In smaller municipalities, it is more likely that the “power vacuum” is filled by highly informal actors: e- g. family and friends.

However, such divergences may be attenuated in larger communities, insofar as

- parties also are committed to deliver support in majoritarian elections, because their representation in the executive depends directly on the success of the specific candidate running in their name;
- proportional elections also tend to engender individual competition, insofar as candidates have to prevail against other candidates of the same party.

In addition, the rules of consociational decision making imply that irrespective of election rules, the decisions of executive bodies can often not be attributed clearly to specific individuals nor to specific political parties – thus making it difficult to base voting decisions on their factual performance. As a consequence, individuals as well as parties are not under heavy pressure to adapt their profiles pragmatically in order to maximize voting turnout on their behalf.

"Where the governing responsibility is shared or obscure, parties can govern and also retain a doctrine which has little relevance to the governing experience." (Schlesinger 1968: 430).

3.5 Intensity of Competition

There are two blatantly contradicting hypothesis on how communal election rules relate to the degree of electoral competition.

On the one hand, there are strong arguments for expecting *more* competition under majoritarian conditions. Under proportional election rules, it is likely that parties retain their shares of seat continuously in accordance with the stability of their support in the community, which is highly conditioned by the overall support of the party as a supralocal organization, and much less dependent on the specific candidates they nominate for municipal elections. While their success in municipal elections will certainly depend on the quality of their specific candidates, they may well see this as a secondary criterium: thus feeling free to select them among a wide spectrum of potential nominees, without giving too much weight to their status characteristics, motivations or qualifications.

Insofar as the voting shares of parties are seen to be rather stable, there may be an incentive to diminish competition: or even to turn to a cartelized strategy where campaigns are only fought “symbolically” in order to reinstate and prolong rather traditional seat allocations.

Under majoritarian rules, by contrast, it will depend much more on the specific candidates whether and to what degree a party is represented in the executive body. Therefore, parties are under high pressure to select candidates with optimal characteristics, and to rely particularly on nominees who have the potential to appeal to broad voter segments beyond the members or adherents of the party: including politically rather inactive strata not associated with any political party. As the electoral success depends so much on personal characteristics, there are higher risks of losing old (and chances of winning new) seats in the executive body: thus motivating parties to engage in more intensive and more competitive campaign activities.

On the other hand, proportional rules may engender more extensive and heated competition because they engage the entire political parties with all the resources they are able to mobilize. By contrast, majoritarian elections may provoke little campaigning insofar as the candidates themselves have little resources and are not able to raise widespread support.

Such divergences may be most pronounced in larger communities where political parties are highly equipped with money, personnel and organizational capacity, while campaigns are so demanding and expensive that individual candidates are unlikely to be able (or willing) to invest the necessary means (Myerson, 1993). In accordance with this second argument, Ladner has found that 90% of proportional Swiss municipalities had competitive elections, but only 57% of those following majoritarian rules (Ladner 1996: 16).

This second strand of argumentation is additionally supported when the conditions and restrictions for multiple candidacies are considered.

Under majoritarian elections, it is mostly up to the individual candidates to fight the campaign – so that they will engage only when they calculate real chances to win a seat. Therefore, the number of running candidates will be rather small.

Under proportional rules, however, such restrictions are less pronounced because the main campaign load falls to the parties: so that each of them may easily find several willing candidates – similar to the legislative elections where the number of names on the lists may easily be ten times longer than the number of available seats. In fact, parties may maximize their chances when they propose several candidates: because at least one or two of them may catch the necessary support from the voters. Of course, the mere perspective of winning a seat with a minority of votes will encourage a larger variety of groups to participate on the elections: thus increasing the number and variety of running candidates (Ladner 1996: 16).

3.6 Level of public political participation

As proportional elections are associated with a larger activity and influence of organized political groupings, they may succeed in activating the communal citizenship to a larger degree, so that election participation rates will be increased. This positive impact on electoral participation has been observed in several empirical studies (e. g. Blais 2000), among them the publication of Andreas Ladner based on the same sample of Swiss communities as included in this present study (Ladner 1996). In a similar vein, Powell found lower turnout rates in countries with a presidential regime and a majoritarian system and suggested this might be due to a weaker party system and less mobilizing voting laws (Powell 1982). In his analysis of 36 democracies, Lijphart found that electoral participation in presidential regimes was 12 percentage points smaller than average voter turnout in parliamentary democracies (Lijphart 1990). Using a larger data set comprising 85 free and semi-free countries, Fumagalli & Narciso showed similarly that presidential regimes are found to be associated with lower participation relative to parliamentary systems (Fumagalli & Narciso 2012).

Apart from the mobilization activities of political parties, electoral turnout may also rise because proportional election systems are associated with a larger number of political parties: so that any citizen is more likely to find a grouping he or she may be motivated to support. In the light of the literature that stresses the expressive functions of elections, voting turnout is expected to be higher in political systems with a wider range of parties available for personal commitment and identification (Brennan and Hamlin, 2000; Hamlin and Jennings, 2011). As Ladner has shown in his Swiss study, such effects are much more pronounced in smaller communities than in larger settings, because in the latter, large numbers of orga-

nized groups (and candidates) are available irrespective of the electoral system (Ladner 1996: 18).

Finally, proportional systems may encourage broad participation by simplifying voting decisions: because candidates can be more easily judged and compared when they present themselves as representatives of political parties (not as idiosyncratic individuals that have to be evaluated according to their particular merits).

In a general sense, proportional rules can be expected to increase the degree to which the executive enjoys broad legitimation, because – given the larger size of the body and the larger number of groups winning at least one seat – more citizens feel themselves sufficiently represented. As a consequence, we may see less citizen protest activities – or even less participation at town hall meetings and other channels of direct democracy: because more trust is given to the decisions taken by the representative executive body. On the formal level, we may well find that proportional executives enjoy higher power vis-à-vis the citizens, while majoritarian bodies exercise less authority and are subject to tighter plebiscitarian control. Overall, proportional systems are likely to promote a climate of stability and less conflict because it allows the co-option of all major groups into the formal power system and thus serves to accommodate various diverging interests.

„In the contemporary discussion the electoral system of proportional representation was widely viewed as a means to accommodate these diverging political interests and generate a more stable political environment.“ (Funk & Gathmann 2008: 10).

3.7 Qualifications, role commitment, work load and work compensation

In proportional systems, executives are seen as bodies designed for political representation: rather similar to parliaments where the adequate distribution of seats among parties is more important than the skills and motivations of individual members. In fact, such individual characteristics cannot be guaranteed because when a party wins a large share of votes, it may have to mobilize also second- or third-rate candidates in order to fill all the seats – while on the other hand, less successful parties may not be able to place even their most qualified nominees.

Majoritarian systems, by contrast, are (ideally) designed for selecting the most skilled and most committed candidates – irrespective of the groups to which they adhere. Thus, they will be mainly found in communities highly committed to the idea of possessing a highly effective and efficient leadership body: endowed with members who are expected to demonstrate high efforts and to deliver good results – and are therefore entitled to receive quite considerable pecuniary compensations.

Thus, we may hypothesize that under majoritarian conditions, executive incumbents bring along more experience and skills, invest more working time in their mandate and receive larger yearly remunerations. In addition, they may show a higher general commitment to their positions, e. g. by being more highly motivated to keep their mandate for long terms by rerunning in the coming elections.

3.8 Decision making criteria

In proportional systems, incumbents will see their political fate primarily tied to the voting turnout of their political party, and only indirectly connected to their personal behavior and

performance. Thus, they do well to please primarily their partisan constituency, instead of following broader concern of general welfare.

“Proportional systems, which give minorities a voice according to their relative size, produce less accountability of politicians. This result is driven by the fact that the success of a candidate depends on the share of votes for her party and less on her individual performance. The political fragmentation, which is typically associated with proportional systems, might also give rise to common-pool problems, where political groups do not internalize the full costs of government programs borne by the whole electorate.” (Funk & Gathmann 2007)

Under majoritarian conditions, instead, office holders will see their reelection chances more dependent of their capacity to appeal to broad (transpartisan and nonpartisan) voter strata, , so that they feel higher pressure to demonstrate good performances and build up an excellent personal reputation (Persson & Tabellini 2004a: 81).

By doing this, they well conclude that in order to maximize personal votes, they do wise to take distance to their party (particularly if it is declining in voters), to seek the support of other parties than their own or to cultivate a even a “suprapartisan” political identity and public reputation.

Thus, we expect that incumbents of majoritarian executives give little weight to party positions when they make their decisions, so that they are free to let themselves guide by other considerations: e. g. their own conscience, public opinion or the interests of nonpartisan groupings in their community.

To the degree that proportional elections promote the identification of candidates with their parties, it is to be expected that the ideological left-right polarization of the party system is mirrored in similarly drastic divergences among their representatives who exercise formal power. Under majoritarian rules, however, we expect incumbents to take more centrist positions, because they are under pressure to harvest votes from voters from very different political parties. Thus, executive bodies as a whole may show lower degrees of ideological polarization: so that they are ridden by ideological conflicts and better able to reach consensual decisions.

We may even expect that the parties themselves shift to the center, because they do no service to a candidate when they spread the impression that he or she represents a rather one-sided or even extremist political party.

3.9 Political outputs

The research literature also provides conflicting arguments in what way electoral systems are related to different policy outcomes, e. g. in terms of the volume of governmental activities, finances and organization.

On the one hand, insofar as majoritarian executives are more effective, it may be expected that they are more motivated to display an expanded activity and to reach important political goals. For instance, their “expansionist” tendency may well result in a rather high expansion of public administration, and their political effectiveness in a vigorous economic growth of their community as well as in higher ability to defend the autonomy of the community vis-à-vis supralocal political authorities (Canton and Federation).

On the other hand, Fumagalli & Narciso have shown that to the degree that proportional systems lead to a higher level of political participation, they contribute to the increase of government expenditure, total revenues, welfare state spending, and the budget deficit.

“In contrast with previous findings in the related literature, we provide evidence that the form of government loses its explanatory power once electoral participation is accounted for. Our study shows that higher voter turnout increases government expenditure, total revenues, welfare state spending, and the budget deficit. We conclude that the effect of forms of government on policy outcomes as found by Persson and Tabellini (2003, 2004) is mediated by voter participation at national elections. (Fumagalli & Narciso 2012: 171).

These results are in line with Arend Lijpharts findings that higher voter turnout entails a larger participation of the lower end of the income distribution, hence a larger representation of people who are more likely to benefit from extended policies of redistribution (Lijphart 1997).

4. Empirical Results

4.1 The communal party systems

As the proportional system relies on lists of candidates submitted by political parties, there is certainly an incentive to form not only partisan ad hoc committees or to rely on the initiatives of supralocal party levels, but to found a formally organized party section within the community itself.

In smaller communities, however, such projects tend to be hampered by an insufficient and highly volatile field of recruitment: making it hard to keep a perpetual organization regularly staffed with a president and a steering committee. Therefore, we expect that a certain level of population size has to be reached for making it possible to translate election rules into formalized political parties.

In accordance with such arguments, Table 1 shows that in the lowest size category (less than 500 inhabitants), the majority of communities don't possess organized parties irrespective of the rules governing their executive elections. Even on this site level however, proportional rules go along more often with rather diversified municipal party systems comprising three or more organized groups. In the next higher category (500-.2000 inhabitants), we see a much more pronounced correlation: only 12% of proportional communities have less than two local party sections: in comparison with 61% under majoritarian conditions. In larger municipalities, the correlation weakens and vanishes totally above a threshold of 8000 inhabitants: indicating that highly developed party systems become universal irrespective of formal rules of election.

Table 1: Mean number of parties formally organized in the community (1994): according to election rule and size of community.

Number of parties represented	Size of Community							
	-500		501-2000		2001-8000		8001+	
	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.
0	80	53	45	6	3	2	0	0
1	12	9	16	6	2	0	0	0
2	5	15	15	27	12	4	0	0
3	3	15	14	55	22	36	3	0
4	0	8	8	5	32	39	17	18
5	0	0	1	1	19	17	17	18
6+	0	0	1	1	10	2	63	64
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Chi2 (sign.)	48.1 (.000)		101.8 (.000)		10.86 (.210)		.49 (.989)	
N =	353		423		242		46	

4.2 Number of represented parties

Evidently, the sharply rising tide of nonpartisan executive incumbents in smaller Swiss communities (Geser & Meuli 2012) is most compatible with majoritarian elections, because campaigning is exclusively on individual candidates, not on lists provided by political parties.

In addition, following Maurice Duverger (1954) and many other authors in the subsequent decades, we hypothesize that proportional rules provide broader opportunities for the representation of various political parties, because only a smaller percentage of votes is needed to win at least one seat. Under majoritarian conditions, by contrast, victory will go to the candidates able to mobilize an absolute (or at least relative majority of votes because they represent one of the few mainstream party. In the case of smaller Swiss communities, there is the additional contingency that they are not belonging to any politics party: being able to secure enough votes by mobilizing their kin and friends or by drawing their supporters from many different sources.

As seen from Table 2, the hypothesis is borne out consistently on all levels of municipal size. In the smallest communities, majoritarian rules are strongly linked to a fully nonpartisan board (or a hybrid body with nonpartisans and members of only one party), while under proportional rules, three thirds of all boards comprise representatives of two or three parties. It seems surprising that even under proportional rules, 19% of the executives are fully nonpartisan. In fact, reality shows that proportionalism is practiced *pro forma* also in a larger number of rather small municipalities, where few or no local parties are existing. (In such cases, party lists are usually substituted by “community lists” competing on a nonpartisan basis.)

In the middle-sized and larger communities (up to 8000 inhabitants), it is also evident that proportional votes promotes executive with a larger number of represented political parties, while in the largest category, the relationship is weakened to a degree that no statistical significance is attained.

Evidently, the capacity of proportional systems to secure representativity is narrowly limited by the small size of the executive bodies. With five members, a party may need more than 15% and with seven members at least 10% of the votes in order to gain a seat: so that minority groups are systematically excluded.

Table 2: Number of parties represented in the executive (1994): according to election rule and size of community.

Number of parties represented	Size of Community							
	-500		501-2000		2001-8000		8001+	
	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.
0	53%	19	26	5	3	0		
1	23	16	18	4	4	1	0	0
2	20	38	39	39	34	16	7	0
3	4	27	14	45	38	49	41	33
4	0	0	3	6	17	30	28	42
5	0	0	0	1	3	3	19	24
6+	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Chi2 (sign.)	101.7 (.000)		113.6 (.000)		30.7 (.000)		6.21 (.289)	
N =	542		667		435		114	

Such restrictions can be alleviated somewhat when the board size is increased: typically from three or five to seven in the smaller communities, and from seven to nine, eleven or even more in the municipalities or larger size.

As shown in Table 3, proportional rules are in fact strongly associated with a larger mean number of executive seats: with the exception of the smallest communities where the tiny field of recruitment may preclude any measures of expansion.

Table 3: Mean number of seats in the executive (2004): according to election rules and size of community.

	Size of Community							
	-500		501-2000		2001-8000		8001+	
	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.
Mean number of seats	4.98	4.68	5.59	6.42	6.16	7.83	6.57	7.82
F-Test (sign.)	17.07 (.437)		147.18 (.000)		128.55 (000)		10.53 (.001)	
N =	937		1030		609		165	

Theoretically, the higher number of parties represented in the board may be fully explainable by its higher number of seats. However, Table 4 documents that the number of represented groupings is larger at every given number of seats. In smaller settings (with 2000 or less inhabitants), almost exactly the same number of groups is found irrespective in boards of five, seven or nine members, while in middle sized communities, increasing the seats seems to be instrumental for integrating additional parties. In the largest municipalities, reverse association seems to hold as the highest number of groups is found in 9-seat bodies recruited by majoritarian rules. However, this regularity seems less paradox when it is considered that smaller minority parties are only existing formally in larger communities, and that majoritarian rules may help the to get a seat whenever they present highly attractive candidates able to aggregate votes from many population segments: even if they stem from a tiny five per cent party that would have no chances under proportional conditions.

Table 4: Mean number of political groups represented in the executive (1994): according to election rules, board size and size of community.

Size of the executive board	Size of Community							
	-500		501-2000		2001-8000		8001+	
	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.
5 seats	.76	1.96**	1.44	2.36**	2.55	2.79	3.25	3.75
7 seats	.85	1.92**	1.65	2.47**	3.00	3.11	3.71	3.83
9 seats	--	--	1.46	2.50**	2.77	3.59**	4.76	4.00

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ (F-Test)

4.2 Ideological polarizations

Given the general minority status of leftist parties in almost all Swiss communities, it is to be expected that they have little chance of being represented when majoritarian rules apply – except in cases where a “voluntary proportionalism” applies: disposing majority parties to leave at least one seat open for a member representing the Social Democratic or the Greens.

Thus, leftist parties should profit particularly from proportional elections because a voting share of less than 20% is usually sufficient to win a seat.

In fact, Table 5 shows that proportional rules are extremely helpful for Social Democrats (the major leftist party) to participate in executive power. Only in larger communities and cities (where rather large population segments usually lean to the left), their representation is in most cases secured even under majoritarian conditions.

Table 5: Percentage of communities with Social Democrats represented in the executive (1997): according to election rules and size of community.

	Size of Community							
	-500		501-2000		2001-8000		8001+	
	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.
Percent of communities	5	26	15	46	37	81	77	95
Chi2 (sign.)	67.94 (.000)		97.65 (.000)		93.63 (.000)		6.62 (.006)	
N =	839		887		541		150	

In a more generalized perspective, it may be assumed that majoritarian rules lead to executives which largely represent the modal ideological positions within the voting population (positions characterized by a moderate bias toward the conservative side), while proportional systems provide more chances for candidates who deviate from the mode (either to the left or to the right). When majoritarian rules apply, candidates are urged to collect a maximum number of votes stemming from adherents of different parties as well as from nonpartisan voters.

Thus, the more “extremist” parties will often not nominate any candidates because they don’t see any realistic chances, and candidates from the remaining parties others may do well to adopt a rather centrist political position: those from leftist parties moving to the right and those from rightist parties somewhat to the left. As a consequence, incumbents may deviate more from the lines of their party than under proportional rules where the parties themselves are active to gain power. Given the basic multiparty character of all executives (based on the principle of “voluntary proportionality”), a party can be sure to get seats even with a modest total share of votes (and to win never all seats even when its shares would approach 100%). Thus, they have little incentive to move to the center, and they will tend to nominate candidates neatly conforming with their own ideological stances.

Looking at Figures 2 and 3 which present frequency distributions on the left-right scale for incumbents of smaller and middle-sized communities (up to 8000), we clearly see this hypothesis borne out. Specifically, we find that proportionally voted incumbents are more frequently located on scale positions to the extreme left and – less pronounced – to the extreme right, while those elected by majoritarian vote cluster more on mainstream centrist and modest right positions (5-8). In larger settings of more than 8000 inhabitants), a more polarized, nearly bimodal distribution is maintained among both subsamples (Figure 4). But

here also, proportional rules seem to facilitate somewhat the recruitment of candidates with rather extremist (leftist) positions.

Figure 2: Frequency Distribution of nonpresidential Executive Members on the Left-Right Scale (self locations): according to election rule (communities with less than 2000 inhabitants; N= 3271)

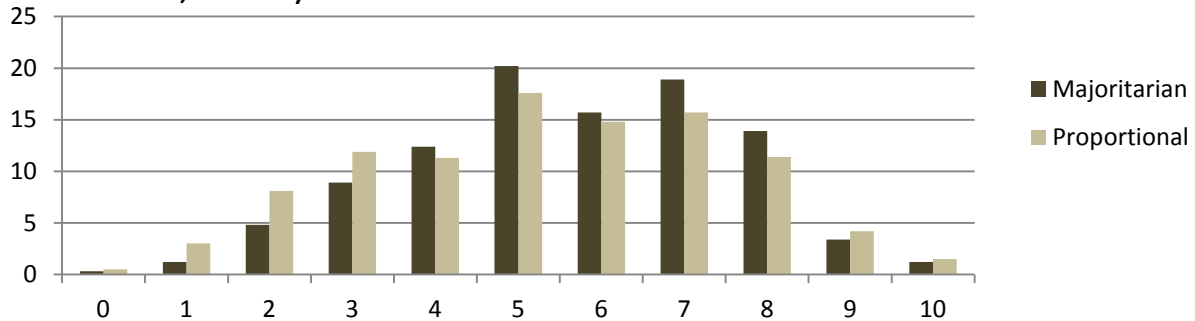


Figure 3: Frequency Distribution of partisan nonpresidential Executive Members on the Left-Right Scale (self locations): according to election rule (communities between 2000 and 8000 inhabitants; N= 1872)

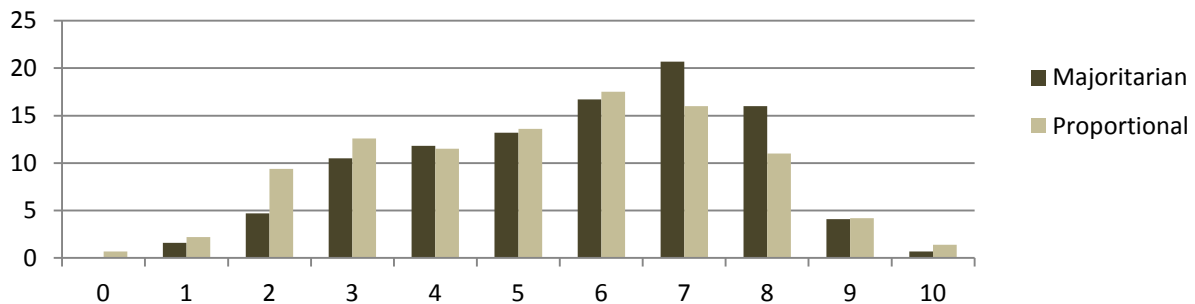
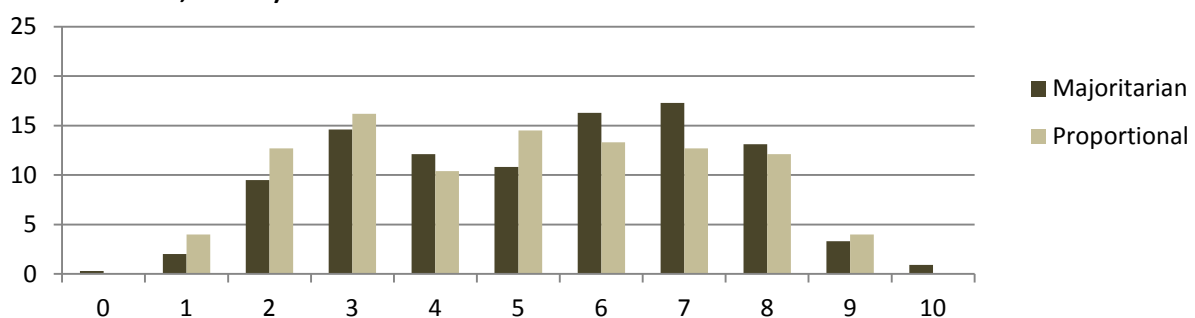


Figure 4: Frequency Distribution of nonpresidential Executive Members on the Left-Right Scale (self locations): according to election rule (communities with more than 8000 inhabitants; N=571)



4.4 Initiation of candidacy and campaign support

Evidently, both electoral systems are compatible with many different ways how candidates are initially brought into play. Of course, no citizen is prevented of taking the initiative him- or herself; but in the majority of cases, candidates accept nomination on request by a political party or by yielding to pressures from any other (formal or informal) influential groups or individual persons.

Unsurprisingly, parties take the initiative more frequently in proportional electoral systems where they are formally obliged to present lists (Table 6). However, this divergence is most pronounced in smaller municipalities, while in larger communities and cities, parties are almost equally active under proportional and majoritarian rules. While the frequency of personal initiatives remains low (= around 20%) in all settings, far more candidacies originate from requests of current executive incumbents or from other politically influential personalities when elections are decided by majoritarian rules. This certainly supports the general notion that majoritarian systems tend to higher degrees of informality and personalization, while proportional rules favor more institutionalized, supraindividually regulated conditions (see 3.4).

Table 6: Percentage of executive members with different ways how their candidature was initiated: according to election rule and size of community.

Way candidacy was initiated:	Size of Community							
	-500		501-2000		2001-8000		8001+	
	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.
Request of a political party	6	46	32	75	73	86	88	90
Chi2 (sign.)	234.09 (.000)		399.74 (.000)		46.87 (.000)		.59 (.272)	
Personal Initiative	20	22	19	17	16	16	22	18
Chi2 (sign.)	.22 (.353)		2.54 (.062)		.115 (.393)		.60 (.255)	
Request from executive incumbents	61	34	41	23	20	16	11	11
Chi2 (sign.)	47.70 (.000)		76.45 (.000)		6.82 (.005)		.13 (.411)	
Request from other personalities	51	42	43	28	32	29	23	24
Chi2 (sign.)	5.96 (.009)		45.23 (.000)		2.28 (.076)		.18 (.378)	
N =	1144		2380		1942		591	

As shown in Table 7, the more frequent party activity in the nomination phase spills over into a more pronounced party support during the electoral campaign. Again, high party support is provided in both electoral systems when communities are of medium or larger size.

It could be expected that candidates running in smaller majoritarian communities have a need to compensate support weak party support by stronger support from more informal sources (3.4). To the contrary, however, Table 8 shows that such backing from kin and friends is also more pronounced under proportional rules. As a possible explanation, we may guess that formal party embedment usually goes along with enlarged informal circles of (party-related) friends and acquaintances: with the result that less partisan majoritarian incumbents are doubly disprivileged because their “social capital” is also deficient in its informal dimensions.

Table 7: Percentage of executive members who have received considerable party support in the election campaign: according to election rule and size of community (non presidential partisan members only).

	Size of Community							
	-500		501-2000		2001-8000		8001+	
	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.
Percent receiving support	6	40	28	62	69	76	82	73
Chi2 (sign.)	40.63 (.000)		76.34 (.000)		.35 (.837)		10.88 (.004)	
N =	244		1291		1638		563	

Table 8: Percentage of executive members who have received considerable support from relatives and friends in the election campaign: according to election rule and size of community (non presidential partisan members only).

	Size of Community							
	-500		501-2000		2001-8000		8001+	
	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.
Percentage	44	55	45	60	53	60	56	69
Chi2 (sign.)	8.17 (.017)		47.64 (.000)		10.46 (.006)		8.65 (.013)	
N =	1034		2201		1856		579	

4.5 Intensity of competition

As argued above, there are conflicting hypotheses about the relationship between election rules and the amount of electoral competition (3.5). On the one hand, lower competitiveness may be expected in majoritarian systems, because given the multiparty “concordance” practiced throughout in Swiss executive bodies, parties may be disposed to limit or rule out competition by means of cartelization. On the other hand, the higher involvement of organized parties may lead to more intense competition, insofar as parties have more resources than individuals to fuel campaigns - and may be more motivated to fight for seats insofar as they urgently seek power in order to realize their ideological programs and goals. Particularly in smaller communities, high party activity may be necessary for mobilizing enough candidates for securing competitive elections.

As seen from Table 9, the second hypothesis is consistently borne out, as much larger percentages of executive incumbents report that they had faced competing candidates when they were elected under proportional rules. Only in the larger municipalities (comprising all cities), a very high prevalence of competitiveness is maintained regardless of the electoral system.

Table 9: Percentage of executive incumbents who faced competing candidates in the last elections: according to election rules and size of community.

	Size of Community							
	-500		501-2000		2001-8000		8001+	
	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.
Percent of communities	32.6	48.3	48.5	70.2	70.1	85.1	90.1	90.8
Chi2 (sign.)	18.50 (.000)		100.60 (.000)		55.38 (.000)		.06 (.470)	
N =	1151		2376		1934		587	

This more intense competitiveness is also manifested in a higher risk of re-rerunning incumbents not be re-elected (Table 10). Particularly in larger communities, proportional elections seem to result in significant turnovers, while under majoritarian rules, most incumbents enjoy no such risks even in urban settings.

Table 10: Percentage of communities where re-running incumbents have not been reelected (1994): according to election rules and size of community.

	Size of Community							
	-500		501-2000		2001-8000		8001+	
	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.
Percent of communities	17.4	27.7	19.3	42.3	16.6	43.5	23.6	55.5
Chi2 (sign.)	8.82 (.016)		47.96 (.000)		45.38 (.000)		15.13 (.000)	
N =	712		837		543		146	

It might be argued that the likelihood for involuntary seat losses is related to the size of the board for mere logical reasons: especially when it is additionally considered that when there are many seats, they may often have to be filled with second or third choice candidates who don't show sufficient commitment and results.

As seen in Table 11, however, the high divergences between majoritarian and proportional systems remain on the same level when the size of the executive body is controlled. With increasing number of seats, risks of non-reelection rise very little in majoritarian systems, while they skyrocket when proportional rules are applied.

Table 11: Percentage of communities where re-running incumbents have not been re-elected: according to size of executive (only communities between 2000 and 8000 inhabitants).

	Size of Executive							
	5		7		9		11+	
	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.
Percent of communities	17.0	30.8	20.4	42.8	17.2	53.7	31.2	76.9
Chi2 (sign.)	23.94 (.000)		35.65 (.000)		20.63 (.000)		3.62 (.004)	
N =	1266		618		146		42	

4.6 Level of political participation

Using the same data (1994) for a more detailed analysis of the Canton of Bern, Ladner has demonstrated that communities with proportional election rules have higher voting turnouts, but only when they are rather small (Ladner 1996).

This regularity can easily be explained when it is considered that under conditions of proportionality,

- more political parties are usually active to present candidates and to mobilize the voters;
- a higher number of candidates is available for choice;
- a higher degree of competitive campaigning is usually enacted;
- elections are more thrilling as it is more probable that incumbents don't get re-elected;
- parties facilitate electoral choice by providing candidates with clear (ideological) profiles;
- many citizens will vote just because they like a specific party- even when they don't know the candidates personally.

Table 12: Mean voting turnout in municipal elections: according to election rules and size of community.

	Size of Community							
	-500		501-2000		2001-8000		8001+	
	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.
Percentage of turnout in communal elections	50.0%	63.3	44.4	62.7	43.5	53.2	40.3	43.8
F-Test (sign.)	30.58(.000)		179.64 (.000)		65.88 (000)		3.64 (.051)	
N =	516		729		470		115	
Difference to national elections	5.3%	13.9	.8	18.4	-.2	8.8	-4.2	-1.2
F-Test (sign.)	17.2 (.000)		165.6 (.000)		64.2 (.000)		3.04 (.084)	
N =	483		690		450		109	

Under majoritarian rules, by contrast, many voters may not find a candidate of their liking, or they may be unable to decide because – as proxy cues associated with party membership are

not available - they have to rely on specific personal information that may be harder to procure.

In accordance with these expectations, a dramatic mean difference in voting turnout is observed in all smaller and middle-sized communities, while in the highest size category, the difference is attenuated and no longer statistically significant (Table 12). This edge is a specific feature of communal voting behavior that does not spill over to supralocal levels, because the divergence remains on the same level when the voting turnouts at Cantonal or National elections is controlled.

Given the direct-democratic constitution of Swiss communities, a comprehensive measurement of political participation must also include turn outs in issue votings and participation in town hall meetings where citizens are entitled to deliberate and to take decisions. Such assemblies are however mostly restricted to smaller and middle-sized communities in German-speaking Cantons, while in the French and Italian regions, even smaller municipalities have shifted such legislative power to parliamentary bodies. Looking at the participation rates in public assemblies, it is evident that in contrast to voting turn outs, they are not higher, but tend to be somewhat lower when the executive is elected by proportional rules (Table 13).

Table 13: Mean participation at town hall meetings; according to election rules and size of community.

	Size of Community							
	-500		501-2000		2001-8000		8001+	
	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.
Percent of citizens present in meetings	34.4	29.5	13.8	11.5	5.2	4.4	1.9	1.3
F-Test (sign.)	2.58 (.109)		3.70 (.055)		.98 (320)		3.30 (.074)	
N =	515		640		391		76	

As a possible explanation, we may guess that proportional elections result in executives that enjoy higher public legitimation because more different groups are represented. As a consequence, citizens may be more disposed to trust their political leaders and to accept their decisions, so that they see less reason for direct democratic participation. Under majoritarian elections, by contrast, significant segments of the population may not feel to be adequately represented: so that town hall assemblies are the only channels to raise their voice. If this reasoning is sound, we should find that the bivariate correlation between voting rules and participation rates should diminish or vanish if the size of the executive and the number of groups represented are controlled.

As seen from Table 14, such expectations are in fact borne out: particularly within the category of smallest communities where both intervening variables contribute significant shares of statistical explanation. In middle-sized and larger municipalities, the number of groups retains its negative impact on assembly participation, while the size of the board becomes less relevant. Due to insufficient sample size, no significant coefficients are reached in the largest size categories (where assemblies are often marginal because for mere technical reasons, most relevant decisions are taken by ballot voting).

Table 14: Participation rates at town hall meetings: explained by election rules, community size, and the number of organized local parties: multivariate linear regressions, BETA-coefficients.

Predictors:	Size of Community							
	-500		501-2000		2001-8000		8001+	
	BETA	BETA	BETA	BETA	BETA	BETA	BETA	BETA
Election rule (prop=+)	-.13*	-.07	-.10*	-.04	-.03	.03	-.19	-.17
Number of groups represented	--	-.16**	--	-.16**	--	-.14*	--	-.16
Number of seats	--	-.22**	--	-.07	--	-.08	--	.23
Cumulative R2 (sign.)	.013	.081	.008	.029	.00	.018	.018	.031
N =	293		413		288		54	

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

The general notion that proportional rules result in bodies with higher legitimation is also supported by Table 15 where it is shown that such communities have been somewhat more prone to shift political power from citizens to the executive within the years period antedating the survey (2000-2004).

Table 15: Percentage of communities having implemented reforms for shifting more political power from citizens to the executive: according to election rules and size of community.

	Size of Community							
	-500		501-2000		2001-8000		8001+	
	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.
% of communities	13.8	14.5	15.1	20.2	15.2	26.0	15.2	26.0
F-Test (sign.)	0.38 (.439)		2.93 (.056)		7.95 (.004)		2.99 (.074)	
N =	601		778		479		126	

4.7 Status characteristics of incumbents

Given the need to secure a maximum number of votes, we may expect that majoritarian elections favor candidates who look promising because they are highly educated and bring along high qualifications acquired in previous public roles. Such criteria are likely to privilege males: especially when it is considered that under proportional rules, political parties are nowadays highly committed to represent both genders about equally in their candidate lists. However, the results show that the effect of election rules on such status characteristics is almost nil, as neither the percentage of women nor the share of highly educated incumbents is significantly affected (Table 16). A rather modest corroboration of the hypothesis is just apparent in the regularity that under majoritarian conditions, incumbents are on average

about an year older when they enter office, and that they are somewhat more likely to bring along leadership skills acquired in their professional work (except in the smallest communes where such skills are less essential given the tiny size of the administration).

4.8 Longevity of office holding

If it is true that majoritarian rules promote a positive selection of highly committed incumbents ready to shoulder the costs and risks of personalized campaigns, (while proportional elections give often rise to party lists filled with lukewarm , unconvinced candidates), we may expect that they show higher tendencies to occupy their office for long periods of time. In fact, members of majoritarian executives indicate somewhat more frequently that they will re-run for an additional term. In the case of “veterans” holding their position already since three terms or more, such divergences are only seen in larger communities (where incumbents elected proportionally show a pronounced more tendency to leave; Table 17).

Table 16: Various status characteristics of executive incumbents: according to election rules and size of community.

	Size of Community							
	-500		501-2000		2001-8000		8001+	
	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.
Percentage of women	25	19	28	20	27	24	24	34
F-Test (sign.)	2.69 (.059)		19.87 (.000)		1.78 (.100)		6.62 (.007)	
N =	1139		2365		1928		599	
Percentage with academic education	22	22	22	27	33	36	54	53
F-Test (sign.)	5.52 (.318)		11.45 (.009)		5.36 (.147)		1.29 (.732)	
N =	1139		2365		1928		599	
Mean Age at first election	42.4	42.8	44.0	43.0	44.9	43.9	46.5	44.7
Chi2 (sign.)	.04 (.878)		7.34 (.007)		5.96 (.015)		6.45 (.011)	
N =	1118		2322		1882		581	
Percentage with leadership skills	36	38	52	44	64	53	74	70
F-Test (sign.)	.43 (.281)		13.65 (.000)		22.84 (.000)		1.45 (.130)	
N =	1175		2415		1974		599	
Percentage self employed	33	33	30	23	33	28	34	32
F-Test (sign.)	.01 (.489)		9.09 (.001)		4.01 (.025)		.13 (.430)	
N =	1087		2215		1814		518	

Table 17: Percentage of executive incumbents disposed to run again in the coming elections: according to election rule, years in office and size of community.

Years in office:	Size of Community							
	-500		501-2000		2001-8000		8001+	
	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.
0-4	68	61	77	62	81	70	80	79
Chi2 (sign.)	2.59 (.412)		38.88 (.000)		20.11 (.000)		3.045 (.329)	
N =	651		1319		947		265	
5-8	41	32	44	38	50	44	63	57
Chi2 (sign.)	4.18 (.219)		8.74 (.033)		20.45 (.002)		6.96 (.074)	
	271		587		532		190	
9+	31	33	37	38	39	31	44	26
Chi2 (sign.)	.67 (.881)		2.09 (.503)		5.34 (.127)		7.79 (.051)	
N =	187		382		374		119	

In a more qualitative sense, the differences in role commitment are additionally highlighted when the *reasons for quitting* are considered. While nonpolitical (private or professional) reasons predominate in both subgroups, incumbents elected by majoritarian rules state more often that they will resign because they have achieved their political goals (except in the smallest communities), while members of proportional executives more frequently plan to leave because they are “disappointed” (i. e. that they could not realize their intentions; Table 18).

Table 18: Percentages of executive incumbents indicating different reasons for not running again for office: according to election rule and size of community.

Reasons for not running again in the next elections	Size of Community							
	-500		501-2000		2001-8000		8001+	
	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.
Professional reasons	34	32	31	32	34	28	17	20
Chi2 (sign.)	.06 (.480)		.07 (.442)		1.62 (.124)		.14 (.449)	
Private reasons	54	68	51	48	50	40	46	32
Chi2 (sign.)	2.81 (.066)		.294 (.331)		3.68 (.035)		1.99 (.113)	
Disappointment	16	30	10	16	3	14	3	5
Chi2 (sign.)	4.95 (.025)		3.78 (.037)		14.37 (.000)		354 (.457)	
Goals achieved	12	17	24	11	22	12	20	10
Chi2 (sign.)	1.08 (.211)		9.83 (.001)		6.48 (.008)		1.79 (.143)	
N =	210		391		368		111	

This supports the contention that on the average, majoritarian elections lead to executives with more rewarding and influential roles than under proportional rules where influence as well as pecuniary compensations are lower because leadership functions are less pronounced and power has to be divided among a larger number of seats.

4.9 Work input and remunerations

At least for two reasons, it is to be expected that when executive members are recruited under majority rules, they will invest more hours of work.

1) In a “Darwinian” notion, majoritarian systems are designed to select candidates with the highest commitment – in contrast to proportional systems which set the stage for testing the chances of survival (and growth) of competing political parties. Thus, a rather high personal motivation is needed to engage in a campaign which necessitates high personal efforts (especially when party support is weak or lacking), and to risk career failure because shortcomings tend to be attributed to the specific person (rather than to the party). Insofar as the well-known theory of cognitive dissonance is accepted, the reverse causality – based on Festingers theory of cognitive dissonance - may also hold: high personal investments increase the role commitment because incumbents “justify” their high costs by increasing the subjective attractiveness of the office acquired.

2) Majoritarian systems are correlates of a political culture in which executives are primarily seen as effective leadership agencies that have to *deliver* – not as representative bodies that derive their legitimation from the mere fact that all major groups feel proportionally included (like in the case of legislatures). Work pressures may of course be additionally increased by the lower average number of seats (see 4.1): thus burdening each incumbent with a larger share of executive duties. Given such high expectations of leadership, it is to be expected that pecuniary compensations are higher than in proportional systems.

In fact, Table 19 provides strong evidence that in communities of all size, incumbents dedicate more weakly work hours to executive tasks when they have undergone majoritarian elections. While the difference is just about one hour in the smallest municipalities, it expands to more than five hours (!) in the larger settings with 8000 inhabitants or more.

Table 19: Mean work hours per week for activities related to the office: according to election rule and size of community (non presidential executive members).

Activities related to:	Size of Community							
	-500		501-2000		2001-8000		8001+	
	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.
Executive tasks	5.2	4.3	7.8	6.6**	11.4	8.4**	19.2	14.0**
Political Parties	.2	.6**	.5	1.0**	1.0	1.4**	2.0	2.2
Local voluntary associations	1.8	1.7	1.9	2.1**	1.9	2.0	2.4	2.1
N =	872	187	1469	773	1126	719	376	185

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ (F-Test)

Among members of proportional executives, this deficit is only slightly compensated by a somewhat higher work load associated with partisan activities – a difference that levels off in larger communities where intensive interaction with parties takes place even under majoritarian conditions.

Table 20 shows that majoritarian executives display a somewhat higher activity also on the collective level, as the mean duration of their regular meetings is somewhat longer (except in the smallest communities where no difference can be found). We don't know whether this results from a larger number of agenda items – or from a tendency to deliberate more extensively on each topic.

Given the high work load as well as the high leadership status of majoritarian executives, it is not surprising that they are endowed with a larger amount of pecuniary resources – despite the fact that on the average, less members have to be compensated. This implies that individual compensations are much higher: particularly in middle-sized communities (between 2000 and 8000 inhabitants) where they surpass those of proportionally voted incumbents by more than 50% (Table 21).

Table 20: Mean duration of average executive meetings: according to election rule and size of community.

:	Size of Community							
	-500		501-2000		2001-8000		8001+	
	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.
Duration in minutes	146	146	157	148	171	159	199	171
F-test (sign.)	.00 (.955)		22.14 (.000)		26.86 (.000)		38.82 (.000)	
N =	908	190	1485	792	1132	726	377	187

Table 21: Mean yearly expensive for the entire executive and expenses per seat (2004): according to election rules and size of community.

	Size of Community							
	-500		501-2000		2001-8000		8001+	
	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.
Mean yearly expenses for the entire executive(Sfr.)	20978	19031	62048	48955	170186	110496	532513	385170
F-Test (sign.)	1.26(.263)		14.03 (.000)		9.04 (.003)		2.26 (.135)	
N =	566		749		455		109	
Mean yearly expenses per seat (Sfr.)	4225	3983	11741	7702	29892	16161	86350	63657
F-Test (sign.)	.48 (.489)		35.91 (.000)		12.21 (.001)		2.145 (.146)	
N =	566		749		455		109	

4.10 Criteria of opinion formation and decision making

When executive members form their opinions and take their decisions, they are usually guided by a manifold of basic criteria all associated with their representative role. As a most basic alternative, they may act either as “delegates” who understand their role as a mandate by their party to translate partisan positions (expressed in programs, position papers or congress resolutions) into political action, or they may identify themselves as independent “trustees” (in the traditional liberalist sense) whose duty is to realize the commonweal in the sense they understand it by following their own conscience (Eulau/Wahlke/Buchanan/ Ferguson 1959). In addition (or alternatively), they may of course also assume a “populist” role by adapting to mainstream attitudes among the voting population, they may be responsive to various collective actors in the community (enterprises or voluntary associations), or just conform to the opinion of their executive colleagues or decision makers in neighboring communities.

Evidently, it can be expected that members of proportional executives will give more weight to party opinion, because it’s the party which determines their nomination and (re-)election and which demands that they articulate partisan positions in their office. When elected by majoritarian rules, incumbents then may have more leeway to follow their subjective convictions, to assume “populist” stances or to conform to opinions of various (nonpolitical or political) actors.

For tapping this important dimension of political role orientation, respondents were given a list of eight possible orientations and to rank them by indicating the three criteria to which they gave most priority (code 100) and the three of least importance (coded 0). The remaining two categories were considered to be of intermediate importance (coded 50).

Table 22: Relevance of „party opinion“ and other criteria for political decision making: according to election rules and size of community (non-presidents only).

Relevance of criteria for decision making	Size of Community							
	-500		501-2000		2001-8000		8001+	
	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.
Opinion of political party	22	35**	24	39**	35	50***	50	62**
Public opinion	81	79	79	77	77	75	72**	61
Personal convictions	75	82**	83	83	88	85	91	92
Voluntary associations	40	43	42	42	43	40	41	36
Entrepreneurs	46*	41	52**	45	54	49	50	56*
Colleagues in executive	78**	69	76	71	71	69	65	60
Decision makers in other communities	49**	41	38**	33	28	25	23	22

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ (F-Test)

As seen in Table 22, the first hypothesis is borne out conspicuously in communities of all size. While the relevance of party opinion rises with increasing population size under both election regimes, it is always considerably higher when proportional rules apply.

On the other hand, the conjecture that majoritarian incumbents would compensate weak partisanship by stronger populism seems to hold only in the largest communities, and the assumption that they would give more space to personal conviction is not borne out at all.

Under all circumstances of community size and election systems, subjective persuasions are given highest priority – next to public opinion which also ranks higher than partisanship, except in the case of urban incumbents elected under proportional rules.

While voluntary associations are given low weight irrespective of electoral rules, majoritarian incumbents seem in fact to be somewhat more responsive to private entrepreneurs, executive colleagues and decision makers in other communities – at least in municipalities of smaller and medium size.

In more speculative theoretical terms, we may conclude that by giving rise to stronger political parties, proportional voting systems

- 1) promote the autonomy of the political vis-à-vis the economic sector: by shielding political decision making against too strong influences from the side of private entrepreneurs;
- 2) inhibit intra-executive decision making: by reducing the capacity (or willingness) of members to form consensual decisions;
- 3) reduce the formation of intercommunal consensus and cooperation by pressuring executive member to give priority to intracommunal (partisan) considerations.

4.11 Political effectiveness of executive members

As the members of proportional executives assume more decisively the role of party delegates, it is not surprising that their political motions meet more frequently political resistance: either by colleagues belonging to other parties (Table 23) or by entire opposing parties. (Table 24). By contrast, incumbents elected by majoritarian rules are better able to realize their initiatives because they are more disposed to take a suprapartisan leadership role – and because they act on average in a smaller executive body, thus running less risks to face majority or opponents within the board.

Table 23: Percent of incumbents who meet “frequent opposition” by other executive members: according to election rule and size of community

	Size of Community							
	-500		501-2000		2001-8000		8001+	
	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.
Percentage	10	10	10	15	15	21	18	24
Chi2 (sign.)	5.34 (.253)		15.27 (.004)		14.58 (.006)		5.99 (.200)	
N =	1113		2298		1888		581	

Table 24: Percentage of incumbents stating that their motions often fail because of resistance by other members of the executive (non presidents only).

	Size of Community							
	-500		501-2000		2001-8000		8001+	
	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.
Percentage	10	11	13	18	15	24	18	29
Chi2 (sign.)	.38 (.988)		16.52 (.002)		50.13 (.000)		14.87 (.005)	
N =	1025		2140		1816		558	

4.12 Expansion of public administration

As majoritarian executives display a higher level of activities (4.9), it is to be expected that they also implement more measures that lead to a net expansion of administrative tasks – thus inducing a growth of personnel in the public administration.

In fact, Table 25 shows that especially larger communities have been more prone to expand their administration recently when they elect their executive by majoritarian rules. It is no surprise that no such relationship exists in the smallest municipalities where absolute task loads as well as money resources are usually so low that no additional paid officials can reasonably be employed.

Table 25: Percent of communities that have expanded their professional administration (2000-2004), according to election rules and size of community.

	Size Community							
	-500		501-2000		2001-8000		8001+	
	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.
Percent of communities	31	33	47	42	63	49	74	50
Chi2 (sign.)	.30 (.861)		1.49 (.473)		9.53 (.009)		6.21 (.045)	
N =	647		818		486		121	

4.13 Fiscal growth

As a second highly salient and consensual policy goal, communities aspire to increase their volume of tax income: either by manipulating rates (Swiss communities have a certain autonomy to determine the level of income taxes) or by demographic and economic growth. As seen in Table 26, such growth has also been more prevalent (in the period 2000-2004) in communities with majoritarian than in those with proportional rules: with the exception of largest municipalities (with more than 8000 inhabitants) where no such relationship is found.

Table 26: Percentage of communities with considerable growth of tax revenues (2000-2004): according to election rules and size of community.

	Size of Community							
	-500		501-2000		2001-8000		8001+	
	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.
Percent of communities	38	29	63	54	69	60	59	60
Chi2 (sign.)	42.41 (.000)		17.98 (.001)		6.27 (.180)		2.54 (.635)	
N =	637		822		497		123	

4.14 Communal autonomy vis-à-vis the Canton

Evidently, all arguments linking election rules to policy outcomes have to remain speculative because such outcomes are conditioned by so many other – more immediate – political and socio-economic factors. However, we may conjecture that to the degree that the more intense leadership activities displayed by majoritarian executives are effective, they may contribute to the realization of some most consensual values and goals typically maintained by all communities: e. g. preserving as much autonomy as possible vis-à-vis the ever increasing controls by supralocal agencies: in the Swiss case particularly from the Cantonal level. For tapping this important variable at least in a superficial manner, the central officials interviewed in 2004 were asked to assess this communal autonomy on a scale ranging from 1 (very low) to 10 (very high). As shown in Table 27, average scale values are generally increasing with growing community size, but they are always somewhat higher when executives are recruited by majoritarian rules. These differences tend to increase in larger municipalities – indicating that in smallest contexts, low autonomy prevails irrespective of formal electoral rules.

Table 27: Degree of autonomy of the community vis-à-vis the Canton and the Federation: according to election rules and size of community (Scale ranging from 1 to 10).

	Size of Community							
	-500		501-2000		2001-8000		8001+	
	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.
Mean scale value (1-10)	4.53	4.42	4.85	4.64	5.16	4.84	5.38	4.84
F-Test (sign.)	.26 (.612)		2.12 (.146)		3.93 (.048)		2.68 (.104)	
N =	562		776		490		121	

4.15 Community power structure

How are community power structures *in toto* shaped by election rules: either directly or by the impact of these rules on various aspects of municipal politics and policy making? In the first place, we will certainly expect that proportional rules favor the influence of political par-

ties, because they are the main actors responsible for political campaigning and recruitment and – as we have seen – quite able to keep their elected representatives in line with their programs and positions. Under majoritarian rules, the lessened relevance of parties may well create a power vacuum that may be filled by various other political groupings (e. g. citizen protest groups) or by nonpolitical actors like private entrepreneurs or voluntary associations. The influence of the executive itself, however, may not be consistently affected, because countervailing causalities – neutralizing each other – have to be taken into account. On the one hand, proportional rules may well be associated with a higher power of the executive body, because – given its broader inclusion of significant groups – it possesses a higher overall status of legitimation (see 4.6). On the other hand, majoritarian bodies may compensate such shortcomings by the higher qualification, role commitment and work hours invested by its average members.

In order to tap the community power structure, a “reputational approach” was implemented by asking the central officials to judge the overall political influence of various intracommunal actors on a scale ranging from 1 to 7.

As seen from Table 28, the first prediction is neatly borne out, as the local parties enjoy significantly higher political influence under proportional rules in communities of all size.

Table 28: Mean influence of various local actors on community politics (2004): according to election rule and size of community (Scale ranging from 1 to 7).

Mean influence of various local actors in community politics	Size of Community							
	-500		501-2000		2001-8000		8001+	
	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.	Maj.	Prop.
Local parties	2.4	3.0	3.5	4.3	4.6	5.0	5.3	5.8
F-Test (sign.)	7.89 (.005)		27.94 (.000)		12.25 (.000)		5.09 (.024)	
Citizen protest groups	2.9	2.4	3.2	2.8	3.5	3.4	3.4	3.6
F-Test (sign.)	6.37 (.012)		7.49 (.007)		.73 (189)		.55 (.461)	
Voluntary associations	3.0	2.5	3.6	3.2	3.8	3.6	3.7	4.1
Chi2 (sign.)	4.39 (.037)		7.79 (.007)		1.46 (.228)		1.97 (.178)	
Private entrepreneurs	2.4	2.4	3.0	2.7	3.6	3.4	3.9	4.1
Chi2 (sign.)	.09 (.771)		4.76 (.030)		2.77 (.097)		.91 (.341)	
Executive	4.6	4.5	5.1	4.9	5.5	5.6	5.8	6.0
F-Test (sign.)	.06 (.809)		3.42 (.065)		.84 (.360)		.71 (.402)	
N =	277		642		485		128	

Secondly, there are also hints that various nonpartisan actors find better chances for shaping community political when – due to majoritarian rules – parties retreat to a less dominant position. This certainly applies to smaller communities where citizen protest groups as well as voluntary associations are somewhat more influential when majority elections apply. Con-

cerning private entrepreneurs, the effect is less clear (reaching modest statistical significance only in the category between 500 and 2000 inhabitants). Finally, a very strong power position of the executive body is unsurprisingly found throughout regardless of the reigning electoral system.

5. Conclusions

While the impact of electoral systems on politics, policies and polities have been on the research agenda since several decades, most studies have focused on international comparisons: so that they were hampered by a low sample size and an uncontrollable manifold of confounding causal factors.

In addition, comparisons between proportional and majoritarian system were usually confined to the legislative level and the specific ways such institutions were shaped for historical reasons (e. g. the high prevalence of one-member districts in majoritarian systems).

By contrast, the Swiss municipalities offer a much larger universe of at least semi-autonomous political units all embedded in a common frame of national political culture and legal-political institutions: thus easing the task of identifying the communal electoral rules as a causal factor. In addition, they provide the opportunity of assessing the impact proportional and majoritarian elections on the level of the political executive: as every municipality is a “multimember district” in which such highest decision making body (comprising between 3 and 17 members) is recruited.

However, the variance of the independent variable is reduced by the basic fact that in Switzerland, a “proportionalistic” (consociational) political cultures permeates also contexts where formally, majoritarian election procedures apply. Thus, minority parties are also given seats in cases where the major party would be able to win all mandates (“voluntary proportionalism”), and regardless of the way they are recruited, executive boards apply rules of collegial decision making: so that responsibilities can hardly be attributed to single members.

Nevertheless, the large number of significant empirical results (based on an extensive mailed-out survey including all members of Swiss communal executives) leaves no doubt that the communal party systems and executive recruitment processes as well as the behavioral dispositions of the incumbents, the activities of the board as well as its position in the community and its political outputs are influenced by the system of electoral rules.

First of all, Duverger’s basic contention is confirmed that proportional systems go along with higher levels of partisanship and a larger number of represented parties (4.3). Even this formal size of the board is increased in order to enlarge the possibilities of broad representation (4.1). In the Swiss political setting where centrist and rightist parties usually control the political arena, proportional systems contribute particularly to a better formal representation of leftist parties (4.2).

Secondly, we could corroborate the hypothesis that in proportional systems, political parties engage are more heavily engaged in the initiation of candidacies and in electoral campaigning (thus fuelling electoral competition; 4.5), while majoritarian rules go along with an increased tendency toward informal co-optation and a higher involvement of relatives and friends (4.4).

Third, the data confirm Ladners (1996) contention that proportional systems encourage higher voting turn outs because campaigns are more intense, information gathering less cost-

ly and a larger number of parties and candidates is available than under majoritarian conditions (4.6). On the other hand, participation at direct democracy institutions (town hall meetings) is somewhat lowered: suggesting that bodies based on proportional representation enjoy higher legitimacy, so that their decisions are less criticized and corrected (4.6).

Fourth, there is evidence that majoritarian systems favor the recruitment of more experienced incumbents (4.7) who maintain a longer-term commitment to their office (4.8), dedicate more work hours to their tasks (4.9) and receive higher (absolute as well as hourly) remunerations (4.10). All this is consistent with the basic hypothesis that majoritarian rules aim at creating an able leadership body endowed with relatively few, but highly qualified and dedicated members, while proportional systems give more weight to securing mere formal representation.

Fifth, proportional systems unsurprisingly increase the tendency of incumbents to cling to the positions of their party when they take their decisions, while majoritarian rules make executive members more disposed to be responsive to private entrepreneurs and to conform to the views of other members (or political bodies in neighboring communities): thus contributing to the convergence of opinions within the board as well as across community borders. However, there are no hints that electoral rules influence the degree to which decision makers are guided by public opinion or by their own personal convictions (4.10).

Sixth, the higher homogeneity and cohesion of majoritarian bodies is reflected in the regularity that members meet less opposition when they present their proposals (4.11), and their higher efficacy is mirrored in an increased policy output resulting in a larger growth of public administration (4.12), in a higher growth of fiscal revenues (reflecting demographic and economic growth; 4.13) and a somewhat more autonomous standing vis-à-vis the Canton (4.14).

Finally, a look at the “community power structure” doesn’t justify the conclusion that the overall power position of the executive is affected by the electoral system. However, there is some evidence that majoritarian rules lead to a situation where parties are weak: thus creating a power vacuum that is at least in smaller communities - compensated by a higher political influence of citizen protest groups and voluntary associations (4.15).

As a general trend, many of these regularities are more pronounced in smaller than in middle-sized or larger municipalities. As a partial explanation, it can be argued that in larger settings, a well-developed and active system of communal parties exists irrespective of the electoral system – thus leveling differences in recruitment patterns, campaign support, attitudinal characteristics and behavioral patterns of executive incumbents. In small communities, by contrast, electoral systems are more decisive determinants for the existence and strength of political parties – and all correlates associated with their involvement in executive matters. Evidently, this result is very much conditioned by basic consociational premises of Swiss political culture: making principles of proportionality predominant whenever the demographic and organizational preconditions for political party formation are fulfilled.

In the future, additional studies will be needed in which political units with pure proportional systems on the one hand and uncompromising majoritarian systems on the other are systematically compared. While such samples may be much easier found on provincial and municipal than on national levels, it has yet to be ascertained to what extent findings such sub-national can be generalized to more encompassing territorial (national or even supranational) systems.

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