(Rethinking) Political representation and accountability in the age of Internet

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Deliberative Constituencies
Outline

• Introduction
• Representation and voting systems
• Voting, aggregation and accountability
• New possibilities and new institutions
• Proposal: *Dynamic Constituencies*
• Pros and cons
Introduction

Representation
Participation
Deliberation
Accountability
Demos

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct Democracy</th>
<th>Representative Democracy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deliberative Democracy</td>
<td>Participatory Democracy</td>
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</table>
## Direct democracy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Polity</th>
<th>Institutional Context</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>Consensus culture/praxis</td>
<td>Stable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>Competitive winner-takes-all culture</td>
<td>Disfunctional</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Electoral system

• An *electoral system* is the use of particular voting systems to place some group of people in charge of administration of a legal system under pre-existing legal codes.

• *Voting systems* are methods (algorithms) for groups of people to select one or more options from many, taking into account the individual preferences of the group members.
Borda elections

- A form of Preferential Voting
  - Rank preference ballots (ranks all options)
- instant-runoff voting, Australia
Double trouble

• There is the voting scheme

• Then there are Districts (Constituencies)

• Their interaction can greatly modify outcome

CLAIM 1: Abolish Districts

CLAIM 2: Dynamic Constituencies = Effective Voters
Majority vote

1 district = 1 seat

Voting scheme

Districts
Majority vote

• Voting schemes applies to districts
  • preference aggregation with known properties
• Overall “aggregation” by district winner does not “represent” population preferences
  • Residual votes are not taken into account
• Constituency link is clear
Majority vote
1. Good if districts have large number of seats
2. d'Hondt method
   a) used in Israel (global district), Austria and Poland
3. Sainte-Laguë method
   a) used in many Scandinavian countries, New Zealand, and the German Federal State Bremen
   b) better minority representation than d’Hondt
Party-list proportionality

1. Only if districts have a large number of seats
   a) Global district (e.g. Israel)

2. No direct link from citizen to MP
   a) Parties as mediation structure
   b) More difficult accountability
Dynamic Constituency

- Keep constituency
- Keep proportionality

Some consequences are against ‘common wisdom’
Dynamic Constituency

Threshold:

Votes in thousands

Constituencies = Group of voters of candidate/elect
Dynamic Constituency

Representatives
Assembly

Deliberative
online groups
(citizens
mini-parliaments)

Constituencies = Group of voters of candidate/elect
Dynamic Constituency

- Simplifies voting scheme
- Abolishes districts and biases
  - proportional
- Keeps constituency link
  - through digital infrastructure
- Fixed seat number vs. fixed threshold
Real time balloting

• Like in approval voting, a citizen may decide more than one candidate is good

• If someone I “approve” is likely to be elected I may vote for my second choice

• Real time balloting assures me this decision is correct
  
  • e.g. current votes in the election insures seat of favorite candidate

• Advantages of Approval Voting
Real time balloting

Threshold:

Votes in thousands

Preferences: “First one is already elected, I’ll vote for the second one"
Real time balloting

Feedback may improve motivation for voting
Open ended voting

• One week for ‘formal voting’
• All candidates that pass the threshold are elected after that week
• People can transfer their vote from non-elected candidates (only) to other candidates closer to the threshold
• All candidates that pass the threshold are elected after ‘formal voting’ week: open-ended process
Summary

Dynamic Constituencies

DC as Mini-parliaments: better accountability, participation, deliberation, representation?

New key concept: Threshold

Open-ended selection of elected candidates

Real time visibility of votes per candidate
Future work

1) Dynamic Constituencies can **criticize** the elected person after a ‘period of grace’ by removing their support

2) Dynamic Constituencies can **impeach** the elected person after a ‘period of grace’ by removing their support

**Impeachment threshold:**
elected person losing 50% of support of his DC could lose her position. Can the people transfer vote to a better candidate? Permanent elections as a good practice?
Thanks!
Questions?