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Allure or Alternative? Direct Democracy and Party Identification

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ALLURE OR ALTERNATIVE?

DIRECT DEMOCRACY AND PARTY IDENTIFICATION

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Abstract

This paper presents the first investigation of whether and how party identification is influenced by direct democratic institutions. The concept of party identification is of central interest to political science. Despite declining partisan attachment and increasing dealignment among voters, little systematic evidence exists as to which factors influence individual party identification. Our paper contributes to improving on this lacuna by considering the educative effects of direct democratic institutions. Theoretically, two competing hypotheses are plausible. On the one hand, direct democracy might strengthen political parties and promote the need for cues so that voters succumb to the allure of partisan attachment. On the other hand, direct democracy might provide an alternative to the representational function of political parties thus rendering party identification less essential. Drawing on recent data from the Swiss cantons, we estimate multilevel models. Our analyses, though giving support to the alternative-hypothesis, yield some surprising findings.

Keywords

Direct democracy; Party identification; Political parties; Dealignment; Educative effects

Introduction

This paper investigates whether and how party identification is influenced by direct democratic institutions. The concept of party identification is often praised as the most important discovery in explaining electoral behavior (Green et al. 2002; Weisberg and Greene 2003). Representing “the glory variable” (Shively 1980: 219) or “the holy grail of electoral research” (Dalton 2009: 628), party identification is shown to be one of the most consistent and influential factors of electoral behavior ever since the early findings by Campbell et al. (1960). But the concept enjoys popularity not only due to both its crucial role in predicting vote choice and its relevance in terms of democratic theory (Schattschneider 1942; Shively 1980). Interest among political scientist grew further when empirical evidence emerged that party identification has been suffering a steady decline in recent decades (Dalton 2007; Dalton and Wattenberg 2000). This obviously begs the questions what is responsible for increased levels of dealignment among voters. Despite the great importance of the concept, there is in fact very little knowledge as to what influences and shapes party identification. But at about the same time that this dealignment occurs, also the extent of direct democracy is subject to change. Be it by coincident or not, the dissemination of direct democratic institutions and procedures notably continues to grow throughout the World (Butler and Ranney 1994; Matsusaka 2005; Scarrow 2001; Schmitter and Trechsel 2004).

But does direct democracy indeed affect individual party identification? After all, the very establishment of direct democratic institutions was meant not least to weaken overly powerful political parties and was subsequently advocated by reformers of the Progressive Era in the USA (Bowler and Donovan 2006: 651; Smith and Tolbert 2004: 112). Although there is some evidence supporting this traditional view (Bowler and Donovan 2006; Cain and Miller 2001; Haskell 2001; Kobach 1993; Ladner and Brändle 1999; Matsusaka 2005), other studies find that parties have adapted well to direct democratic challenges and meanwhile use it to

their advantage (Budge 1996; Ladner and Brändle 1999; Scarrow 1999; Smith and Tolbert 2001). So with regard to party politics, the influence of direct democracy remains an intensely, yet inconclusively discussed topic. As for individual attachment, the social capital literature shows that direct democratic institutions indeed foster ties and attachment to interest groups and social organizations (Boehmke and Bowen 2010; Freitag 2006). Such unintended “educative” effects of direct democracy on attitudes and behavior of individuals are more and more attested (Smith and Tolbert 2004). But despite all obvious indications there is, hitherto, no study systematically investigating the relationship between direct democracy and party identification.¹

In this paper, we attempt to fill this gap. By answering the question how direct democracy influences party identification, we wish not only to contribute to the understanding of socio-political consequences of direct democratic institutions but also to gain a more fine-grained picture of the institutional foundations of party identification and dealignment. Theoretically, both positive and negative conjectures seem justifiable. On the one side, individuals in direct democracy face a higher need for partisan cues and parties are more visible and attractive so that individuals succumb to the allure of partisan attachment. On the other side, direct democratic institutions provide an alternative to the representational function of parties and therewith to party identification, increasing dealignment among voters. We test those competing hypotheses for the very first time empirically with recent data from the Swiss cantons.

¹ In recent studies on party identification in California Bowler et al. (2006) as well as Dyck et al. (2012) find that racially charged ballot measures made Latinos more likely to identify with Democrats than with Republicans. These policy- and party-specific findings, again, strongly suggest that direct democratic institution can also shape the general extent of party identification.

Switzerland represents a particularly useful case for our analysis. Still only few countries in the World offer substantial means of direct democratic participation, rendering internationally comparative analyses difficult. In the Swiss cantons though, citizens can participate through direct democratic institutions to a wide and varying degree (Schmitter and Trechsel 2004). While some cantons provide permissive direct democratic institutions, reflecting a participatory model of democracy, others are much more prohibitive, reflecting almost a purely representative democracy (Vatter 2002). Moreover, the 26 subnational entities are not only a sufficient number of contextual units for quantitative analysis (Stegmüller 2013). Being within the same political system nationally, they also allow us to treat many characteristics as constant (Lijphart 2002).

The paper proceeds as follows: In the next section we discuss the theoretical background and develop two competing hypotheses how direct democracy should affect party identification. Then we describe our research design and present results of our empirical analysis as well as some robustness checks. The paper concludes with some summarizing remarks.

Theory and Hypotheses

How do cantonal institutions of direct democracy affect party identification? Do they allure individuals to parties or do they present an alternative to party identification? As mentioned before, this is the first paper to systematically study effects on individual attachment to parties—as opposed to the quite well-studied consequences for political parties themselves. If direct democracy does affect political parties, it seems rather evident to expect also effects for individuals identifying with them. In particular, following the argumentation by Boehmke and

Bowen (2010) about direct democracy and interest group membership, we hypothesize an *indirect* effect via political parties as well as a *direct* effect of direct democratic institutions on individuals. Assuming that individual attitudes are affected by institutions, the latter argument takes on the theoretical approach of new institutionalism. Institutions in that sense provide certain incentives and shape the preference structure. Since individuals form attitudes within their contextual setting institutions, like the ones of direct democracy, can affect attitudes in the political realm and hence adopt the role of explanatory variables (March and Olsen 1989).² With regard to the specific logic of new institutionalism, rational-choice and historical/sociological perspectives apply differently to our two competing hypotheses (Hall and Taylor 1996). In the following, we detail both indirect and direct theoretical arguments for first positive and then negative conjectures.

On the one side, the *allure-hypothesis* assumes that in a direct democratic context party identification increases as parties become more visible, decisive, and attractive. The reasoning regarding an *indirect* effect is obviously based on the view that political parties can benefit from direct democracy. Refuting any weakening effect several authors provide evidence that direct democracy instead adds to the repertoire of political parties (Budge 1996, 2001; Kriesi 2006; Ladner and Brändle 1999; Smith and Tolbert 2001). Generally, four arguments can be formulated how parties benefit from direct democracy: First, a more open direct democratic system favors the entry of new and smaller parties. Second, direct democracy gives parties an opportunity to put forward and promote their ideas. Third, it fosters a high level of political activity. Fourth, it provides a pressure relief valve for parties bound in the consensus government of the Swiss political system (Ladner and Brändle 1999:

² It is of course also true that institutions originate from collective action of citizens and may therefore be endogenous to individual attitudes in the long term (Foweraker and Landman 1997). In our case, however, it seems only plausible that long-term direct democratic institutions, which have been stable over decades, affect the extent of individual party identification (Davis 1985; Johnston 2006; Vatter 2002).

287–288). Consequently, more and smaller parties make it easier for voters to find a particular party that closely represents his or her interests. So for any voter, there is a matching party to feel close to. Existing parties can campaign constantly and promote their cause thus reaching more voters. And as they are stronger and decisively steering direct democratic processes, parties are more attractive to identify with. Altogether direct democracy increases the allure of political parties and indirectly raises the likelihood of feeling attached to a party.

Regarding a *direct* effect we can argue along a rational-choice logic of new institutionalism that individuals use their party identification as information short-cut to orient themselves on issues and policies. Fiorina (1981, 1990) calls such partisan cues the ultimate cost-saving device. By their very nature, matters in direct democratic processes (ranging from fiscal policy or infrastructure projects to moral and social issues or international treaties) are far more complex and demanding than voting for parties or candidates. So developing a personal preference regarding an issue is more demanding. It takes more information, resources and skills to figure out, which position serves one best. Thus, voters in direct democracy should be more likely to rely on the cost-saving cue of party identification so that they can simply adhere to the position of the party, to which they feel close. And evidence in fact shows that Swiss voters do resort to partisan cues in popular votes (Kriesi 2006; Lutz 2007). Moreover, direct democratic institutions are precisely said to “educate” citizens (Smith and Tolbert 2004). Given the opportunity and responsibility of direct democratic instruments, voters gain political efficacy and receive “an education in democratic citizenship” (Dyck 2009: 540). Besides, voters are constantly and immediately exposed to political information in ads, the media, official brochures, or in conversations with family, friends and co-workers if popular votes take place regularly. So in addition to the mere institutional opportunity, this positive relation should be even more apparent the more often popular votes actually occur. Since direct democracy that way indeed fosters political information and interest

(Mendelsohn and Cutler 2000), the argument speaks to a positive connotation of partisanship being virtuous and sophisticated, as opposed to uninterested and uninformed independent voters (Dalton 2007: 276. 2009). Taking together direct and indirect arguments of the allure of parties in direct democracy, we hypothesize:

H₁: The more direct democratic a context, the more likely an individual will feel close to a political party. This effect becomes even stronger the more frequent popular votes actually take place in a canton.

On the other side, it is possible to formulate an equally convincing *alternative-hypothesis* arguing that direct democracy decreases party identification because it provides an alternative to the representational function of political parties. Regarding an *indirect* effect, it is indeed the traditional view that political parties become less important in direct democratic settings as their influence dwindles. As a matter of fact, reformers of the Progressive Era in the USA advocated the very establishment of direct democratic institutions explicitly to weaken overly powerful political parties (Bowler and Donovan 2006: 651; Smith and Tolbert 2004: 112). And just like to the positive, there is also empirical evidence supporting the negative conjecture that direct democracy entails weaker, less autonomous parties and tougher legal controls on them (Bowler and Donovan 2006; Cain and Miller 2001; Haskell 2001; Kobach 1993; Matsusaka 2005). Again, there are at least four arguments why direct democracy should affect parties adversely: First, parties face stronger competition from interest groups who gain more influence thanks to direct democracy. Second, being forced to frequently position themselves on specific issues conflict between and within parties increases, thereby paralyzing ordinary party activity. Third, direct democratic campaigns demand extra work and resources from parties. Fourth, offering political means beyond and without representation by parties, direct democracy threatens to render them insignificant (Ladner and Brändle 1999:

286). Consequently, parties find it harder to compete successfully with other organizations for affection of voters. With concrete, tangible issues frequently on the ballot, individuals might disagree with the position of their party and feel alienated. After all, the alternative of direct democracy enables individuals to participate and decide politically without relying on parties and indirectly reduces the likelihood of feeling attached to a party.

Regarding the *direct* positive effect of direct democratic institutions on individuals, we draw on the historical or sociological logic of new institutionalism (Hall and Taylor 1996). Being socialized into a direct democratic context, individuals develop an anti-elitist disposition (Canovan 2002: 7; Feld and Kirchgässner 2000). They have experienced all along that the popular will remains above all and that it can (and will) be enforced through direct democracy. In an institutional context, where the direct democratic tradition is genuine and long-lasting, this attitude is passed on over generations. Eventually, direct democratic institutions foster an inherent predisposition to rely rather on such participatory means outside the representational realm than on political parties in order to carry out the popular will. Obviously, this negative relation should be even more pronounced if popular votes are indeed highly frequent. It does, however, not necessarily imply a less informed or sophisticated public. The reasoning by what party identification is affected is in fact not that different, only the normative connotation of being partisan or independent changes (Dalton 2007: 276. 2009). Positively connoting the latter, Shively (1979) points out that the need for partisan cues should decline as the political skills of the public increase and information costs decrease. So if we invoke again the educative effect of direct democratic institutions we can just as well argue that they make for a more informed, engaged, and thus more independent citizenry. Voters in direct democracy are, therefore, not dependent on partisan cues and ties to decide political issues. Taking again together direct and indirect arguments of direct democracy as alternative to party identification, we hypothesize:

H₂: The more direct democratic a context, the less likely an individual will feel close to a political party. This effect becomes even stronger the more frequent popular votes actually take place in a canton.

Research Design

In this section, we describe the methodological approach of our analysis and explain how we operationalize dependent, independent and control variables. The Appendix summarizes operationalization, data sources and descriptive statistics of all variables. Since we test how direct democratic institutions affect the individual propensity to identify with a political party, we analyze individual data from the Swiss cantons. Analytically speaking, these individuals are nested in the institutional context of cantons, and thus assumed to be more similar within than between contexts. To account for the hierarchical data structure we resort to multilevel modeling and estimate random-intercept models (Gelman and Hill 2007).

For data on the individual level we make use of the latest Swiss Electoral Studies (Selects) 2011. The Selects surveys are part of the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) network. They are conducted through computer assisted telephone interviews (CATI) after the Swiss National Elections. The data set consists of 4,391 respondents in 26 cantons (Lutz 2012 for details of the survey).³ Regarding the dependent variable of party identification, the Selects survey asks whether someone generally feels close to a political party. This measure differs from the usual 3- or 7-point measures in the USA. Because of the

³ The survey draws primarily on a nationally representative sample. In small cantons, it was attempted to raise the numbers of observations additionally to about 100, in the selected cantons Zurich, Ticino, and Geneva to about 600 (Lutz 2012: 81).

multi-party system it is not possible to conceive party identification on one dimension ranging from Democrat over Independent to Republican—which is anyhow questionable (Holmberg 2007). Since our interest here lies in attachment to parties at large, we find this general measure useful for our analysis. The dichotomous nature does, however, imply a logit transformation in our models.

Regarding the independent variable of direct democratic institutions, the hypotheses imply two distinct measures, which are commonly used in analyses of direct democracy. The first one concerns how permissive direct democratic institutions are in a canton. Unlike the states in the USA direct democracy in the Swiss cantons cannot simply be described as having an initiative process or not. Instead, Stutzer (1999) suggests coding cantonal hurdles to evoke the constitutional popular initiative, the legislative popular initiative, the legislative referendum, and the fiscal referendum into an index between one and six. These hurdles consist of number of signatures needed, time span to collect signatures, and in the case of the fiscal referendum the financial threshold. Schaub and Dlabac (2012) provide current numbers of the index of direct democracy.⁴ The second measure concerns how frequently direct democratic institutions actually result in popular votes. Although of course not entirely independent, permissiveness of direct democratic institutions and frequency of popular votes are not highly correlated in the Swiss case (Barankay et al. 2003). With data again by Schaub and Dlabac (2012), we therefore include the average of yearly popular votes in each canton between 2005 and 2009 as independent variable, too.⁵ Particularly, we hypothesize that the effect of permissive direct democratic institutions becomes stronger if popular votes take place frequently. Since this implies a moderating effect, we introduce a multiplicative

⁴ Values close to 1 indicate high, restrictive hurdles reflecting representative democracy; values close to 6 indicate low, permissive hurdles reflecting direct democracy.

⁵ Specifically, the logarithm of the frequency is used because the distribution is highly skewed and, in substantial terms, because we assume ceiling effects when the number of popular votes gets large.

interaction term between the index of direct democracy and the frequency of popular votes. To judge the moderating effect we estimate and plot marginal effects according to Brambor et al. (2006).

Party identification is commonly assumed to be influenced by a number of other individual as well as contextual factors. In order to rule out such alternative explanations and spurious relationships, we account for them by including several control variables long associated with research on partisan identification (Bowler et al. 2006). On the individual level we control for age, level of education, gender, ideological position on the left-right scale, political knowledge, political interest, and post-materialistic values.⁶ The intuition is that individuals are either more or less likely to feel attached to a party, depending on different partisan connotations (Dalton 2007: 276. 2009), if they are more interested, engaged, willing, and capable to follow politics in general. As for ideology, Miller and Shanks (1996: 354) point out that it works as proxy for a variety of policy positions and we need to control for “all policy-related preferences when we assess the relevance of other explanatory themes.” Moreover, on the contextual level, we control for urbanization, number of inhabitants, change of unemployment rate, and share of Catholics in order to account for regional and cantonal idiosyncrasies. It seems plausible that in urban and bigger cantons party identification becomes more important whereas in rural and smaller cantons much of the political life is still based on personal contact. If the economic condition in a canton worsens, reflected by rising unemployment over the past years, so should the chance of identifying as partisan. A Catholic heritage, which is more at ease with the reliance on authorities, might be associated with higher partisan attachment whereas Protestantism emphasizes individualism and self-reliance.

⁶ We deliberately do not include income as the variable is abundant with missing values in the Selects 2011 data and including it would severely impair the quality of the model estimates. But since income is highly correlated with level of education we are confident to account for a potential bias while still keeping several hundred observations more in the model.

To be sure, the findings of our analysis are robust to both inclusion and exclusion of each control variable. Thus we consider including this comprehensive set of control variables a yet stricter test. Succeeding the empirical analysis, we nonetheless follow up on our results with some additional robustness checks.

Empirical Findings

In the following we present results of the analysis how direct democratic institutions influence the propensity to feel close to a political party. Corresponding to the research design detailed above, we estimate several random-intercept logit models, which are shown in Table 1. Model 1 includes only individual predictors of party identification, Model 2 adds to that the variables of direct democratic institutions and frequency of popular votes, Model 3 represents the full configuration with contextual controls, and Model 4 includes the interaction term. By and large, most of the individual control variables in Model 1 perform in the expected direction. A higher likelihood of party identification is significantly associated with higher age and level of education, more political interest and knowledge as well as post-materialistic values. Gender and ideological position of respondents are not significantly associated with attachment to parties.

Table 1 about here

Adding direct democracy variables in Model 2 increases the goodness of fit and substantially reduces context variance from 0.20 to 0.08. As it seems direct democracy can indeed explain some of the variance of party identification between cantons. With regard to

our research question, the results are unambiguous: The index of direct democracy is negatively related to the likelihood to feel close to a political party. This correlation is highly significant even holding contextual control variables constant in Model 3. If direct democratic institutions are available and permissive in a canton, party identification among individuals is less likely. The result gives strong support to the *alternative-hypothesis* (H₂). Apparently, voters do not fall prey to the allure of political parties in direct democracy. Instead they perceive direct democratic institutions as alternative to the representational function of parties. However, results in Table 1 are difficult to interpret in terms of their substantiality. For that reason we calculate predicted probabilities to report party attachment given the permissiveness of direct democratic institutions. Figure 1 illustrates the size of the effect, with controlling covariates fixed at their means. As a matter of fact, the probability to report party identification drops from 52 % in the least to 26 % in the most direct democratic canton based on Model 3. There is a reduction of about 50 %. Put differently, individuals in almost entirely representative cantons are twice as likely to be attached to a political party as individuals in almost entirely direct democratic cantons. So it is fair to say that the effect of direct democratic institutions is substantial in size.

Figure 1 about here

In contrast to the clear result of direct democratic institutions, the frequency of popular votes, on the other hand, does not exhibit a significant effect. Although the coefficient is also negatively signed, it fails to reach conventional significance levels in any of the model in Table 1. Apparently, the likelihood to feel close to a party is not affected by how often popular votes usually take place in a canton. To be fair though, the hypotheses do not assume an immediate effect of popular votes, but rather suggest that the negative effect of permissive

direct democratic institutions is conditional on how often direct democratic processes actually result in popular votes. In other words, individuals in direct democracy should identify even less with parties if they are constantly caught up in popular votes. To analyze this moderation, Figure 2 illustrates the marginal effect of the index of direct democratic institutions given the frequency of popular votes based on the multiplicative interaction term in Model 4. The positive slope indicates that the negative effect of direct democratic institutions becomes in fact weaker, not stronger, as popular votes become more frequent. Eventually, if popular votes are highly frequent, the confidence interval includes zero and the effect is rendered insignificant (Brambor et al. 2006). Partly, this runs counter to the *alternative-hypothesis* (H_2) assuming an increasing moderation effect. While it is yet no redemption for the *allure-hypothesis* (H_1), it seems that if popular votes are highly frequent individuals do resort to cues of partisan attachment at least to the extent to counter the negative effect of direct democratic institutions. As for political parties, the finding could imply that in a potentially detrimental environment of direct democratic institution the frequent use of direct democracy offers the opportunity to distinguish themselves and seek new partisans.

Figure 2 about here

Robustness

The previous result of a negative influence of direct democratic institutions on party identification require, of course, further testing. We discuss two issues here in particular: influential cases and the influence of language regions. First, since the number of contextual units (cantons) is limited, the peril of overly influential cases exists. It might be that the relationship is biased by idiosyncrasies of one extraordinary canton, thus casting doubt on the

estimates. We therefore apply a manual jackknife procedure and re-estimate Model 3 26 times, each time excluding one canton and its respondents. As can be seen in Figure 3, the coefficient of direct democratic institutions remains significant in all 26 repetitions, whereas the coefficient of popular votes does not reach significance in any repetition. Based on these results, we are fairly confident about the present findings.

Figure 3 about here

Second, another issue has to be addressed. Cross-cantonal analyses of Switzerland often mention the caveat of different language regions. In fact, differences between German speaking and Roman parts are relevant to aspects of political and societal life (Freitag and Stadelmann-Steffen 2010: 477). Moreover, language regions roughly coincide with cantonal institutions of direct democracy. This makes it somewhat difficult to disentangle the influence of direct democracy from the influence of language regions. Hardly surprising, the coefficient of direct democracy in our models is not significant anymore when controlling for language regions (not shown). But does the variable of language regions work as a proxy for direct democracy or vice versa? From a theoretical point of view, it seems at least less clear how identification with a political party should be affected by the prevalent language in a canton if not precisely by institutions such as direct democracy. It is for this theoretical reason that Freitag and Stadelmann-Steffen (2010) for instance drop language regions altogether from their analysis of Swiss direct democracy. From an empirical perspective, we can test the influence of language, *ceteris paribus* direct democratic institutions, by looking closer at the three bilingual cantons. Figure 4 compares means and standard errors of party identification between language groups in Bern, Fribourg, and Valais. On average, more French speaking respondents indicate party attachment than German speaking respondents within the same

canton. Looking closer at the standard errors, however, it becomes evident that confidence intervals overlap. Thus, differences in party identification between language groups are not statistically significant. Although this result is of course not sufficient to dismiss the influence of language regions, it does support the importance of direct democratic institutions in order to explain differences in partisan attachment.

Figure 4 about here

Conclusion

The concept of party identification plays a major role in the study of electoral research (Green et al. 2002; Weisberg and Greene 2003). It is of central interest to political science to know why and to what extent individuals affiliate with political parties (Dalton 2007). But despite the phenomenon of declining party identification and increasing dealignment among voters (Dalton and Wattenberg 2000), little systematic evidence exists as to which factors influence individual party identification. Our paper contributes to improving on this lacuna by considering the educative effects of direct democracy (Smith and Tolbert 2004). Thereby, it represents the very first analysis of the influence that direct democratic institutions exert on party identification. Theoretically, two competing hypotheses sound plausible. On the one hand, direct democracy might strengthen political parties and promote the need for cues so that voters succumb to the allure of partisan attachment. On the other hand, direct democracy might provide an alternative to the representational function of political parties thus rendering party identification less essential. Our empirical analysis of individual data from the Swiss cantons gives clear support to the *alternative-hypothesis*. In Switzerland, individuals are

significantly less likely to feel close to a political party if they have permissive direct democratic institutions at their disposal. Surprisingly, however, this effect diminishes if individuals are constantly exposed to popular votes.

The finding that direct democracy evidently fosters the dealignment of voters raises obviously further questions—three of which we would like to address briefly. First, increased dealignment of the electorate might have alarming normative implications. Recalling the connotation of dealigned, independent citizens being less sophisticated and disaffected by politics, direct democratic institutions consequently should be opposed (Rosenblum 2008). It is, however, the more recent view that this negative connotation fails to do independent voters justice (Dalton 2007, 2009). Although we observe in our data the more knowledgeable and interested being less likely to be independents, we have no evidence whatsoever that direct democratic institutions affect political interest and knowledge negatively. Existing evidence of the USA points rather to the contrary (Mendelsohn and Cutler 2000; Smith and Tolbert 2004). Thus we see no concern to oppose for such reasons the introduction and extension of direct democracy. Nonetheless more research on the educative effects of direct democratic institutions is in any case desirable.

Second, the finding bears also substantial relevance to party politics. From the perspective of political parties loyal attachment of voters represents a valuable and desirable resource. Permissive direct democratic institutions seem in this regard potentially detrimental. In an environment of extensive direct democracy, it gets harder for political parties to attract partisans. On the other hand, parties can also seize direct democratic instruments in order to counter the dealignment of voters in direct democracy. If parties provoke popular votes often enough, they have opportunity to use direct democratic campaigns to promote themselves, to provide cues to voters, and ultimately to seek new partisans.

Third, we should, after all, be cautious about the conclusions of course. Although the results have shown to be fairly robust, they can only be considered to be preliminary. Specifically, the cross-sectional data does not allow us to investigate the causal mechanism, which we merely theorized between direct democracy and party identification. Further analyses could thereby take a longitudinal or qualitative approach in order to scrutinize the causality. In the same vein, replicating this study in different countries and contexts would be helpful to validate the generalizability of the findings. In this regard, our paper can be seen as point of departure for future research.

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Figure 1: Predicted probability of party identification given direct democracy

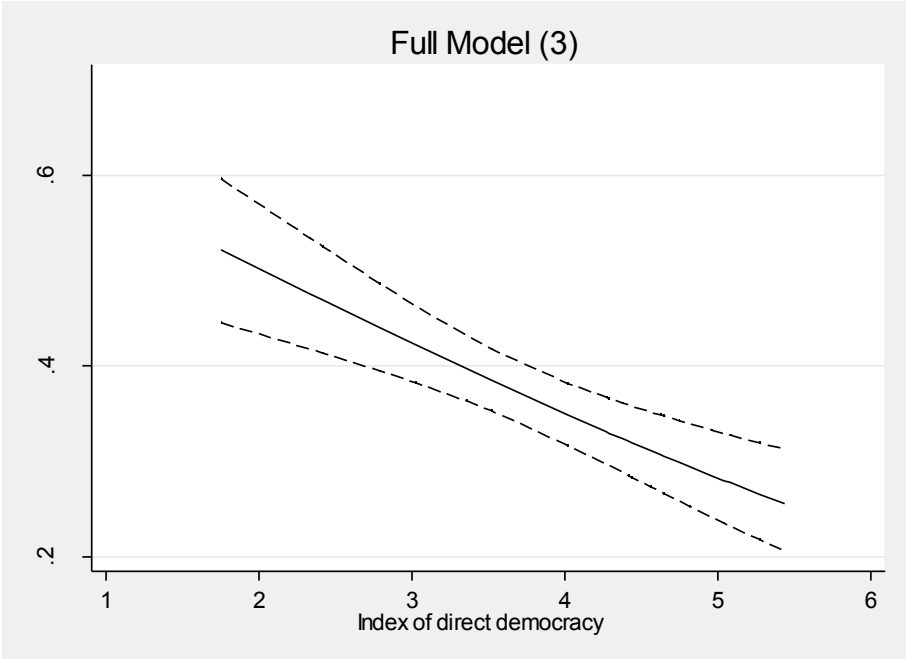


Figure 2: Moderating effect of popular votes

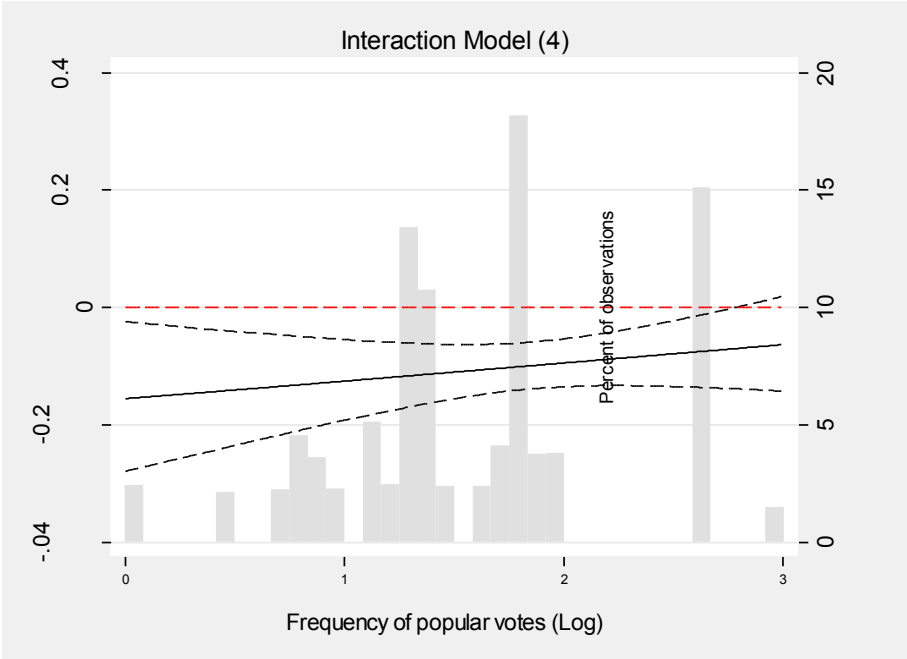


Figure 3: Robustness test through manual jackknife procedure

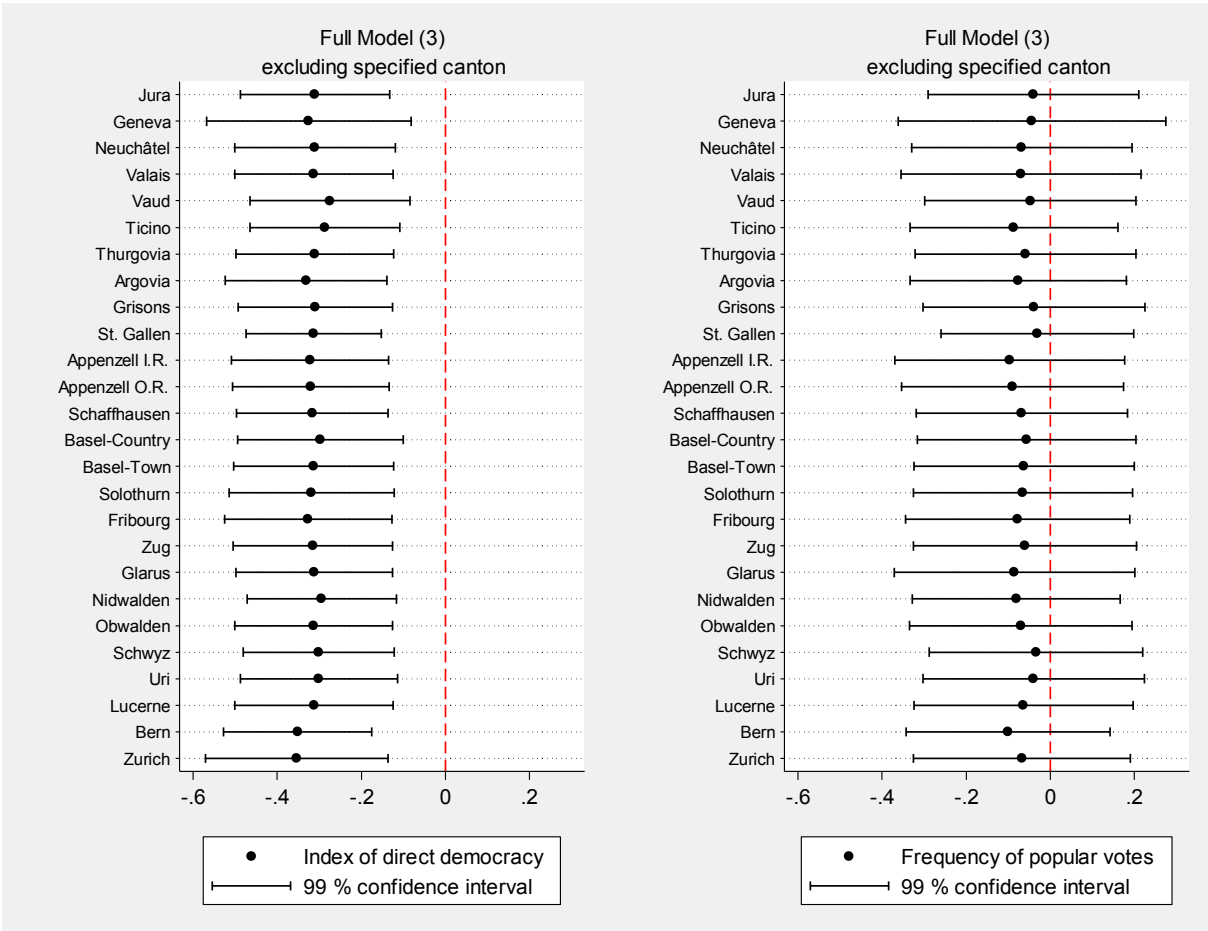
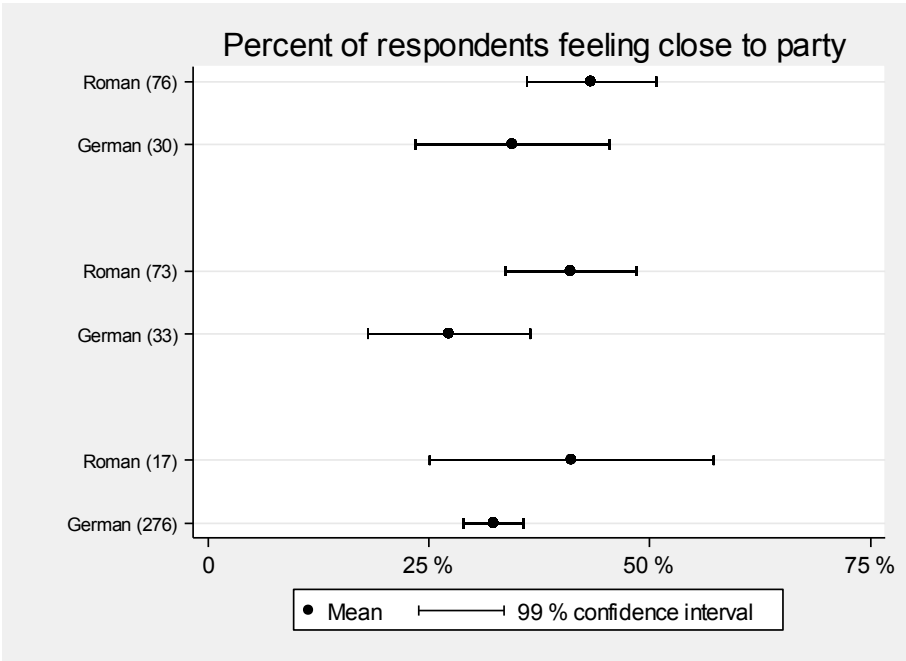


Figure 4: Party identification in bilingual cantons



Note: Numbers in brackets indicate number of respondents.

Table 1: Random-intercept logit models of party identification

| | (1) <i>Individual controls</i> | (2) <i>Direct democracy</i> | (3) <i>Full controls</i> | (4) <i>Interaction term</i> |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Constant | -0.474 (0.302) | 1.086*** (0.418) | 0.780 (0.616) | 1.426 (0.976) |
| Index of Direct Democracy | | -0.331*** (0.069) | -0.312*** (0.072) | -0.480** (0.209) |
| Frequency of popular votes | | -0.147 (0.105) | -0.063 (0.099) | -0.408 (0.415) |
| Direct democracy*Popular votes | | | | 0.090 (0.105) |
| Age | 0.013*** (0.002) | 0.013*** (0.002) | 0.013*** (0.002) | 0.013*** (0.002) |
| Level of education | 0.036*** (0.011) | 0.035*** (0.011) | 0.036*** (0.011) | 0.036*** (0.011) |
| Gender | 0.106 (0.074) | 0.104 (0.074) | 0.107 (0.074) | 0.107 (0.074) |
| Ideological position | -0.008 (0.016) | -0.008 (0.016) | -0.007 (0.016) | -0.008 (0.016) |
| Political knowledge | 0.115*** (0.022) | 0.115*** (0.022) | 0.116*** (0.022) | 0.116*** (0.022) |
| Political interest | -0.816*** (0.054) | -0.818*** (0.054) | -0.820*** (0.054) | -0.821*** (0.054) |
| Post-materialistic values | 0.064* (0.039) | 0.064* (0.039) | 0.064* (0.039) | 0.064 (0.039) |
| Urbanisation | | | 0.003 (0.003) | 0.004 (0.003) |
| Share of Catholics | | | 0.164 (0.411) | 0.108 (0.410) |
| Population (in 10,000) | | | -0.003 (0.002) | -0.003 (0.002) |
| Δ Unemployment rate | | | 0.246* (0.147) | 0.199 (0.155) |
| Observations | 4103 | 4103 | 4103 | 4103 |
| Number of groups | 26 | 26 | 26 | 26 |
| Context variance | 0.197 | 0.079 | 0.051 | 0.048 |
| Deviance | 4872 | 4854 | 4849 | 4848 |
| AIC | 4890 | 4876 | 4879 | 4880 |
| BIC | 4946 | 4946 | 4973 | 4981 |

Note: Standard errors in parentheses; *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Appendix

| Variable | Operationalization / Coding | Source | N | Descriptive statistics | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|------|------------------------|----------|--------------|
| | | | | Mean | St. dev. | Range |
| <i>Dependent variable</i> | | | | | | |
| Party identification | “Do you generally feel close to a political party?” / 0= No; 1 = Yes | Selects 2011 | 4356 | 0.40 | 0.49 | 0; 1 |
| <i>Independent variable</i> | | | | | | |
| Index of direct democracy | Permissiveness of institutional hurdles according to Stutzer (1999) / 1 = low; 6 = high | Schaub and Dlabac (2012) | 26 | 4.11 | 0.97 | 1.75; 5.43 |
| Frequency of popular votes | Average number of popular votes (on initiatives and referendums) over 2005-2009 / Log | | 26 | 1.44 | 0.69 | 0; 3.01 |
| <i>Individual control variables</i> | | | | | | |
| Age | in years | | 4391 | 50.25 | 17.60 | 18; 94 |
| Level of education | 0 = no education; 12 = University degree | | 4368 | 7.61 | 3.46 | 1; 13 |
| Gender | 1 = Male; 2 = Female | | 4391 | 1.52 | 0.50 | 1; 2 |
| Income | Gross monthly income of respondent’s household / 1 = less than CHF 2000; 11 = more than CHF 11000 | | 3780 | 6.97 | 2.89 | 1; 11 |
| Ideological position | Self-placement on left-right scale / 0 = left; 10 = right | Selects 2011 | 4278 | 5.11 | 2.33 | 0; 10 |
| Political knowledge | Factual knowledge questions regarding Swiss politics / 0 = low knowledge; 7 = high knowledge | | 4391 | 3.50 | 1.94 | 0; 7 |
| Political interest | “How interested are you in general in politics?” / 1= very interested; 4 = not interested at all | | 4379 | 2.13 | 0.80 | 1; 4 |
| Postmaterialism | Inglehart index / 1 = Materialist; 4 = Post-materialist | | 4260 | 2.57 | 0.94 | 1; 4 |
| <i>Contextual control variables</i> | | | | | | |
| Urbanisation | Degree of urbanization in 2001 / in % | Swiss Federal Statistical Office | 26 | 54.63 | 30.78 | 0; 100 |
| Share of Catholics | Share of Catholics in population in 2010 | | 26 | 0.48 | 0.21 | 0.16; 0.84 |
| Population | Number of inhabitants in 2010 / in 10000 | | 26 | 30.27 | 32.07 | 1.57; 137.31 |
| Unemployment | Change of unemployment rate between 2004-2010 | | 26 | -0.22 | 0.51 | -1.04; 1.73 |