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Self-guided and Party-guided Ideological Orientations

A comparative study of municipal politicians in Switzerland

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Abstract

In a study comprising about 8000 members of Swiss municipal executive boards, it was analyzed to what degree self placements on the left right scale were based on self-guided judgments (=opinions about specific issues) or on party-guided impacts (= ideological standing of respective parties). Using multivariate linear regressions, it was found both couplings were far more pronounced on the left side on the political spectrum than on the center and to the right. Party guidance correlates positively with community size with the size of the executive, the communal influence of local parties and the application of proportional (instead of majoritarian) election rules. In addition, it was higher in the case of incumbents highly supported by parties in election campaign and occupying formal intraparty positions. On the other hand, self-guided ideologization is over average in the case of incumbents with university degrees, high political interest and those give more weight to "personal conviction" than to public opinion, party positions or other board members when they make their political decisions. Finally, some indications were found that the levels of self-guided as well as party-guided ideology are lowered by the "pragmatic pressures" associated with consociations democracy and collegial decision making within the boards, but that both ideological orientations may be on the rise in younger generations.

Inhalt

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1. Theoretical Concepts

While most – even politically inactive and unsophisticated – individuals are ready to locate their ideological position on a left-right scale when asked to do in questionnaires, there is still inconclusive knowledge about how they arrive at such judgments.

Following Inglehart and Klingemann (1976), André Freire identifies three very different components that may contribute to such self-related evaluations:

First, people may derive their ideological positions from the social categories and organizations to which they belong. Thus, class-related identifications may inspire unionized workers to attribute to themselves rather leftist positions, while members of the Catholic Church see themselves embedded in a conservative, rightist social milieu.

Secondly, there is a subjective "value" component that

> *"…refers to the link between an individual's left–right self-placement and his attitude toward the major value conflicts in western democratic mass politics, be they socioeconomic, religious, or the "new politics." (Freire 1976: 359).*

Such a "vertical" connection between specific issue attitudes and generalized LR ideology has widely been documented in many studies (e. g. Huber 1989; Knutsen 1995, 1997 etc*.).*

Thirdly, there is unquestionably a "partisan" component: motivating individuals to ascribe to themselves the same ideological positions as they attribute to the political party to which they belong as formal members or to which they feel themselves informally attracted (Inglehart and Klingemann, 1976: 244; Fuchs and Klingemann 1990: 207; Huber 1989; Knutsen 1997).

It has been argued that in "traditional" Western industrial societies as they have existed until the 1960ies, there was a strong predominance of social and organizational factors: rightism and leftism was primarily defined by the belongingness to societal population segments and formalized institutions. Since the seventies, however, these structural determinants characteristic of "old politics" are said to have declined in importance: giving rise to a "new politics" where political opinions became much more determined by individual values and preferences (Inglehart 1984: 32; 1991: 279–85; Knutsen and Scarbrough 1995: 496).

In fact, the general decline of class voting and confessional voting has not gone along with "the end of ideology." Instead, the ideological concepts of leftism and rightism have remained of paramount importance, but they haven proven to be more conditioned by subjective personal factors: by opinions about specific political issues on the one hand and subjective party identifications on the other (Knutsen 1988; Huber 1989; Kim/Fording 1998; Freire 2006: 367).

1) Self-guided left-right orientations

While all individuals maintain specific attitudes toward particular political issues, they differ in their tendency to organize and synthesize them consistently and relate them to more generalized guidelines (principles, values or ideological constructions).

Empirically, this "level of conceptualization" (Converse 1964) is manifested to the degree to which attitudes to specific issues are related to higher-order concepts like "liberalism" vs. "conservatism" or "left vs. right". In operational terms, they can be assessed by the certainty and

precision with which the placement on such ideological scales can be predicted when opinions on a set of relevant issues (A,B,C.... to Z) are known.

By inductive generalization, individuals may conclude that they are "far left" when they favor redistribution of wealth, open immigration and the nationalization of key industries, or "far right" when they combine proudness of nationality with a demand for degressive taxes and a conservative attitudes toward abortion (Inglehart and Sidjanski 1976).

In this sense, Sani and Sartori have argued that left-right positions represent issue stands in salient political domains', as they are a

> *"yardstick [that] mirrors fairly well the voters' stands on some of the major conflict do-mains and echoes much of the voters' feeling toward significant political objects." (Sani and Sartori 1983, 314).*

Minimal ideologization, on the other hand, would be defined as a totally "disorganized political standing where the opinion about each issue is generated independently and without guidance by superordinate "Weltanschauungen" or programmatic structures: e. g. on the basis of "prag-matic" factors related to current personal interests, trends in public opinions, tactical considera-tions or specific situational conditions.

There is a wealth of evidence that such "self-guided" ideological thinking is widespread and powerful in Western as well as many nonwestern countries (Huber 1989; Falter and Schumann 1992: Laver and Budge 1993: Geser 2008).

2) Party guided orientations

As a main function of the left-right scheme is to facilitate electoral decisions, it is heavily applied for classifying political leaders, regimes, programs and political parties. It has been argued that the need for such ideological comparisons is low when only two parties are competing because such parties will cultivate a rather blurry identity (in order to gain a majority; Huber 1989)) and because a choices can easily be based on a various more specific traits. In multiparty systems, however, the LR axis is useful for reducing their manifold divergences to a single dimension, so that the information costs are diminished and unambiguous preferences can be achieved.

> *"In modern politics and mass media-dominated political communication, it is usually as-sumed that, by using a simplified, encompassing ideological dimension, party leaders and candidates can transmit useful information on policy programs which can be understood by voters without paying high costs. It has, thus, been postulated that a party position on the left-right dimension can synthesize a number of party policy positions on many is-sues…. – an intuition that has repeatedly been submitted to scrutiny and empirically test-ed." (Colomer & Escatel 2004).*

In addition, such collective ideological attributions can help individuals to identify their personal ideological positions. Specifically: when they have ties to a particular party which is known to occupy a specific location on the left-right dimension, they may place themselves at the same – or at least a rather similar – location. In contrast to self-guided ideologies derived *inductively* by processes of "upward generalization" (from specific opinions to generalized attitudes), party-guided standings are achieved *deductively* by a procedure of "downward specification": by ap-

plying average or generalized party labels to themselves (or other party adherents) as particular persons.

> *"One may prefer a given party because of family tradition or religious and other affiliation. One is also aware of the conventional label attached to one's party. For decades, the mass media have spoken of the communists as a party of the extreme left, the Socialists as the moderate left and so on. Knowing this, the voter locates himself on the left-right scale at about the same location as the party he prefers." (Inglehart and Sidjanski 1976: 228).*

Giving utmost weight to such partisan orientation, Arian and Shamir argue that left and right are cues provided fully by political parties. According to their view,

> *"there is no ideological thinking or conceptualization, and nothing that can be called a super issue, or ideology, for a large portion of the public,… and no stability over time in the public's position on issues, so that the left-right continuum is just denoting a party space, not an ideological space, for the electorate." (Arian and Shamir 1983).*

On the empirical level, many studies have supported the existence of such a collectivistic source of individual ideologization. In one of the earliest publications, Butler and Stokes (1969, 208-10) concluded that in the case of Great Britain, party identification is the predominant factor of individual self-placement on the left-right scale. In accordance with these findings, Inglehart and Sidjanski (1976: 240) found that in Switzerland, left-right orientations are good predictors of partisanship, while explaining little in terms of political issues. Similar results were found by Inglehart and Klingemann (1976: 269-270) in their comparative study on nine European countries. In a subsequent publication, Klingemann (1979: 227-32) firmly argued that few individuals in Western countries have an `ideological' understanding of `left and 'right', so that these terms are often equated with political parties or social groups. Ronald Inglehart went even further by suggesting that

> *"the terms 'Left' and 'Right' have become largely assimilated to established party loyalties". (Inglehart (1979: 353)*

Certainly, countries differ in the degree this is the case. In Belgium and Ireland, is was found that "left" and "right" parties didn't differ at all in terms of issue positions, while Italy, Denmark and France showed quite considerable issue-related polarizations (Huber 1989). On the other hand, Converse and Pierce's (1986, chap. 4) study of France found that left-right orientations were strongly related to partisanship, while issue orientations played a much lesser role.
In his effort to disentangle partisan from issue influences on LR self placements, Huber found that party identification was responsible for one point (on a 1 to 10 scale) when issue attitudes were controlled (Huber 1989: 613). Most importantly, it was found that

> *"In all countries the left parties have a negative coefficient while the right parties have a positive coefficient, indicating that partisan loyalties push party supporters away from the center of the left-right continuum."(Huber 1989: 614)*

In his comparative international study Freire finds that

> *"…..in eight out of 23 cases, the variance in individual left–right self-placement that can be explained by social factors, values, and partisan orientations is greater than or equal to 49*

percent. Only Austria and Ireland had levels which were less than 28 percent." (Freire 2006: 370)

In his study based on the World Values Survey 1990 and the European Value survey 1999, Freire (2006: 370) has shown that eight of the 23 countries, "partisan orientation" turned out to be the most important element in explaining left–right orientation. More specifically, this was true for Portugal (1990 and 1999), France (1999), Germany (1999), Italy (1990 and 1999), the Netherlands (1999) and Belgium (1999).

Evidently, such collectivistic orientations reduce drastically heavy loads of information gathering and synthetic judgment formation associated with self-guided ideologization, and they make individuals more prone to act in accordance with supraindividual programs and orders, and to maintain a clear-cut self-identity as well as a consistent public identity in political matters.

> *"Party identification allows voters to avoid an extensive processing of information, while at the same time providing them with sufficient confidence in the quality of their choice. This does not mean that party identifiers do not pay any attention to the political messages delivered in the public space, but rather that their party identification will bias the way they process this new information. In this sense, party identification has a sheltering effect, meaning, that it protects citizens from the influence of political communication. In our present context, this implies that party identifiers are less likely to base their electoral choice on issue-related considerations. In other words, party identification is expected to mitigate the effect of issue-voting on party choice. Voters who do not identify with a party, by contrast, do not possess partisan loyalties that may pre-structure their electoral choice. As a result, they are more likely to rely on issue-related considerations when making their electoral choice." (Nicolet/Sciarini 2006: 163/164).*

In contrast to Nicolet and Sciarini, however, we don't accept the premise that there is necessarily a trade off between self-guided and party guided ideological constructions. Instead, we assume that these two dimensions can vary independently of each other: adding up to a total "degree of ideological thinking" that may be high, medium or low.

2. Theoretical determinants of self-guided and party-guided ideologization

Size of community

There are many reasons to expect that self-guided as well as party-guided ideologization is positively associated with community size. In smaller settings, community affairs are widely considered as nonpolitical issues to be settled by common sense, technical rationality or by applying supralocal legal rules and administrative procedures: so that there is no place for power play and controversies on the level of values and goals (Vidich & Bensman 1968; Holler 1981; Geser 2003). Under such conditions, we expect that the need for ideological structuring is much less than in settings where "real politics" like on cantonal or the national level takes place.

Thus, the author has shown in a previous study that executive members of larger communities (and cities) were far more disposed to maintain highly ideologized attitudes: by organizing their

different issue opinions "horizontally" in a consistent fashion and by relating them "vertically" more tightly to the overarching dimension of left and right (Geser 2009a; 2009b).

In addition, party-guided identifications may be hampered by in smaller municipalities by the fact that organized party sections either don't exist or are too weak (in terms of finances, personnel and organization) and too inactive to take decisive stands, to formulate programs and to maintain a sharp profile vis-à-vis other organized groupings. In particular, their ideological consistency during time will be low, insofar as it depends on very few individuals who may easily fluctuate due to transitory commitment or intercommunal migration.

Leftist, centrist and rightist parties

Some researchers dealing with the semantics associated with the LR scale have indicated that basic asymmetries exist between the two poles. Thus, it has been found that postmaterialist values are strong predictors of leftist placements, while opinions on materialist are more determinative for rightist positions (Potter 2001).

In several other empirical studies, it was found that rather tight correlations between issue positions and left-right self ratings exist for the left half of the continuum, while on the right side, the explanatory power of political attitudes is much reduced. As Laponce concludes from a meta-analysis of such studies, this is true for most issues conventionally related to the LR-continuum: e.g. attitudes toward economic regulation, nationalism or gender equality (Laponce 1981: 158ff.).

In his comparative study including eight countries, Huber has similarly found considerable differences in issue attitudes between leftist and centrist voters, while differences between centrist and rightist respondents were much less pronounced or even inexistent (Huber 1989: 612). As the author himself has verified in an earlier study on local parties in Switzerland, the same is also true for items related to financial policy, immigration policy or environmental protection (Geser 1992).

As a consequence, we hypothesize that impacts of party membership as well as issue opinions on ideological self placement are more strongly on the left than on the right section of the scale. In addition, we may expect particularly low impacts of centrist parties, because given their moderate and often volatile and undecided standing on many issues, members may not see them as adequate platforms for anchoring their own political identity.

Number of organized parties in the community

In two party systems, Parties have become rather depolarized in order to be able to win 50% of the votes. As a consequence, they have to cultivate rather diffuse identities (in order to appeal to very broad population strata), so that party identification is not a good anchor for individual ideological standings in terms of left and right. With increasing number of organized groupings, the degree of ideological thinking may rise for two reasons. First, every single party has more leeway to appeal to special electorate groups and give priority to internal purity and coherence, because it has not to take the overall perspective of the total community. Secondly - following the functional theory of Fuchs and Klingemann (1990) - parties in complex political systems have to streamline and simplify their positions and programs, so that citizens are better able to make

electoral decisions without having to gather and synthesize much information. As a consequence,

- *party-guided* ideological identifications may become more pronounced because parties provide a more secure ground for anchoring personal convictions and may also exert more authority on their individual members;
- *self-related* ideology may also be strengthened insofar as the more polarized political climate incites individuals to take more determined positions on the generalized conceptual level of left and right.

Against this hypothesis, however, it might be objected that party organization on the communal level is not relevant insofar as municipal politicians derive their ideological standing from supralocal (Cantonal or National) levels (where of course more polarized and ideologized inter-party relationships prevail).

Relationship of incumbent to the political party

It is highly plausible that incumbents rely more on party guidance in their ideological stances when they maintain a tight relationship to their political grouping.

First of all, candidates may identify more with their party when they are elected under proportional instead of majoritarian rule. In the latter case, they have to secure an absolute majority of votes stemming from various parties: so that they are motivated to maintain a pragmatic responsiveness toward various segments of the population. Under proportional rules, however, they have to help their party winning so many list votings that their election is secured. *Secondly,* party guidance may correlate with the degree to which a candidate is supported by their party in the election campaign, particularly when they have to prevail against serious competitive runners. *Third*, it may co-vary with their level of party commitment as it is manifested in the fact that they occupy a formal office (e. g. as presidents, board members or Cantonal delegates) within the local section. *Fourth*, it may be higher when the local parties are highly influential within the community, because in this case, incumbents have more reasons to identify with their grouping in order to participate in its collective power.

Evidently, reverse causal relationships have also to be taken into consideration: political parties may be more motivated to support candidates highly committed to (and conforming with) the party (and select them preferentially for formal intraparty positions), and competition may well cause parties to increase their internal cohesion or even their social control over its core members (Geser 2005).

Status of incumbent in the executive board

In a negative perspective "ideological thinking" denotes a tendency

- to cling to rigid mental stereotypes instead of recognizing the reality and adapting pragmatically to situational conditions;
- to evaluate all issues according to the same monistic guidelines instead of judging each on its own intrinsic merits, and
- to identify with ready-made collectivistic opinion patterns instead of relying on one's capacity of autonomous thought.

Lerner et. al. (1991) have argued that ideological thinking is most pronounced within marginal (e. g. cultural) elites not involved in far-reaching (political or economic) decisions. This could result from the fact that powerlessness offers better opportunities to preserve "ideological purity" because no full "reality tests" have to be faced, while high policy involvement creates pressures to adapt pragmatically to particular problems and situational conditions.

By following this argumentation, it can be assumed that that the president of the executive board is under particular pressure to adopt a suprapartisan standing by catalyzing interparty consensus and represent the community as a whole, while ordinary board members have more leeway to articulate their own (or their party's) positions.

Size of the executive

While all executive members have to function in a consociational body where the pressure to reach pragmatic compromise decisions sets limits to unconditional party allegiance, the intensity of such pressures may be correlated with the size of the executive body. When there are only three or five members, each of them represents quite heterogeneous voters and has to carry a large responsibility for the commonweal, making it difficult to pursue one-sided ideological values and goals. When there are seven nine or even more seats, executives are more similar to legislative bodies where each member primarily functions as a party delegate, so that decisions are more likely to be based on voting majorities than on consensus within the board. As a consequence, we may expect party-guided ideology to be increase with the size of the executive body.

Education and level of political motivation

Self-guided inductive generalizations have of course to be based on adequate cognitions about what is considered to be left or right in the domestic national society and political order, and individuals have to be able to synthesize different values and issue positions in order to attain an overall value on the one-dimensional LR scale

Evidently, higher education may help to become aware of such cultural patterns because it goes along with more extensive reading and larger contact networks with other people who are adequately informed. In many ways, ideological thinking can be considered a correlate of higher intellectual sophistication, as it is characterized by the capacity to relate specific issues to more abstract principles and to organize different attitudes to coherent and logically consistent wholes (Converse 1964; Gerring 1997). In addition, such skills will be more pronounced when somebody is highly interested in politics and engages in frequent political communication.

This view gave rise to the notion that people with high education and political interest are most likely to structure attitudes toward political issues in ideologically consistent ways (Converse 1964; Zaller 1992; Federico/Schneider 2007), while political views of the educated tend to be incoherent, volatile and logically flawed (Bishop 2005; Converse 1964; Nie & Anderson 1974; McGuire 1985/1999).

In conformity with Converse's observation that highly educated and politically interested individuals were more inclined to think in ideological terms (Converse 1964), various more recent studies have shown that politically sophisticated individuals are better able to make use of political labels like "left" and "right" because they are better informed about their meaning

(Sniderman et al. 1991; Kitschelt & Hellemans 1990; Klingemann 1979 etc.). Similarly, correlations between issue positions and left-right self placements are stronger when the level of political cognition is high, while institutional influences (stemming from religious adherence or political partisanship) tend to diminish (Inglehart & Klingemann 1976). This accords with Daltons "cognitive mobilization thesis" which states that with increased levels of education and political sophistication, individuals become more able to engage in self-guided ideology building, so that impacts of party membership decline (Dalton 1984; Dalton & Rohrschneider 1987). In accordance with this hypothesis, Alt has found that highly educated respondents in the UK had a threefold higher tendency to reduce party loyalty between 1964 and 1974 than individuals on the lowest level of education (Alt 1984: 304).

Political role orientations

While all of them are committed to a basically democratic political order, executive role incumbents nevertheless differ in the weight given to various criteria when they make their decisions. Some may rely primarily on their own convictions, others on the tides of public opinions, thirds on opinions reigning within their party or the executive body to which they belong (e. g. Prewitt & Eulau 1969). Evidently, we expect self-guided ideology to be most strongly articulated when they base decision making on personal convictions, and party-guided ideology to be more pronounced when their measure rod is the standing of their political grouping. In cases where responsiveness toward public opinions or other political office holder prevails, we expect a "pragmatic" orientation characterized by low values on both dimensions of ideological guidance.

Age cohort

Finally, there are several reasons to expect that older cohorts to differ from younger age groups in the way they relate their ideological self placements to issue opinions and political parties.
First of all, younger generations may be more affected by the general erosion of the impact of social cleavages on their own political standings: so that subjective values and opinions of all kinds may gain more importance (Inglehart, 1984: 32: Knutsen and Scarbrough, 1995: 496).
In his international comparative study, Freire concludes from the comparison between two cohorts (born before and after 1945) that

> *"in the majority of the cases analyzed, we can conclude that the erosion of the effects of social structural factors on left–right orientation is outweighed by an increase in the role of subjective social identities in defining left–right attitudes." (Freire 2006: 367).*

Secondly, younger role incumbents may be more influenced by recent processes of value change that have brought an increased emphasis on goals like personal autonomy, spontaneity, creativity and self actualization, while "traditional" values stressing discipline, conformity, orderliness and loyalty have become less important (Klages 1985; Inglehart 1997). Based on such premises, Dalton has asserted already in 1984 that

> *"…partisan dealignment is more than a temporary phase in the history of advanced industrial democracies. The growing sophistication of mass publics should continue to lessen the role of partisanship as a framework for political behavior." (Dalton 1984: 282).*

In operational terms, we might thus expect that younger age categories diverge from older co-horts by a higher level of self-guided ideologization, but a reduced impact of party adherence on their self placements of the LR scale.

By using a typological conceptualization, four ideal-type constellations of ideology formation can be distinguished (Table 1):

Table 1: A fourfold typology of party guidance / self guidance constellations

	Self guidance: low	Self guidance: high
Party guidance: low	3	2
Party- guidance: high	1	4

Type 1 represents fully self-guided incumbents who base their LR self placement exclusively on their own subjective attitudes toward political issues: regardless of the party to which they hap-pen to belong. We max expect such constellations to be frequent among highly sophisticated and experienced politicians holding office in a location where political parties are either absent or weak and low profiled: so that they don't provide clear ideological orientation.

Some of them may represent Dalton's "apartisans" who

> *"are not attached to political parties. Nevertheless, they are involved in politics. If the cog-nitive mobilization thesis is correct, this group should possess the political skills necessary to orient themselves to politics without depending on party labels." (Dalton 1984: 271)*

Type 2 describes board members who anchor their ideological standing fully in the party to which they belong: irrespective of their personal opinions about specific political matters. Such constellations may be found frequently among representatives of strong and highly profiled parties and among incumbents strongly dependent on their party, particularly in cases where their personal sophistication in political matters is low.

Among them, we may find those to which Dalton applies the term "ritual partisans"

> *"to describe citizens mobilized into political action primarily by their strong party attach-ments. Party cues play a large functional role in guiding political behavior in the absence of cognitive mobilization." (Dalton 1984: 270)*

Representatives of Type 3 may be less common among political role incumbents than among many ordinary citizens as they are included in demoscopic survey studies. Their self placement on the left-right scale is only loosely (or not at all) connected with their personal opinions as well as their membership in any political party. On the one hand, this category may comprise "apolitical" office holders

> *"who are neither attached to a political party nor psychologically involved in politics." (Dal-ton 1994: 270)*

as they may be mainly found in smaller communities where parties are weak and political con-troversies lacking, particularly among incumbents low in political motivation and formal educa-

tion. On the other hand, this category may include highly "pragmatic" politicians who are low on ideological commitments because they adapt their opinions about specific issues flexibly according to changing circumstances and tactical considerations, so that their general political outlook doesn't depend the party to which they are affiliated.

Finally, Type 4 incumbents coincide with Daltons "cognitive partisans" who

> *"…are highly rated on both mobilization dimensions. Their strong party attachments should stimulate involvement in party-related activities. At the same time, this group is psychologically involved in politics even when party cues are lacking. Since the partisan and cognitive dimensions overlap, these are reinforcing influences for cognitive partisans."* (Dalton 1984: 272).

They may be found among highly motivated and sophisticated executive members who are representing strong and highly profiled parties (on which they are highly dependent for nomination and election), particularly in urban settings where a highly politicized, ideologically polarized political climate prevails.

3. Studying members of Swiss communal executives

In 2008, Switzerland was segmented in 2768 municipalities ranging from 22 (!) to 363273 inhabitants (median: 870), distributed among 26 Cantons located in 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.

Research on Swiss communities means to study local governmental subunits that are of course mainly occupied with just executing supralocal policies on the basis of detailed rules; but apart from such administrative tasks, they have all retained some crucial areas of autonomous political action: e. g, in the fiscal field where they can decide about 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 in the wide field of "facultative" tasks ranging from child daycare facilities and swimming halls to public libraries and cultural events.

These genuine 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 at least into the more sizable (urban) communities.

Thus, the communal level has been affected by the increasing ideological polarization that has taken place in Swiss politics during the last 30 years: giving rise to a most rightist "populist" party (Swiss People's party) on the one hand and two leftist parties (Social Democrats and the Greens) standing out by more fundamentalist standings than most of their sister parties in other European countries.

On the other hand, ideologization is moderated by the "consociational democracy" (Lijphart 1977) universally practiced in Switzerland on all political levels. Thus executive boards are designed to function as multiparty bodies in which delegates of all major parties are represented and permanently pressured to come to terms with each other.   It is led by a "Gemeindepräsident" who has no final say: just acting as a "primus inter pares" in order to catalyze compromise decisions within the board.

As it has been shown in a previous study, this collegial decision making has the effect that within the board, a lower level of ideological polarization than on the party level is maintained: the delegates of rightist parties shifting somewhat to the left, and the representatives of leftist parties to a similar degree to the right (Geser 2011).

Concerning this study here, it might be argued for the same reasons that the degree of ideologization may be lowered (e. g. in comparison with members of legislative bodies), because pragmatic considerations force incumbents to dissociate their specific issue positions from their own generalized ideological standings as well as from those of their parties.

4. Methods and Data

Between September 2008 and March 2009, a nationwide mail survey including all 15'500 members of Swiss communal executives was conducted. The return rate 8111 (about 54%) was much higher than originally envisaged: providing a data file outstanding internationally by its large size and its potentials for a manifold of multivariate comparative studies. Most of the incumbents fulfill their mandates on a honorary or side job basis, while only 211 (2.6%) 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 most of the respondents were either nonpartisans or members of one of 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).

The figures in Table 2 show that the (almost 40%) nonpartisans concentrate mostly on smaller communities (below 5000 inhabitants), while the Swiss People's party as well as the liberals have their major strongholds in middle-sized municipalities, and the Social Democrats are disprortionately present in urban areas.

In the mailed-out questionnaire, respondents were asked to indicate their own location on an eleven point left-right scale (0-10) as well as to give a judgment on the position of their local party section on the same scale. Table 3 corroborates the expectation that delegates of the populist Swiss People's party tended mostly to right, while Social Democrats cluster on the left side and incumbents of the more moderate two parties (Liberals and Christian Democrats) spread over a wide middle range of the scale. Unsurprisingly, nonpartisans showed the broadest distribution: resembling that of the centrist Christian Democratic Party.

Table 2: Frequency distribution of responding executive members of Swiss communities: according to party affiliation and community size.

Party affiliation:	Number of inhabitants in the community:							
	-500	501-1000	1001-2000	2001-5000	5001-10000	10001-20000	20001+	Total
Nonpartisans	1251	863	553	308	44	26	1	3046
Liberals	100	152	306	477	226	121	22	1404
Christian Democrats	79	123	269	306	149	67	19	1012
Swiss People's Party	55	110	179	294	107	54	10	809
Social Democrats	34	53	127	238	141	93	38	724
Other groupings	57	106	179	210	81	45	23	701
Total	1576	1407	1613	1833	748	406	113	7696

Table 3: Frequency distribution of Swiss communal executive members on the Left-Right Scale: according to party affiliation (self placements; percentage values)

Party affiliation:	Left-Right Scale:										
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Nonpartisans	0.2	1.0	5.1	9.6	13.1	21.7	15.9	17.0	12.3	3.1	1.0
Liberals	0.0	0.1	1.0	4.0	7.3	13.1	22.8	27.0	18.5	5.3	0.9
Christian Democrats	0.2	0.1	1.8	7.5	16.3	23.1	21.0	17.9	8.5	3.1	0.6
Swiss People's Party	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6	1.4	9.0	17.8	28.4	31.9	8.2	2.7
Social Democrats	1.3	8.8	26.2	35.3	18.5	5.7	2.3	1.4	0.3	0.1	0.0
Other groupings	0.6	3.8	12.5	15.0	14.4	15.4	15.0	13.8	7.2	1.6	0.6
Total	0.3	1.6	5.8	10.1	11.9	16.7	16.7	18.7	13.5	3.7	1.0

In accordance with the above argument concerning consociational democracy, , it turns out that members of the two pole parties (SVP and SPS) tend somewhat more to the center than their respective local party section to which they belong, while delegates of he two moderate parties do not differ significantly from their grouping (Table 4).

Very similar results have been attained in an earlier survey (conducted in 1989 and 2002) where local party leaders were asked to locate their party section as well as the cantonal and national level of party organization (Table 5). Evidently, it has to be expected that supralocal party organizations are predominantly chosen as anchors for personal positions, because ideological divergences are more distinctly expressed on these higher levels.

Table 4: Average self placements and placements of the local party section on the left-right scale (only partisan incumbents).

	Average placements on the Left-Right Scale	
	Self placement	**Placement of the local party**
Liberals	6.39	6.48
Christian Democrats	5.60	5.50
Swiss People's Party	7.14	7.39
Social Democrats	2.97	2.72
Other groupings	4.73	4.70
Total	5.56	5.60

A closer inspection of Table 5 shows that three parties have experienced a major shift to the left between 1989 and 2002: with the significant exception of the (rapidly expanding) Swiss People's party that has shifted to the right. Evidently, all these changes are most pronounced on the National level: resulting in an increase of total interparty polarization (=difference between People's party and Social Democrats) from 4.0 to 5.0 scale points.

Table 5: Average placements of local party sections, Cantonal parties and National parties on the LR-scale (answers given by local party presidents in 2002).

Party:	Local Party Section		Cantonal Party		National Party	
	1989	**2002**	**1989**	**2009**	**1989**	**2002**
Liberals	6.9	6.8	7.2	6.8	7.5	6.8
Christian Democrats	6.3	6.0	6.5	5.9	6.4	5.8
Swiss People's Party	7.0	7.1	7.3	7.5	7.1	7.9
Social Democrats	3.3	3.1	3.2	2.8	3.2	2.9

For assessing issue opinions, respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with eight political postulates notoriously propagated by leftist or rightist parties. As expected, Social Democrats are most likely and delegates of the People's party least likely to agree with the five leftist demands, while the two moderate parties show medium values. In the case of the three conservative claims, the Social Democrats contrast clearly against the other three parties (Table 6).

For the following analyses, a summative index "support for leftist issues" was constructed by adding the eight answers: providing the first five issues with a positive and the last three issues with a negative sign.

Table 6: Average Approval/rejection of five leftist and three rightist issue positions of Swiss communal executive members: according to *party affiliation*.*

Issue:	Liberals	Christian Democrats	People's Party	Social Democrats	Non-partisans
More expenses for Social Welfare (+)	-21	-5	-40	61	-7
More support for child daycare (+)	20	21	-30	74	8
Mehr public expenses for culture (+)	18	30	-8	53	19
Stricter environmental policy (+)	39	45	19	79	42
Communal voting rights for immigrants (+)	-46	-42	-79	37	-21
Attraction of more rich taxpayers (-)	57	50	55	20	36
Lower local tax rates (-)	59	44	57	-13	35
Liberalization of public services (-)	42	33	35	5	21

* Scale ranging from -100 (disagree totally) to +100 (agree totally), with intermediate points -50 (disagree moderately) and +50 (agree moderately).

5. Empirical Results

5.1 Size of the community

In a previous study it has been shown that executive members of larger communities (and cities) were far more disposed to maintain highly ideologized attitudes: by organizing their different issue opinions in a consistent fashion ("horizontal coupling") and by relating them more tightly to the overarching dimension of left and right ("vertical coupling") (Geser 2009).
However, it has not been assessed whether this ideologization is the result of a self-guided effort, and to what degree it just mirrors the affiliation to political parties. In the first case, high differences should remain, and in the second case, they should shrink or even vanish if party membership is controlled.
The results of Table 7 show convincingly that it is the impact of party affiliation that tends to increase spectacularly with growing municipal size, while the share of variance explained by issue opinions is highest in the smallest communities and remains on about the same level in communities of medium and larger size.
A closer inspection reveals that with increasing size, only the fiscal issue retains considerable Beta-coefficient, while issues associated with ecology, foreigners and even social policy lose their power to define the standing of incumbents on the ideological scale.

Table 7: The *size of community* as a factor conditioning the impact of issue opinions and party membership on left-right self placement of communal executive members (Partisans and nonpartisans): (multivariate regressions, BETA-coefficients and R2).

Predictors:	Number of inhabitants in the community:						
	-500	501-1000	1001-2000	2001-5000	5001-10000	10001-20000	20001+
Lowest possible tax rates	.12**	.12**	.13**	.13**	.15**	.12**	.14**
Budget increase for culture	-.07**	-.01	-.02	-.07**	-.03	-.06	.08
Budget increase for child daycare	-.05	-.05	-.09**	-.08**	-.07	-.10*	-.08
Budget increase for social welfare	-.22**	-.23**	-.17**	-.14**	-.15**	-.12**	-.13
More environmental protection	-.21**	-.11**	-.12**	-.08**	-.16**	-.09*	.04
Voting rights for foreigners	-.21**	-.21**	-.12**	-.17**	-.13**	-.16**	-.15*
Promoting economic growth	.11**	.04	.05*	.09**	.05	.01	.08
Liberalization of public services	.17**	.12**	.11**	.10**	.01	.02	.13*
Member of liberal party (FDP)	.08**	.09**	.12**	.09**	.13**	.19**	.13**
Member of people's party (SVP)	.08**	.11**	.13**	.17**	.14**	.14**	.13**
Member of Christian Party (CVP)	.06*	-.02	-.04	-.02	.01	.10*	.19**
Member of Social Democr. Party (SP)	-.09**	-.15**	-.22**	-.23**	-.22**	-.20**	-.25**
Member of Green Party (GP)	--	-.01	-.02	-.06**	-.06*	-.10**	-.22**
% explained variance: total (R2*100)	34.8	32.4	39.0	51.7	56.6	63.4	78.0
% explained by issues:	*28.3*	*21.8*	*18.6*	*21.8*	*22.8*	*23.2*	*18.3*
% explained by parties:	*6.5*	*10.6*	*20.4*	*29.9*	*33.8*	*40.2*	*59.7*
% Explained variance: Model including only issues	32.4	29.9	31.6	44.9	53.0	58.0	72.1
% Explained variance: Model including only parties	8.4	12.8	24.8	36.8	46.0	51.0	69.1
N =	*1179*	*1125*	*1337*	*1600*	*666*	*360*	*100*

Looking at the individual parties, it is evident that membership in Social Democratic and Green groupings gains increasing relevance in determining leftist self placements irrespective of personal attitudes on specific issues, while belonging to the centrist CVP goes along with more rightist ideological positions. On the conservative side, membership in the more moderate FDP and the more radical "Swiss People's party" has about the same effect of pushing respondents to the right. On its lower parts, Table 7 shows that in smallest communities, party membership adds extremely little to the explained variance achieved by including only issue opinions in the

equation, while in larger cities, about almost eighty percent of the explained variance is grasped by including just the party membership dummies.

5.2 Leftist, centrist and rightist positions

According to the (empirically well founded) arguments in the introductory chapter, it is expected that higher levels of (self-related as well as party-related) ideology can be found on the left side than on the right half of the left-right scale. In the present study, this hypothesis is well borne out by several empirical results.

A first confirmation is found in Figures 1, 2, and 3 that inform about the detailed interactions between issue effects and the effects of different party affiliations in communities of smaller, medium and larger size. These figures primarily reveal the outstanding tendency of Social Democrats to articulate a pronounced leftism irrespective of their attitudinal configurations that may well coincide with those of heir colleagues from centrist or even rightist parties. This heavy weight of partisanship (relative to the impact of self-guided orientations) may be caused by the fact that almost by definition, Social democrats may be more prone to accept collectivistic guidance than more "individualistic" incumbents from bourgeois parties. Or they may mirror the fact that the center of Social Democratic party activity is located on a supralocal (especially national) level, so that it's leftist ideology is associated with "greater issues" (like the relationship to the European Union for example) that cannot be grasped with items related to municipal problems.

As a second confirmatory regularity, it can be seen that party membership gains importance with increasing community size, but only for incumbents with rather leftist opinions. Thus, while the self placements of nonpartisans almost coincides with those of Social democrats when they give full support to the eight leftist issues, members of the FDP and CVP locate themselves much more toward the political center. A similar – while much more modest – centripetality holds for right-wing CVP members who locate themselves somewhat nearer to the center than nonpartisans and adherents of he other two parties. Evidently, this centripetality contrasts with the study of Huber (1989) who found only centrifugal effects of political parties: drawing leftists more to the left and rightists more to the right (Huber 1989).

Overall, the results support the hypothesis that nonpartisans are most prone to rely on self-guidance (by associating their left-right self placement rather tightly with their subjective opinions), while in the case of party members, this covariance is reduced by the impact of their affiliation.

Figure 1: Average self placement values on the ieft-right scale: according to party membership and degree of support for eight leftist issues : communities with more than 5000 inhabitants (N=2378; 2008).

Degree of support for eight leftist issues (scale ranging from -800 to +800)

Figure 2: Average self placement values on the ieft-right scale: according to party member-ship and degree of support for eight leftist issues : communities between 1000 and 5000 inhabitants (N=3012; 2008).

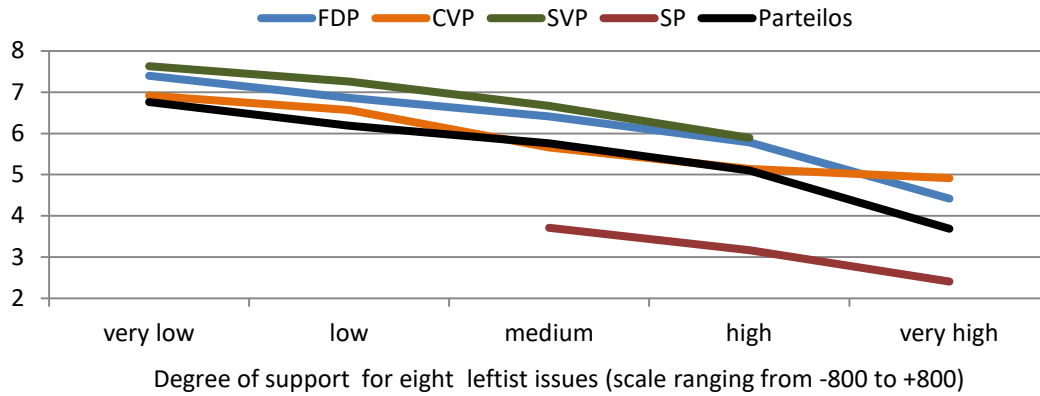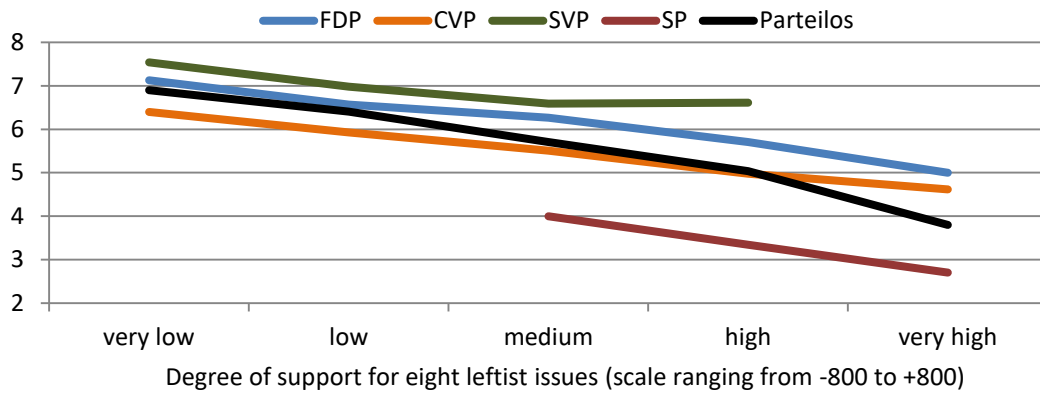Degree of support for eight leftist issues (scale ranging from -800 to +800)

Figure 3: Average self placement values on the ieft-right scale: according to party membership and degree of support for eight leftist issues : communities with more than 5000 inhabitants (N=1143; 2008).

Degree of support for eight leftist issues (scale ranging from -800 to +800)
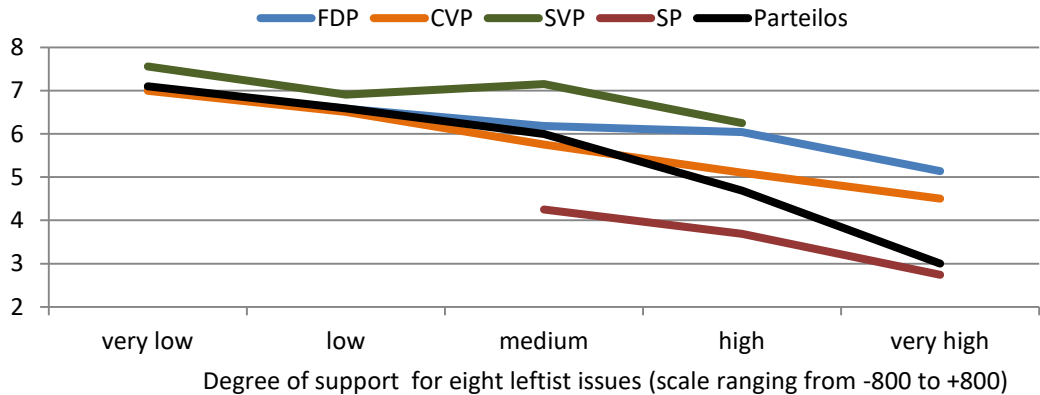
Table 8 provides some further insights into the asymmetries of self-guidance and party guidance between left and right. In communities of all size categories, the combined explanatory power of issues and party membership is lowest among the most rightist and highest among the most leftist respondents, and this divergence increases drastically with growing municipal size. When the two effects are separated, it is revealed that party adherence is by far the more influential factor, but that attitude differentials toward issues are also somewhat more consequential on the leftist section of the scale. In other words: the relationship between issue attitudes and left right self placement is nonlinear insofar as with increasing leftism , the impact of issue attitudes on ideological standings becomes more tight.

Table 8: *Leftism, centrism and rightism* **as a factor conditioning the impact of issue attitudes and party membership on left-right self placements of communal executive members (Percentage of explained variance (=R2*100) of multivariate regressions; only partisans).**

Community size	Support for leftist issues*	Model I: Party alone	Model II: Issues alone	Model III: Party and Issues together			N =
				Party	Issues	total	
	Low	7.7	6.4	7.4	5.3	12.7	*614*
-2000	Medium	13.8	2.2	13.2	1.2	14.8	*675*
	High	22.4	23.9	20.0	13.0	33.3	*543*
	low	10.1	12.0	9.7	9.4	19.1	*477*
2001-5000	medium	18.4	6.1	18.1	3.2	21.3	*485*
	high	36.9	29.2	34.3	10.1	44.4	*411*
	low	5.8	8.5	5.0	6.6	11.6	*192*
5001-10000	medium	15.7	1.3	10.3	0.5	15.8	*222*
	high	30.7	28.7	27.7	12.1	39.8	*214*
	low	11.5	8.2	10.3	5.2	15.5	*128*
10001+	medium	15.5	7.8	14.4	3.4	17.8	*105*
	high	51.9	36.3	48.6	8.7	57.3	*212*

* According to the value of an aggregated scale off 8 issues, ranging from -800 to +800. (low: -250 or less; medium: -200 – 0; high: +50 or more).

In addition, it becomes evident that in all size categories, party adherence is a very potent independent factor because its explanatory power is hardly reduced when issue opinions are added to the equation, while the variance explained by issues shrinks considerable (especially on the left side) when party adherence is additionally included. This implies that issue opinions are heavily conditioned by partisanship, while reverse effects are much less pronounced.

5.3 Number of formally organized local parties

Contrary to plausible theoretical arguments, the degree of party guidance is not diminished when there are no organized party sections within the community. In middle-sized communities (between 1000 and 5000 inhabitants), the explanation power of party affiliation is even highest when no local parties are existing (Tab. 9). This supports the competitive assumption that whenever individuals anchor their own ideology in the party, they choose supralocal party levels where this ideology is more clearly defined and manifested (e. g. in the form of position papers, official programs, legislative decisions etc.). The presence of local parties may even hamper such supralocal anchorings because given their often quite "pragmatic" orientation, they may contribute more to a blurring than to a sharpening of party-specific ideological contours.

Table 9: The *number of formally organized local parties* as a factor conditioning the impact of issue attitudes and party membership on left-right self placements of communal executive members (Percentage of explained variance (=R2*100) of multivariate regressions; only partisans).

Community size:	Number of local parties:	Model I: Party alone	Model II: Issues alone	Model III: Party and Issues together			N =
				Party	Issues	total	
-500	0	23.7	46.2	19.5	30.6	50.1	*90*
	1-2	17.9	55.3	3.1	51.6	54.7	*55*
	3+	19.1	26.8	8.0	21.3	29.3	*75*
501-1000	0	18.4	30.0	15.7	21.7	37.4	*92*
	1-2	29.6	39.0	13.8	23.1	46.9	*94*
	3+	21.4	42.0	12.9	31.4	44.3	*170*
1001-2000	0	41.6	36.2	36.9	14.0	50.9	*219*
	1-2	32.6	32.3	29.2	15.8	45.0	*117*
	3+	30.7	28.6	26.7	12.5	39.2	*190*
2001-5000	0	47.3	41.8	48.3	10.5	58.8	*144*
	1-2	43.8	42.1	40.2	14.0	54.2	*125*
	3+	42.6	50.1	32.7	24.3	57.0	*794*

5.4 Majoritarian and proportional election rules

It is well known that under rules of proportionality, candidates are particularly inclined to identify with their party, because their own political fate depends on the amount of list votes won by their particular political grouping (e. g. Ware 1996: 289ff.). Campaigning as representatives of

such a grouping, they may consequentially be inclined to adopt the party's collective ideological standing as heir own.

Under majoritarian rules, candidates will be more disposed to downplay their party allegiance, because their task is to collect as many personal votes as possible from broad and heterogene-ous segments of the population. Especially in two-person games, voters have little reason to rely on left-right schemes, because they can base their decision sufficiently on more detailed comparisons between the two candidates (e. g. by considering their attitudes towards currently salient issues; Ware 1996: 289ff.). Thus, it might be expected that candidates maintain less ideo-logical profile when they run under rules of plurality, and that they show a particularly low incli-nation to comply with party-guided ideological positions. It is crucial to restrict the test of this hypothesis to nonpresidential executive members, because presidents usually elected in a sepa-rate election based on majoritarian rule.

Looking at the results in Table 10, it is evident that theoretical expectations are borne out only for middle-sized communities (between 2000 and 10 000 inhabitants), while smaller settings do not show a clear trend, and in cities, we even find that majoritarian, not proportional rule goes along with higher levels of party-guided ideologization.

Table 10: *Majoritarian and proportional election rules* **as a factor conditioning the impact of issue atti-tudes and party membership on left-right self placements of communal executive members. (Percent-age of explained variance (=R2*100) of multivariate regressions; only partisans).**

Community size:	Electoral rules	Model I: Party alone	Model II: Issues alone	Model III: Party and Issues together			N =
				Party	Issues	total	
-2000	majoritarian	28.0	34.6	25.4	19.9	43.3	536
	proportional	29.4	38.9	23.2	22.4	45.6	497
2001-5000	majoritarian	42.7	41.6	37.3	15.8	53.1	229
	proportional	51.2	54.2	41.0	21.5	62.5	500
5001-10000	majoritarian	45.4	56.5	26.8	32.5	59.3	263
	proportional	54.4	50.9	45.9	14.5	60.4	166
10001+	majoritarian	63.3	60.7	53.2	15.9	69.1	201
	proportional	55.6	61.2	43.2	23.7	66.9	88

In the case of small villages, we may guess that *proportional* rule will not make much difference because political polarization is generally low and parties too weak to develop high ideological profiles. In cites, on the other hand, *majoritarian* rule will not be very consequential because an ideologically polarized political climate pervades communal politics to such a degree that run-ning candidates have no choice than to be seen (and to see themselves) as representatives of specific political parties (on whose campaign support they heavily depend).

5.5 Party support in election campaign

It is reasonable to assume that elected politicians will be more inclined to choose the party as an anchor for their personal ideological standing when they are heavily dependent on their grouping for winning the election. Vice versa, a similar correlation can be expected when parties are more disposed to provide support to candidates known to maintain high identification and loyalty to their political grouping.

Table 11: The *degree of party support in election campaign* as a factor conditioning the impact of Issue attitudes and party membership on left-right self placements of communal executive members. (Percentage of explained variance (=R2*100) of multivariate regressions; only partisans).

Community size:	Party support:	Model I: Party alone	Model II: Issues alone	Model III: Party and Issues together			N =
				Party	Issues	total	
-2000	high	33.9	34.8	29.9	15.9	45.8	986
	moderate	26.4	35.4	19.8	20.8	40.7	441
	low/none	16.8	36.2	13.5	27.4	40.9	347
2001-50000	high	44.5	47.3	36.4	20.0	56.4	1047
	moderate	40.5	44.8	36.0	18.7	54.7	274
	low/none	18.3	41.2	7.7	33.6	41.3	39
5001-10000	high	51.8	50.6	32.9	17.7	50.6	508
	moderate	29.0	52.3	9.8	42.5	52.3	104
	low/none	--	--		--	--	10
10001+	high	61.8	63.1	42.5	20.6	63.1	362
	moderate	34.4	42.5	18.4	24.1	42.5	76
	low/none	--	--	--	--	--	2

While nonpartisan incumbents usually cannot count on any party support in their election campaigns, even partisan candidates differ extremely in the degree to which they can rely on such backings, because in many (particularly smaller) communities, their party may not exist as a formal grouping, or if it does, its resources (in terms of money, personnel and organization) are very limited. Thus, we may hypothesize that high party support is positively associated with party-guided (and maybe negatively correlated with self-guided) ideologization, and that this relationship becomes more pronounced in larger (especially urban) municipalities.
This expectation is convincingly borne out in Table 11 which shows that impacts of party membership are strongest when party support is high - and very small when candidate could not rely on any backing by their political group. By contrast, the partialized impacts of issue opinions (expressing self-guided ideological thinking) are considerable higher when party support is only

moderate or nil. As hypothesized, the consequences of party support are somewhat lower in the smallest size category (below 2000 inhabitants); but fully reliable conclusions are hampered by the fact that in middle-sized and larger communities, almost all candidates could rely at least on a moderate sponsorship by their political party. This higher support by parties is a major background variable that explains why party-guided ideology has much more weight in larger municipalities (Table 7), because at least up to 10000 inhabitants, size effects completely vanish when support levels are controlled.

5.6 Formal office in the local party

It is to be expected that incumbents are more disposed to identify with party ideology when they maintain a tight organizational relationship to their party: e. g. by occupying an official position in its leading board or any other, more specialized committees. Evidently, the reverse causality may also hold: insofar as such positions are filled preferentially with members who show outstanding commitment and solidarity to their political grouping.

Table 12: *Official role incumbency in the local party* **as a factor conditioning the impact of issue attitudes and party membership on left-right self placement of communal executive members. (Percentage of explained variance (=R2*100) of multivariate regressions; only partisans).**

Community size:	Official role in local party:	Model I: Party alone	Model II: Issues alone	Model III: Party and Issues together			N =
				Party	Issues	total	
-2000	no	28.2	34.5	23.7	19.1	42.8	685
	yes	40.5	43.0	34.6	18.7	53.3	435
2001-5000	no	37.9	44.6	31.1	22.6	53.7	537
	yes	52.6	54.5	40.2	21.9	62.1	351
5001-10000	no	41.4	43.1	25.3	23.0	48.3	160
	yes	55.0	59.2	37.7	26.8	64.5	190
10001+	no	41.0	46.0	30.2	21.1	51.3	89
	yes	53.0	56.7	40.2	24.6	64.8	115

In fact, Table 12 reveals that in communities of any size, the holding of a party office goes along with an increased tendency to derive one's own ideological standing from party membership: so that – as the partialized contribution of subjective issue-opinions remain on about the same level - a larger *total* percentage of explained variance is achieved.

It also becomes evident that the large bivariate correlation between community size and total levels of ideologization can partially be explained by the higher rate of party office holders in larger municipalities, because it shrinks very considerably (from about 30 to 10 percentage

points) when role incumbency is controlled. This supports the hypothesis that parties in larger communities are better able to "socialize" members into their collective ideological framework by offering a larger number of formal intraorganizational roles.

5.7 Influence of local parties in community politics

"Party guidance" of course presupposes that there is a party able to guide and capable of inciting its adherents to become committed and identify with its political values, programs and ideological directions. Evidently, such guidance is potentially stronger in the case of in parties that display a wide range of activities in various fields: so that their ideological positions can easily be seen. And the party's ideological authority over its members may well be more pronounced when they appear as potent actors offering many chances to influence community politics by supporting it and participating in its collective endeavors,
In order to assess this power dimension, we rely on a measure stemming from the general community survey conducted in 2005 where respondents (central community officials) were asked to give a judgment on the general influence of local parties in their communal political system.

Table 13: The *influence of local parties in community politics* as a factor conditioning the impact of Issue attitudes and party membership on left-right self placements of communal executive members. (Percentage of explained variance (=R2*100) of multivariate regressions; only partisans).

Community size:	Influence of local parties:	Model I: Party alone	Model II: Issues alone	Model III: Party and Issues together			N =
				Party	Issues	total	
-2000	**Low**	25.5	35.6	20.1	23.3	43.4	*373*
	Medium	32.3	30.2	29.6	12.9	41.5	*664*
	High	28.0	37.8	18.9	24.3	43.2	*408*
2001-5000	**low**	35.7	41.6	23.4	24.8	48.2	*168*
	medium	45.2	50.8	38.0	21.1	59.1	*592*
	high	46.4	43.1	38.7	16.1	54.8	*352*
5001-10000	**low**	49.0	50.2	42.6	18.1	60.4	*37*
	medium	44.8	52.8	27.7	28.6	56.3	*240*
	high	54.0	56.4	38.2	22.4	62.6	*250*
10001+	**low**	33.2	37.9	23.4	23.4	46.8	*26*
	medium	59.3	64.3	42.6	27.2	69.8	*167*
	high	59.2	61.2	50.6	17.1	67.7	*163*

* Index based on a scale ranging from 1-7 (1-3: low; 4-5: medium; 6-7: high).

In accordance with this hypothesis, Table 13 shows that the variance of left-right self place-ments explained by party memberships tends to be higher for incumbents of communities where the general influence of parties is high. This is particularly true for communities between 2000 and 5000 and above 10000 inhabitants where the positive covariation with party influence is not diminished when the contribution of issue attitudes are statistically controlled.

Concerning the smallest communities, it could again be argued that even high party influence does not change the basic fact that local parties are usually displaying few activities and do usu-ally not produce programs or "position papers" in which their positions are explicitly stated.

5.8 Size of the executive

In smaller executives comprising only three of five seats, incumbents may find it particularly difficult to anchor their political position in the party to which they belong, because each of them is accountable to a broad range of voters. In fact, ordinary members differ not much from the president in having to aggregate many different interests and to contribute to a consensus transcending one-sided allegiances to specific parties. In larger executive bodies, members may have more leeway to articulate diverging partisan positions: resembling members of a parlia-ment who act primarily as representatives of their party, so that decisions have to be made by voting majorities, because no consensus can be achieved.

Thus, we may expect party-guided ideology to increase in larger executive bodies: so the large bivariate effect of community size (see Table 7) may at least partially be explained by the fact that larger communities tend to have larger executive boards.

Table 14 corroborates the hypothesis that with increasing number of seats, a larger percentage of variance in LR self placements is explained by party membership. As the partialized influence of issue opinions is somewhat decreasing in larger sized executives, the total variance explained remains practically on the same level.

The hypothesis that effects of community size are attenuated when executive size is controlled is only partially borne out. Evidently, larger bodies facilitate party-guided ideology even in very small communities where smaller bodies go along with extremely little partisan effects.

5.9 Status of incumbent in the executive board

A fully non-ideological politician would be characterized by highly flexible issue opinions or even party memberships which are chosen according to current circumstances and opportunistic tac-tical or strategic considerations: not as rigid consequences of higher order principles or a gener-alized "Weltanschauung" which demands to maintain them unchanged under all conditions.

Generally, such notions describe rather well the role of Swiss executive members operating un-der "consociational conditions", because their task is to convene collectively on compromise decisions that can supported by all major parties and population segments: irrespective of any subjective convictions. Evidently, they apply particularly to the presidents because their role is

to catalyze such compromises by highly flexible negotiations, and to assume – like all executive chiefs – a suprapartisan position guided by overarching commonweal considerations. On the one hand, nomination and election processes will already favor candidates known (or assumed) to possess "integrative" qualities based of their personal flexibility and social responsiveness; and on the other hand, exercising the presidential role will additionally socialize incumbents to keep a low profile in terms of party allegiances and personal ideological convictions.

Table 14: The *size of the executive body* as a factor conditioning the impact of issue attitudes and party membership on left-right self placements of communal executive members. (Percentage of explained variance (=R2*100) of multivariate regressions; only partisans who don't occupy presidential roles).

Community size:	Size of Executive:	Model I: Party alone	Model II: Issues alone	Model III: Party and Issues together			N =
				Party	Issues	total	
-2000	**-5**	25.0	42.1	18.3	28.9	47.2	*722*
	7	31.8	38.2	26.0	19.4	45.4	*523*
	9+	41.3	38.3	33.9	13.5	47.4	*129*
2001-5000	**-5**	44.5	47.4	36.7	19.4	56.1	*322*
	7	46.0	50.3	36.7	21.8	58.5	*555*
	9+	46.4	48.1	39.6	17.8	57.4	*238*
5001-10000	**-5**	51.0	53.5	35.7	25.3	61.0	*121*
	7	48.0	55.5	40.6	28.7	59.3	*232*
	9+	51.6	47.4	44.5	13.5	58.0	*169*
10001+	**-5**	57.0	57.4	50.8	20.3	71.1	*71*
	7	56.8	62.4	46.7	20.3	67.0	*173*
	9+	63.6	60.1	52.7	17.4	70.1	*128*

In accordance with such expectations, Table 15 shows that in communities of all size categories, presidents tend to maintain a somewhat lower level of ideologization than ordinary executive members. Only in communities between 2000 and 5000 inhabitants, however, this can predominantly be attributed to a lower level of party-guided identifications; in all other cases, it is caused by lower "self-guided ideologization: i. e. a diminished tendency to tie specific issue positions to overall self placements on the left-right scale.

Table 15: The *status in the executive body* as a factor conditioning the impact of issue attitudes and party membership on left-right self placements of communal executive members. (Percentage of explained variance (=R2*100) of multivariate regressions; only partisans).

Community size:	Status in the executive:	Model I: Party alone	Model II: Issues alone	Model III: Party and Issues together			N =
				Party	Issues	total	
-2000	President	25.9	19.1	24.0	8.4	32.4	457
	other member	28.6	40.2	22.4	24.1	46.5	1376
2001-5000	President	24.9	33.3	22.6	17.6	40.2	256
	other member	45.5	48.9	37.3	20.5	57.8	1118
5001-10000	President	45.7	45.5	35.6	18.2	53.8	105
	other member	47.9	52.1	35.4	23.0	58.4	524
10001+	President	45.8	54.3	36.9	23.1	60.0	72
	other member	57.6	60.7	37.7	30.8	68.1	374

5.10 Level of formal education

Following the string of empirical studies initiated by Converse in the 1960ies, we may assume that higher education facilitates self-guided ideological thinking insofar as it goes along with increased cognitive capacities to perceive the factual connections of concrete political issues with the abstract dimension of left and right, as well as the intellectual abilities to organize one's own particular convictions under more generalized conceptual schemes.

On the other hand, education may also be positively related to party-guided ideological self placements, insofar as it helps to get a more adequate view of the party as a supraindividual organization: its standings, strategies and its relationships to other political groupings with different ideological positions.

In fact, Table 16 shows that the combined explanation power of the issues and party predictors is considerably higher for incumbents with university degrees than with respondents of lower educational levels: with the noteworthy exception of cities (over 10000 inhabitants) where no such correlation can be found.

Closer inspections reveal that in smaller communities (< 5000 inhabitants), such divergences are exclusively caused by rises in self-guided ideologization (=issue opinions), while in middle-sized municipalities (between 5000 and 10000 inhabitants), they are can predominantly be attributed to the growing impact of political parties. Also in cities, the ideological standings of academic incumbents are largely shaped by party adherence, while the impact if personal opinions is extremely low.

Table 16: The *level of formal education* as a factor determining the impact of Issue attitudes and party membership on left-right self placements of communal executive members. (Percentage of explained variance (=R2*100) of multivariate regressions; only partisans).

Community size:	Level of education:	Model I: Party alone	Model II: Issues alone	Model III: Party and Issues together			N =
				Party	Issues	total	
-2000	simple	29.0	27.9	25.9	12.5	38.4	*565*
	advanced	23.6	30.5	20.5	18.2	38.7	*606*
	university	29.0	44.5	20.7	28.5	49.2	*486*
2001-5000	simple	44.8	41.9	39.4	14.5	53.9	*353*
	advanced	36.7	44.0	28.9	22.7	51.6	*475*
	university	45.6	50.3	38.0	20.8	58.8	*448*
5001-10000	simple	34.7	46.6	18.1	31.9	50.0	*123*
	advanced	45.1	33.1	40.9	8.1	49.0	*193*
	university	51.3	61.7	30.8	34.2	65.0	*287*
10001+	simple	55.8	61.6	42.1	25.7	67.8	*63*
	advanced	39.8	57.8	19.3	40.7	60.0	*104*
	university	58.7	58.0	52.7	14.7	67.4	*252*

As a summary, we may conclude that the basic hypothesis related to formal education has been corroborated: but only in the sense that a divisive line exists between incumbents with university degree and all others. In addition, community size has to be taken into account as a decisive intervening variable. It might be assumed that in smaller settings, high education catalyzes only self-guided ideological thinking because local parties are inexistent or too weak and too inactive to serve as an anchor for ideological identifications. In urban areas, party-guided orientations take the lead, and even most issue-related correlations with LR- self placements are largely channeled through party membership (so that their impact is much reduced when party adherence is statistically controlled).

5.11 Level of political motivation

When asked about their main reasons why they have run for office, only about half of all respondents confess that "interest in politics" has been a predominant motivation. While their percentage grows with increasing size of the community, even many managers in urban areas admit that they are driven by a commitment to "civil duty" – or haven even just given way to social pressures to fill a vacancy nobody else was ready to fill.

Based on the already mentioned recent study of this author (Geser 2009), we expect that incumbents with vivid political interests maintain higher level of ideologization, because they invest more cognitive efforts to inform themselves about the ideological implications of various issues and the ideological standings of political parties, and more intellectual efforts to organize their specific issue attitudes in a consistent manner and to reflect about their general standing vis-à-vis parties as well as their political colleagues.

In contrast to formal education, however, political motivations are more focused on realizing goals by means of collective political actions than on the acquisition of personal knowledge, so that they may be more tightly associated with partisanship than with personal identity formation. In other words: politically active executive members may be more prone to derive their own ideological standing from that of their party (whose support they badly need for acting successfully in the political arena), while their level of self-guided ideologization may be less affected.

Table 17: The *level of political motivation* as a factor conditioning the impact of issue attitudes and party membership on left-right self placements of communal executive members. (Percentage of explained variance (=R2*100) of multivariate regressions; only partisans).

Community size:	Level of education:	Interest for politics :	Model I: Party alone	Model II: Issues alone	Model III: Party and Issues together			N =
					Party	Issues	total	
< 2000	medium/ low	medium/low	23.3	25.1	20.1	15.0	35.1	*780*
		high	32.6	36.3	29.7	16.8	46.5	*479*
	high	medium/low	30.4	43.9	20.7	27.7	48.4	*271*
		high	28.3	44.2	19.0	29.5	48.5	*210*
2001-5000	medium/ low	medium/low	36.3	37.9	32.2	16.0	48.2	*474*
		high	46.1	49.7	36.9	20.7	57.6	*384*
	high	medium/low	39.5	43.1	33.5	19.9	53.4	*243*
		high	53.2	59.5	44.0	22.8	66.8	*193*
5001-10000	medium/ low	medium/low	35.5	40.2	30.1	18.5	48.2	*162*
		high	45.0	38.3	34.7	14.1	49.8	*157*
	high	medium/low	42.6	45.3	25.4	23.8	49.2	*109*
		high	58.2	68.8	34.7	37.3	72.0	*174*
10001+	medium/ low	medium/low	40.4	56.0	29.0	30.8	59.8	*71*
		high	57.5	65.9	40.5	29.6	70.1	*114*
	high	medium/low	49.5	47.1	45.5	10.4	55.9	*79*
		high	66.5	62.1	59.8	12.3	72.1	*175*

In Table 17, it is shown how the effects of political interests interact with those of community size as well as with those stemming from the level of formal education. The binary educational variable only contrasts academics with all lower levels, because it has been demonstrated in Table 16 that the only relevant division line separates incumbents with university degrees from all others.

Looking first at the total variance explained by all the predictors, it is evident that high political interest adds cumulatively to the contributions of community size and education – with the exception of the lowest size category (below 2000 inhabitants) where no conclusive results can be found. When party and issue effects are splitted, we see that the positive effects of political interests are mainly due to impacts of party membership, while the explanatory power of issue opinions on left right self placements is not consistently affected.

In addition, it seems evident that political interest is considerable more consequential when formal education is high then when it is medium or low. This is particularly demonstrated by the politically interested academic incumbents in cities (with more than 10000 inhabitants), where almost 60% of the total variance is explained by party membership, while thee impacted added by issue opinions is extremely modest (12.3%).

This suggests that the role of higher education may be to provide basic cognitive and intellectual capacities which then facilitate party-related ideological conceptualizations in cases where such incumbents are driven by sufficient political motivation. Evidently, this does not hold for very small communities where no adequate political groupings are organized, so that higher education is predominantly related to an increase in self-guided ideologization.

5.12 Dominant guidelines for political decisions

When elected politicians take their decisions, they are usually guided by a manifold of basic criteria all associated with their representative role. On the one side, they may act as "representatives" who understand their role as a mandate by their party: so that they try to translate the positions of their parties (expressed in programs, position papers or congress resolutions) into political action.

On the other hand, they may see themselves (in the traditional liberalist sense) as independent "trustees" whose duty is to realize the commonweal in the sense they understand it by following their own conscience (Eulau/Wahlke/Buchanan/Ferguson 1959).

Thirdly, they may legitimately maintain a "populist" orientation by seeing themselves mandated to exert the "will of the people as a whole": thus to be responsive to changes of public opinion irrespective of party standings and personal opinions

In consociational systems where decisions are taken collectively by a multiparty council, a fourth role is to function as a cooperative board member who adapts his standings responsively to the opinion of colleagues in order to reach compromises that are consensually accepted.

On a secondary level, several other criteria can provide guidance: e. g. the interests of articulated by powerful firms or other lobbies, the preferences of significant local associations or the opinions held by political decision makers in neighbour communities.

Table 18: The *relevance of "party position" (as a major decision guideline)* as a factor conditioning the impact of issue attitudes and party membership on left-right self placements of communal executive members. (Percentage of explained variance (=R2*100) of multivariate regressions; only partisans).

Community size:	"Party position" is a major decision guideline	Model I: Party alone	Model II: Issues alone	Model III: Party and Issues together			*N =*
				Party	Issues	total	
-2000	no	24.7	31.3	21.0	18.2	39.2	*1497*
	yes	36.5	49.8	28.2	27.4	55.6	*336*
2001-5000	no	34.9	41.8	29.3	20.4	49.7	*1081*
	yes	60.9	58.3	47.4	16.9	69.3	*293*
5001-10000	no	36.9	46.5	26.2	25.5	51.7	*436*
	yes	64.3	58.1	54.7	12.5	67.2	*192*
10001+	no	54.8	54.0	45.3	18.3	63.6	*273*
	yes	57.8	64.4	46.5	23.0	69.5	*173*

In cases where the first ("delegate") role orientation is predominant, we might expect that incumbents show a strong tendency to anchor their personal ideology heavily in the their political party, insofar as they accept it as a collective authority under which they subordinate their personal opinions.

In the second case of the "trustee" model, it may be expected that a self-guided mode of ideology formation prevails where personal left-right placements are tightly connected to personal issue opinions.

When the third ("populist") orientation or the fourth ("consociationalist") role models dominate, it might by hypothesized that party guided as well as self-guided ideologization is low because incumbents tend to maintain a "pragmatic" attitude that allows them to chance issue opinions more flexibly because they have not to be held in accordance with higher level values and goals.

For identifying such role orientations, the respondents were confronted with a list of eight decisional criteria out of which they had to choose the three to which they gave highest priority. The remaining unchosen items were all coded as "low". As seen in Table 18, the first hypothesis is convincingly corroborated. At least in the three lower size classes (< 10000 inhabitants), the explanatory power of party membership is significantly higher in the case of incumbents who see themselves in the delegate role. In communities above 2000 inhabitants, the divergences are even amplified when self-guided (issue-related) ideologization is controlled.

The second hypothesis (that a "trustee" role concept goes along with high self-guided ideologization) is even more convincingly supported (Table 19). In all four categories of community size, incumbents who base their political judgments highly on personal convictions show higher tendencies to derive their left-right self placements from their personal issue opinions. In larger communities (above 5000 inhabitants), this goes even along with a sharply reduced im-

pact of party adherence – so that the total variance explained by all two factors remains about on the same level.

Table 19: The *relevance of "personal convictions" (as a major decision guideline)* as a factor conditioning the impact of issue attitudes and party membership on left-right self placements of communal executive members. (Percentage of explained variance (=R2*100) of multivariate regressions; only partisans).

Community size:	"Personal convic-tion" is a major decision guideline	Model I: Party alone	Model II: Issues alone	Model III: Party and Issues together			N =
				Party	Issues	total	
-2000	no	22.4	25.8	21.2	14.2	35.4	*398*
	yes	29.5	38.5	23.4	22.3	45.7	*1435*
2001-5000	no	38.9	39.5	34.3	14.3	48.6	*256*
	yes	43.0	48.5	35.3	21.6	56.9	*1118*
5001-10000	no	51.1	30.3	48.6	5.8	54.4	*78*
	yes	48.5	54.7	33.9	26.0	59.9	*551*
10001+	no	70.8	47.0	70.0	0.0	70.0	*55*
	yes	56.3	62.6	44.6	24.8	69.4	*391*

Table 20: The *relevance of "public opinion" (as a major decision guideline)* as a factor conditioning the impact of issue attitudes and party membership on left-right self placements of communal executive members. (Percentage of explained variance (=R2*100) of multivariate regressions; only partisans).

Community size:	"Public opinion" is a major deci-sion guideline	Model I: Party alone	Model II: Issues alone	Model III: Party and Issues together			N =
				Party	Issues	total	
-2000	no	30.0	41.5	22.2	24.4	46.6	*583*
	yes	26.5	32.6	23.0	18.4	41.4	*1250*
2001-5000	no	44.9	49.0	37.6	19.9	57.5	*451*
	yes	41.0	45.4	34.1	20.1	54.2	*923*
5001-10000	no	56.9	63.5	30.1	29.4	69.5	*253*
	yes	40.1	41.9	30.8	17.6	48.4	*376*
10001+	no	54.3	63.7	30.2	33.8	68.0	*199*
	yes	57.5	55.7	52.8	13.8	66.6	*247*

Hypothesis three would predict that the total variance explained (by party membership and issue opinions combined) is lower in the case of "populist" incumbents who give much priority

to the "people's voice". Looking at Table 20, we find this expectation borne out tendentially in all size categories, but only in middle-sized municipalities (between 5000 and 10000 inhabitants) to a significant degree. Evidently, these divergences are largely caused by the negative impact of populism on self-guided ideologization, while to impact of party membership is not consistently affected.

Very similar regularities are seen in Table 21 which corroborates the fourth hypothesis that a high intraboard responsiveness also goes along with lower total levels of ideologization. Again, this is predominantly a consequence of the lower impact of issue opinions on left-right self placements. In larger communities, the partialized contribution of parties to the explained variance is even somewhat higher when a populist orientation is maintained.

Table 21: The *relevance of "opinion of other board members" (as a major decision guideline)* as a factor conditioning the impact of Issue attitudes and party membership on left-right self placements of communal executive members. (Percentage of explained variance (=R2*100) of multivariate regressions; only partisans).

Community size:	"Opinion of other executive members " is a major decision guideline	Model I: Party alone	Model II: Issues alone	Model III: Party and Issues together			N =
				Party	Issues	total	
-2000	no	31.2	40.1	23.9	22.9	46.8	*742*
	yes	25.7	32.2	22.1	18.2	40.3	*1091*
2001-5000	no	47.6	54.3	38.7	23.6	62.3	*579*
	yes	38.1	39.8	32.0	17.1	49.1	*795*
5001-10000	no	48.0	54.7	30.8	27.4	58.2	*272*
	yes	47.0	48.6	37.5	20.1	57.6	*356*
10001+	no	56.6	67.8	40.3	31.9	72.2	*228*
	yes	55.1	52.5	47.2	14.9	62.1	*218*

5.13 Older and younger executive members

Results of studies as well as a wealth of impressionistic evidence suggest that ideological polarization has increased within the last decades – at least in the cities where political conflicts resemble those on the cantonal and national level. This is illustrated by a finding of our comparative community study (conducted in 2005) where in communities above 5000 inhabitants, where almost 50 percent of the respondents (central municipal officials) said that ideological polarization in their community has increased within the past 10 years.

Similarly, diachronic studies of local party sections have shown that within the time span between 1989 and 2002, the "vertical coupling" between the party's specific issue positions and its

generalized placement on the left-right axis has become tighter, while the percentage of parties unable to place themselves has decreased (at least on the left section of the scale; Geser 2009).

Such findings give rise to the expectation that younger age cohorts may be more prone to associate their personal left right placement with their personal issue opinions on the one hand and/or with the standings of their parties on the other.

As seen from Table 22, incumbents below 40 show considerable higher percentages of total explained variance than older cohorts when party memberships and issue opinions are included in the multivariate equation, particularly in larger communities (> 5000 inhabitants) where he youngest cohort surpasses the oldest by almost 20% (!). In the smallest as well as in the largest size category, such divergences are exclusively caused by higher levels of self-guided ideologization, while in the two intermediate categories, they can be attributed solely to the increased impact of party adherence. However, the results concerning the two largest size classes are somewhat shaky due to the rather low occurence of younger executive member (only 29 in cities with 10 000 inhabitants or more).

Table 22: The *current age of incumbent* as a factor determining the impact of issue attitudes and party membership on left-right self placements of communal executive members. (Percentage of explained variance (=R2*100) of multivariate regressions; only partisans).

Community size:	Age group:	Model I: Party alone	Model II: Issues alone	Model III: Party and Issues together			N =
				Party	Issues	total	
-2000	-40	29.8	45.3	20.6	28.9	49.5	*277*
	41-55	9.2	34.2	24.7	18.4	43.1	*1018*
	56+	24.6	32.7	21.7	18.6	40.3	*524*
2001-50000	-40	46.7	45.9	41.5	16.2	57.7	*151*
	41-55	42.1	48.5	42.3	22.6	56.9	*742*
	56+	43.1	45.4	35.3	18.1	53.4	*470*
5001-10000	-40	59.0	66.1	58.0	14.0	72.0	*54*
	41-55	47.5	54.1	42.0	27.1	59.1	*343*
	56+	45.0	43.6	35.2	16.2	51.4	*227*
10001+	-40	68.7	78.2	46.1	35.1	81.2	*29*
	41-55	61.0	63.6	49.1	21.1	70.2	*213*
	56+	52.0	52.3	45.1	16.9	62.0	*202*

6. Conclusions

In comparison to the normal population, incumbents of political offices are more interesting objects for ideological studies. On the one hand, they are more involved in the ideological polarizations characterizing modern political controversies, so that they become more conscious on its dimensions and contents. As a consequence, they are almost universally ready to locate themselves on the left-right scale: even if they act in smaller communities where political controversies are rather rare. On the other hand, it is of course more consequential how and to what degree they tie their ideological convictions to the level of concrete political actions. Two ways are available. The first is to tie their ideological standings to the sphere of specific political issues which are the object of "real life" political deliberations and decisions. This is the "individualist" strategy: contributing to an articulation of their personal political profile vis-à-vis other active politicians. The second is to tie their personal ideological position to that of the party to which they belong. This is the "collectivist" strategy letting them appear as true partisans who subordinate personal convictions to the leadership, programs or paroles of their political grouping. This (intentionally vague) formulation may be useful because it does not fix ex ante which direction of causality is involved. Thus, left-right self placements may alternatively be determinants, correlates or outcomes of specific issue-related opinions or of the adherence to a specific political party.

While these two strategies are certainly substitutive and to a degree even contradictory, they can also be complementary and cumulative in contributing to tighter "vertical connection" between political thinking on the one hand and political action on the other.

The first pole of the summative scale would be occupied by ideal-type "pragmatists" who choose issue standings' and party memberships irrespective of their ideological positions (or the other way round), while at the contrary second pole, we would find full-blown "ideologists" who maintain rigidly determinative relationships between their issue opinions and party adherence on the one hand and their ideological standings on the other. The causal factors determining the position on this scale are certainly highly diverse. Thus, the category of "pragmatists" may be composed of genuinely flexible politicians highly responsive to the public and highly cooperative and adaptive within political decision making bodies; but also rather uneducated and disinterested role incumbents lacking the cognitive capacities for judging whether there opinions and loyalties are to the left or to the right.

Symmetrically, the class of "ideologists" may consist of dogmatic hardliners committed to a highly ideological action profile as well as rather passive "party ritualists" (Dalton 1984) unable or unwilling to adapt to changing political circumstances and specific local conditions.

A synthetic look at the empirical findings allows the conclusion that in the case of Swiss municipal executive members, the degree of party-guided ideology is mainly determined by situational and institutional conditions, while the level of self-guided ideology is predominantly influenced by role characteristics and personality factors. Thus, the impact of party membership on LR self placements increases dramatically in larger settings, while the variance explained by issue opinions is highest in the smallest villages, but beyond this level, not consistently affected by the size of communal population.

A more detailed analysis of different scale sections reveals nonlinearities in the sense that that such size effects are predominantly determined by high correlations on the left third of the axis, while the centrist and rightist parts do not make any significant contribution.

In the following, community size is identified mainly as a proxy variable camouflaging the effect of third variables tightly associated with it: e. g. the overall influence of local parties in community politics, the dispositions of local party sections to support their incumbents in their election campaign and in integrating them into formal intraparty roles, and finally: the increasing size of executive boards which makes individual members freer to follow partisan lines. Contradicting theoretical expectations, however, the number of organized local parties seems to have no effect on party-guided ideology when community size is controlled. On the other hand, the findings corroborate the hypothesis that the grip of parties on executive members is stronger when they are elected by proportional (instead of majoritarian) rules.

Concerning person-related factors, the role incumbents occupy in the executive is a major importance. Thus, presidents contrast with ordinary members by the significantly lower tendency to associate their ideological LR standing with their opinions on specific issues. Evidently, the most plausible assumption is that presidents are under particular pressure to act responsively by catalyzing compromises and by representing all segments of the population in an equilibrated way: thus reducing their leeway for ideologically guided political action.

Secondly, Dalton and Inglehart's well known "cognitive mobilization" thesis is supported by the regularity that incumbents with academic degrees maintain considerably closer links between LR self placement and specific issue attitudes: except in the largest communities where they give much more weight to party-guided ideologization. High education has also to be taken into account as an intervening variable: being a precondition for a positive effect of political interest on self-guided as well as party-guided ideologization. Consequently, highest levels of total explained variance (by parties and issues together) are found among highly educated and politically highly motivated executive members residing in larger communities (with 5000 inhabitants or more). In addition, the two dimensions of ideologization are shown to be part of a larger network of subjective role orientations governing the political decision making behavior of executive members. Unsurprisingly, incumbents who give much weight to party positions show higher levels of party-guided ideology, while politicians mainly directed by "personal convictions" are above average in self-guided ideology, and those predominantly responsive to public opinion or to the opinions of other board members are somewhat lower on both dimensions.

Finally, comparisons between age cohorts suggest that total levels of ideology tend to increase in the younger generation (especially in larger communities): due to a rise in self-guided as well as party-guided left right orientations. By summary, it has been demonstrated that personal left-right self placements are firmly rooted in issue opinions as well as party allegiances: the total variance explained ranging from 35% to 72% when both sets of predictors are included in the multivariate equation. More than two thirds of the total effects can be attributed to issues in smaller communities, while in larger municipalities; more than 60 percent are accounted for by the political parties. Such divergences are at least partial y caused by the large shares of non-partisans in smaller settings: incumbents who have to make the effort to derive their ideology more from their personal issue opinions, because they cannot rely on the collectivized guidance of a political party.

The shift from self-guided to party-guided ideology in larger communities is consistent with the conclusions of an earlier empirical study that urbanism breeds more conformist collectivism than autonomous individualism (Geser 2009): i. e. because candidates become more dependent on party support for their election, and because parties adopt the potential for effective collective indoctrination.

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