

Do Multicultural Democracies Really Require PR? Counterevidence from Switzerland

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Abstract

Central to consociational (or power-sharing) theory is the claim that multicultural societies require electoral systems based on proportional representation (PR) in order to ensure a fair representation of the various cultural groups in parliament. In this context, Switzerland is often cited as a “PR country”, as well as the key example of successful consociationalism. This article argues that, in this respect, the Swiss experience does not support consociational theory as far as the representation of linguistic groups is concerned. The counterevidence is found by exploring the variety of Swiss electoral systems, both at the national level and in the four multilingual cantons. The article suggests that territoriality (i.e. definition of electoral districts) is the key variable for ensuring linguistic proportionality in parliament. When this is not possible, as is the case in some elections in the multilingual cantons, majoritarian systems sometimes do a better job than PR.

Keywords: multicultural societies, consociational theory, power-sharing, electoral systems, Switzerland, multilingual cantons

Introduction

The choice of electoral system is one of the key issues that “institutional designers” in culturally heterogeneous societies need to face (Cohen 1997; Reilly 2001; Horowitz 2003; Bogaards 2004; Wolff 2005).¹

“The most important choice facing constitution writers is that of a legislative electoral system, for which the three broad categories are proportional representation (PR), majoritarian systems, and intermediate systems. For divided societies, ensuring the election of a broadly representative legislature should be the crucial consideration, and PR is undoubtedly the optimal way of doing so.” (Lijphart 2004: 99f.)

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Lijphart (2004: 99f.) further claims that there is “a scholarly consensus against majoritarian (or plurality) systems in divided societies”. Together with other advocates of consociationalism², he clearly recommends PR for multicultural societies. Based on data drawn from the “Minorities at Risk” project, Cohen (1997: 628) states that “proportional institutions are more effective than majoritarian institutions as democratic instruments of ethnic-conflict management.” And according to Doorenspleet (2005: 366) “[m]ajority rule is dangerous in divided societies, because minorities that are continually denied access to political power will feel excluded and discriminated against by the regime.”

But not all scholars of multicultural societies agree with this alleged consensus. Horowitz (2003), the main representative of the so-called “integrative power sharing” school of conflict resolution (Wolf 2005), claims that some forms of majoritarian systems, like the alternative vote, may work better, especially if the goal of institutional designers is to promote interethnic voting and the consolidation of moderate (and possibly multiethnic) parties (see also Reilly 2001).

Proportionality through territoriality: the Swiss example

The central thesis of this article is that the choice of electoral system (PR vs. majoritarian method) does not *per se* have an impact on group representation in parliament, provided that groups are territorially concentrated and that electoral districts reflect the geographic distribution of the groups. In such a context, adequate group representation in parliament and the consequent participation of all significant groups in the legislative decision-making process is possible with plurality/majority³ systems as well as with PR. The article explores this thesis

² The model of consociational democracy has four characteristics: broadly inclusive executives, territorial autonomy, veto power for minorities, and PR (as an electoral system and as a principle for allocating public funds and jobs in the public service). Lijphart considers consociationalism and power sharing as synonyms (Lijphart 2004: 97). Yet, in literature this equation has been controversial (see Bogaards 2000). In this article I will rely on the term ‘consociationalism’. Further, Lijphart (1989) underlines that *consociational* democracy shall not be conflated with *consensus* democracy. The latter concept was developed in the 1980s and has been considered an antonym of the Westminster majoritarian model of democracy. It relies on more formal practices and requires some elements that are absent from the consociational model (e.g., written constitution, judicial review). Lijphart considers consociationalism a more suitable prescription for divided societies.

³ In Switzerland majoritarian methods are typically two-round systems applied in two- or multi-member districts in which electors have as many votes as there are candidates to be elected (candidate-centred voting or “block vote”). In the first round an absolute

by focusing upon the experience of Switzerland and the electoral instruments by which parliamentary representation of the various *linguistic* groups⁴ has been ensured.

Why Switzerland? The simple answer is that this country has played the crucial role in consociational theory ever since the theory was first developed (Lijphart 1969; Steiner 1970; Daalder 1971; see also McRae et al. 1974). It later became one of Lijphart's seven "prime examples" for the thesis which stated that consociationalism is the only workable solution for establishing and/or maintaining democracy in multicultural societies (Lijphart 1985: 89, 2004). It should be noted that most of these consociational experiences either ended or failed, so that today only Belgium and Switzerland remain.⁵

However, since the 1990s the Belgian case has less and less been considered a successful multilingual democracy, due largely to the growing cleavage between its two major linguistic groups (Deschouwer 2005). On the other hand, Switzerland is still viewed as a model from which other multicultural countries can draw inspiration (Kymlicka 1995: 22, 128; Lijphart 2002; McGarry and O'Leary 2005). This explains the focus upon the Swiss case in this article.

Now the idea that proportionality – in terms of representation of cultural groups, rather than political parties – can be achieved through territoriality is not new, both in theory and in practice (Ordeshook and Shvetsova 1994; Norris 2002: 233f.; Bogaards 2004; Linder 2005: 42). Consociational theory, too, does not ignore the fact that proportionality can be realised through territoriality and by non-PR methods as well (Lijphart 1986: 118f.). In spite of this, consociationalists still consider PR, especially if applied in sufficiently *large* electoral districts, as a superior system with respect to majoritarian methods (Lijphart 1999: 152).

Yet, exactly this solution – PR in large electoral districts – may have *negative* consequences for representation of cultural minorities in certain contexts. Consider the following statement drawn from the 1972 official report of an ad hoc

majority ("majority") is required in order to get elected. In the second round the candidates with the highest vote totals win the seats ("plurality"). In this article the broad categories of "majoritarian systems" and "majoritarian rule" will be used in order to describe both plurality and majority methods. For a comprehensive classification of electoral systems see IDEA (2005).

⁴ The reasons for the emphasis on linguistic groups, and not other groups, are explained in the two disclaimers at the end of the article.

⁵ The other five examples were the Netherlands (1917-67), Austria (1945-66), Lebanon (1943-75), Malaysia (since 1955), and Cyprus (1960-63). Two of them have failed (Lebanon and Cyprus), two have been transformed into democratic majoritarian systems (Austria and the Netherlands), whereas Malaysia "may not qualify as fully democratic" (Lijphart 1985: 89).

commission set up by the Swiss federal government with the aim of analysing the implications of different proposals for the reform of the electoral system.

“Dans les grands arrondissements, le danger existe que des minorités linguistiques, confessionnelles ou sociales (ville/campagne) voient leurs intérêts particuliers négligés parce que les électeurs, pour des raisons inhérentes au système de la représentation proportionnelle, donnent en premier lieu leur suffrage aux représentants d’un parti et moins à ceux d’une région, d’une confession ou d’une communauté linguistique déterminée. ... Le partage d’un territoire étendu en plusieurs arrondissements peut donc constituer une précieuse garantie pour d’autres minorités que celle de caractère politique.” (Chancellerie fédérale 1972: 133f.; my emphases)

It is no wonder, then, that in Switzerland the existence of relatively *small* electoral districts, and not PR *per se*, has typically been seen as the best instrument for ensuring representation of cultural minorities.

The first goal of this article is to challenge the tendency to consider Switzerland an example in support of the consociational thesis according to which a PR electoral system is the “optimal way” of ensuring the election of a “broadly representative legislature” in multicultural societies. The article presents three pieces of counterevidence showing that in Switzerland PR electoral systems have not been related to adequate representation of linguistic groups in legislative bodies, in contexts in which boundaries of electoral districts reflected the territorial distribution of different groups. The first two pieces of counterevidence address the elections to the upper and lower houses of the Swiss parliament; the third one explores the method of election for the cantonal parliament of the Grisons, the most linguistically heterogeneous Swiss canton.

At this point an important question arises: what if groups are not territorially concentrated, and therefore, it is difficult to design electoral districts in order to ensure representation of minorities? In this case, too, Switzerland has several interesting case-studies to offer, since four of its 26 cantons are multilingual. Although most of the internal linguistic minorities living in these cantons are territorially concentrated, the respective cantonal territories have not been divided into several electoral districts in the elections to the lower house (by PR) and to the upper house (by majoritarian method) of the federal parliament, and in the direct elections of the cantonal executives (by majoritarian method). So, it is interesting to see what effects the different electoral systems have had on group representation in these four cantons. This article does not take an a priori stance in favour of PR or majoritarian systems, but rather looks at the available empirical evidence.

Council of States: majoritarian system and low district magnitude

In the literature dedicated to Switzerland, the multitude of electoral systems used in this country has received extensive coverage (see Garrone 1991; Kriesi 1995: 141ff.; Linder 2005: 95ff.). Yet, all major international studies on electoral systems still classify Switzerland simply as a “PR country” (see Lijphart 1999: 145; Powell 2000: 28, 41; Blais and Massicote 2002: 47; IDEA 2005: 172). The reason is straightforward: these studies have considered only the first chambers.

In the case of Switzerland this approach is not justified. Switzerland is one of the few democracies where both chambers formally have equal powers, since they have the same voting rights on all legislation (symmetrical bicameralism).⁶ Moreover, if we focus exclusively upon federal countries, we find out that the Swiss Council of States is the most powerful second chamber (Swenden 2004: 36). And as far as multicultural democracies are concerned, in his 1984 book Lijphart states that Switzerland is the “only one of our six plural societies [that] has strong bicameralism” (Lijphart 1984: 100).⁷ Further, in his 1999 study the author states that in Belgium and Switzerland “[t]he lower houses of both legislatures are elected by PR” (Lijphart 1999: 37). In other words, Lijphart acknowledges that the Swiss upper house is powerful and that it is not elected by PR. Nonetheless, this fact was not taken into consideration and the example of Switzerland continued to play its (crucial) role in consociational theory as a “PR country” (Lijphart 2002).

In the Council of States each of the 20 cantons now have two representatives. The remaining six cantons – formerly known as “half-cantons” – each have one seat. Thus, elections are held in 20 two-member and six single-member districts. Each canton is free to choose the mode of appointment of its representatives. 25 cantons have chosen *majoritarian* systems. Only Jura uses PR (Garrone 1991: 13f., 76).

Here it is necessary to stress that the focus upon the upper house of the Swiss parliament is not that important because of the majoritarian electoral system per se, but because of the very small number of mandates per electoral district (i.e. low district magnitude). Indeed, some authors consider district magnitude to

⁶ One notable exception to this rule is the election of the members of the federal cabinet and of the federal tribunal. In such occasions the two chambers join in a common session and the vote of every member of parliament has the same weight. This is one of the rare cases in which there is an asymmetry between the two chambers, at the expense of the smaller one (upper house).

⁷ The other five “plural societies” are: Austria, Belgium, Israel, Luxemburg, and the Netherlands.

be *the* most important characteristic of an electoral system (see Ordeshook and Shvetsova 1994). In fact, as Lijphart rightly notes, “[t]wo-member districts can hardly be regarded as compatible with the principle of proportionality” (Lijphart 1999: 152). So the central claim of this section would be the same if all the cantons had applied PR, as Jura does.

What are the effects of the Council of States’ electoral system upon the linguistic composition of this chamber? Table 1 shows that in the 1979-2007 period, the four linguistic groups were adequately represented in the Council of States, according to their share of the population.⁸

Table 1: Linguistic composition of the Council of States, 1979-2007

	Swiss population share (1980-2000)	Seat share (majoritarian system)
German speakers	73.1 %	72.2 % (232.5)
French speakers	20.5 %	21.7 % (70.0)
Italian speakers	4.3 %	4.3 % (14.0)
Romansh speakers	0.7 %	1.7 % (5.5)

Sources: www.parlament.ch; Swiss Federal Statistical Office. **Notes:** The percentages given for the linguistic composition of the Swiss population are the mean values of the 1980, 1990 and 2000 censuses (main language only). Only Swiss citizens have been considered, since foreign residents (20.7 percent of the population in 2005) have no voting rights in federal elections. (N) = total number of seats in the Council of States gained in the 1979, 1983, 1987, 1991, 1995, 1999, and 2003 elections. The representatives of 22 monolingual cantons have been automatically classified within their respective linguistic groups. An ad hoc enquiry has been conducted in order to classify the representatives of the four multilingual cantons. The following criteria have been considered: place of birth and/or origin, language used in the parliamentary debates, newspaper reports. For the classification of the representatives of the Grisons I am indebted to Daniele Papacella. Two members of the upper house elected in the multilingual cantons have been considered as bilingual: Anton Cottier from Fribourg (German/French speaker, elected in 1987, 1991, 1995, and 1999), and Christoffel Brändli from the Grisons (Romansh/German speaker, elected in 1995, 1999, and 2003).

It should be noted that such a proportional linguistic composition of the Council of States is simply an odd product of historical and demographic circumstances. It was not on the agenda of the authors of the modern Swiss

⁸ Official statistics concerning the linguistic composition of the Swiss parliament do not exist. There are no clearcut criteria for classifying the members of parliament according to their mother tongue (see notes to Table 1). Only few authors have undertaken such a task (e.g., Linder 2005: 43).

constitution in 1848, when bicameralism was established (Heger 1990).⁹ If, for instance, Italian speakers from Ticino were divided into two separate cantons – as was the case during the Helvetic Republic (1798-1803) – their representation in the upper house would have doubled. Similarly, if the French-speaking cantons of Geneva and Vaud had become a single canton – as a 2002 popular initiative unsuccessfully demanded – there would be two French speakers less in the upper house.

To sum up, the first piece of counterevidence that challenges the consociational claim that PR is a necessary choice for multicultural countries is the fact that the members of the Swiss upper house are elected by majoritarian rule, either in two-member or in single-member districts. But let us, for the sake of the argument, follow scholars who have opted to ignore the electoral system of the upper house. Does the alleged importance of PR in multicultural countries hold if we focus exclusively upon the lower house of the Swiss parliament?

National Council: majoritarian system before 1919

The electoral method of the lower house of the Swiss parliament – the National Council – is determined by federal law. Today it is a “free list” PR system – that is, a form of list PR with *panachage* – with the possibility of *cumulation* of candidates, and *apparentement* of party lists (IDEA 2005: 90). The elections are held in 26 electoral districts, since every canton forms a separate electoral district.¹⁰

We have seen that in consociational theory and in international studies on electoral systems, which rely exclusively on the electoral system by which the lower house is elected, Switzerland has typically been cited as an example of a PR country. Yet, in the first seven decades of the modern Swiss federal state (1848-1919) the elections to the National Council were conducted by majoritarian rule. During that period the number of districts varied from 47 to 52, but they were never allowed to overlap cantonal borders (Gruner 1978: 312ff.). With the adoption of PR in 1919 it was decided that every canton would form a single electoral district.

⁹ In 1848 the religious cleavage (Catholics vs. Protestants) was particularly salient. The upper house served to ensure a certain overrepresentation of the Catholic minority, in virtue of its concentration within a couple of smaller cantons. Therefore, through the Council of States, the Catholics could balance the power of the Protestant majority in the lower house (Heger 1990).

¹⁰ There are huge variations of the district magnitude. Today the most populous canton (Zurich) has 34 seats. The six smallest cantons have one seat each, and thus, inevitably elect their representatives with majoritarian system. The average district magnitude is 13.

For the purposes of this article it is important to underline that this reform of the electoral system hardly had an impact on one of the most important goals that, according to consociational theory, PR is supposed to realize: ensuring adequate representation of all the main linguistic groups in parliament. This argument is best illustrated by comparing the linguistic composition of the National Council before and after the introduction of PR in 1919. For an empirical test, I looked at the National Council during the 1979-2007 period, as well as the National Council elected in 1911.¹¹

Table 2: Linguistic composition of the National Council, 1911-1915 and 1979-2007

	1911-1915		1979-2007	
	Swiss population share	Seat share (majoritarian)	Swiss population share	Seat share (PR)
<i>German speakers</i>	72.7 %	67.7 % (128)	73.1 %	71.4 % (999)
<i>French speakers</i>	22.1 %	27.0 % (51)	20.5 %	23.2 % (325)
<i>Italian speakers</i>	3.9 %	4.2 % (8)	4.3 %	4.1 % (57)
<i>Romansh speakers</i>	1.2 %	1.1 % (2)	0.7 %	1.4 % (19)

Sources: www.parlament.ch; Swiss Federal Statistical Office; Altermatt (1996: 134ff.); Bundesversammlung (1911). *Notes:* See Table 1. The linguistic composition of the Swiss population is based on the censuses of 1910 and 1980-1990-2000 (mean). In the 1979-2007 period a small number of representatives were elected with majoritarian system (see fn. 10). One national councillor (and later a member of the federal government) – Joseph Deiss, elected in 1991, and 1995 – has been considered as bilingual (German/French speaker).

Table 2 shows that all linguistic groups were adequately represented in the National Council according to their share of the population, both in the 1911-1915 and the 1979-2007 period. In the aftermath of the 1911 elections French speakers were slightly overrepresented at the expense of German speakers. This is mostly due to variations within the three bilingual (French/German-speaking) cantons.

How is it possible that the choice of electoral system did not have a significant impact on the linguistic composition of the lower house? The answer is straightforward: the adequate representation of the linguistic groups in the National Council was ensured by the definition and the distribution of electoral districts. These did not overlap cantonal borders, within which the groups are geographically concentrated.¹² In fact, 22 out of 26 cantons have only one official

¹¹ The choice of the 1911 election has been made in consideration of its proximity with the 1919 reform of the electoral system and the 1910 census of population. Since no official or secondary sources indicate the mother tongue of the members of the federal parliament, the creation of a data base for a larger pre-1919 period would have required an extensive and time consuming ad hoc inquiry, especially in the multilingual cantons. This would not have significantly changed the general picture of the 1848-1919 period.

¹² A possible exception is the canton of Grisons, where in some municipalities Romansh speakers live side by side with German speakers.

language (17 German-speaking, 4 French-speaking and one Italian-speaking). This is what really determines the “proportional” character of this house of parliament, as far as its linguistic composition is concerned. Of course, the change of the electoral system in 1919 did have an influence on other important features of the political system, especially on representation of political parties. In particular, PR has favoured the election of representatives of the Social-Democratic Party (SP/PS) and of the Swiss People’s Party (SVP/UDC) (Kriesi 1995: 141ff.). But since the Swiss party system is not structured along linguistic lines (Kriesi 1995: 135ff.), the 1919 electoral reform did not have an impact upon the representation of linguistic groups.

Finally, an analysis of the 1848-1919 period also points to a crucial role for electoral districts, since in that period they were adjusted and redefined every 10 years. In his extensive study of the elections to the National Council during this period, Gruner (1978) has shown that this was the central issue in political debates. Although the districts were not allowed to overlap cantonal borders, their geographical distribution within a given canton strongly affected the electoral outcome in virtue of the majoritarian electoral system. Gruner’s empirical analysis indicates that in that period the territorial definition of electoral districts was widely used as an instrument for achieving (or hindering) proportionality between the existing political forces. Theoretically, intracantonal districts could also have been used in order to ensure representation of linguistic minorities in the multilingual cantons. There is no evidence, however, that this issue was central in political discussions. Language was only one among many factors for defining electoral districts, and it was far from being the most important one (Gruner 1978: 316ff.).¹³

Grisons: majoritarian rule in the most heterogeneous canton

The third case of counterevidence to the consociational claim that a PR electoral system should be recommended for multicultural societies is the example of the

¹³ At the time of the 1911 election the canton of Valais had two electoral districts, but neither was composed exclusively of the German-speaking minority. The canton of Fribourg was also divided into two districts, both of which were linguistically mixed. Only in the canton of Berne was the French-speaking minority from the Jura concentrated within two separate districts (see Bundesversammlung 1911). In 1911 the Grisons formed one electoral district, but from 1848 to 1863 there were four single-member districts there, and all were linguistically mixed (Gruner 1978: 339).

cantonal parliamentary elections in the Grisons. With three official languages (German, Romansh, Italian), it is the most linguistically fragmented Swiss canton.¹⁴

Advocates of consociational theory would undoubtedly suggest a PR system in such a context. Yet, it is the *only* Swiss canton whose parliament is entirely elected by majoritarian rule. Other cantons use PR or mixed systems.¹⁵

As at the national level, in the Grisons linguistic representation in parliament is ensured through geographical concentration of the linguistic groups and a large number of small districts: there are as many as 39 electoral districts (15 single-member, 9 two member, and 15 multi-member). This is especially true for the smallest linguistic minority, the Italian speakers. They are clustered in four distinct valleys, which, in turn, are divided up into six distinct electoral districts. So the representation of Italian speakers is ensured through “their” electoral districts, independently of the electoral system. In the Grisons’ parliament they usually have 10 out of 120 seats (8.3 percent), which corresponds to their share of the population.¹⁶

In the past decades there have been seven (unsuccessful) attempts to change the electoral system from majoritarian to PR. For the purposes of this article it is important to note that such electoral reforms have typically been advocated by *political* minorities (especially the SP/PS), which have definitely been disadvantaged by majoritarian rule, and not by *linguistic* minorities. For instance, in the 2003 referendum, the level of support for the maintenance of the majoritarian system (measured by “yes” votes), and thus the opposition to the

¹⁴ In 2000 the linguistic composition of the Grisons (Swiss citizens only) was as follows: German speakers (73.5 percent), Romansh speakers (16.9 percent), Italian speakers (8.4 percent).

¹⁵ In the cantons of Uri and Appenzell Outer-Rhodes the majoritarian system is used in a number of small-sized districts, whereas larger districts apply PR. The canton of Appenzell Inner-Rhodes is a special case, where the ultimate legislative powers reside within the Landsgemeinde, an institution that belongs to the category of direct (and inevitably majoritarian) and not representative democracy.

¹⁶ The situation of Romansh speakers is more complex. Their territorial concentration is less clearcut, since in many areas they are intermixed with German speakers. Moreover, they display a high degree of intragroup heterogeneity (various dialects, different religious backgrounds, regional differences). For instance, the members of cantonal parliament of Romansh tongue have not created a distinctive crossparty group, contrary to the Italian-speaking members of parliament who, in spite of a similar intragroup heterogeneity, join up in the *Deputazione grigionitaliana* in order to better defend the interests of Italian speakers on certain issues. It is also questionable whether Romansh speakers can be considered a minority in the same way as Italian speakers can, since they are perfectly fluent in the language of the majority (German), and therefore, do not face functional disadvantages of a typical linguistic minority.

introduction of a special mixed majoritarian/PR system, was roughly the same in the Italian-speaking districts as in the rest of the canton (slightly above 50 percent). In any case, the question of representation of linguistic groups was not an issue in the referendum campaign. In fact, the turnout was very low: 37 percent in the canton as a whole and 38 percent in the Italian-speaking districts.¹⁷ This demonstrates that Italian speakers did not consider the reform of the electoral system as an important issue for their representation in parliament.

Does this mean that the Grisons' citizens do not care about their linguistic representation? There are indications that the question of linguistic representation in parliament might arise if there were a reform of the *electoral districts*. In February 2006, the SP/PS launched a popular initiative demanding the reduction of seats in the cantonal parliament by one third (from 120 to 80). This would imply a reduction of the number of electoral districts, particularly through the fusion of the smallest ones. The SP/PS acknowledged that the more populous regions would certainly gain a couple of seats after such a reform, but that nevertheless the "proportions between urban and rural areas, as well as between languages would remain the same." In order to achieve this goal in spite of the reduction of the number of districts, they advanced the idea of adopting "regional, linguistic and gender quotas."¹⁸ I consider this as a sign that the issue of linguistic representation in parliament is not totally absent from the political debate. But up to now it has not come up as a problem simply because all regions and linguistic groups have been adequately represented in parliament by virtue of the large number of electoral districts.

Elections in the multilingual cantons

The choice of a PR vs. majoritarian system may have an impact on the patterns of group representation if electoral districts are so large as to encompass more than one linguistic group. This is the case of the federal parliamentary elections (especially after 1919, as far as the National Council is concerned) and of the cantonal executive elections held in the four multilingual cantons, namely Berne, Fribourg, Grisons, and Valais.

I will start by exploring the elections to the lower house of the federal parliament. In light of the consociational concern for adequate representation of all linguistic groups in parliament, the system of elections to the National

¹⁷ www.gr.ch (consulted on 31 Aug. 2006); my calculation.

¹⁸ www.sp-gr.ch/argumentarium_80sindgenug.pdf (consulted on 31 Aug. 2006).

Council – PR in cantonally defined electoral districts – constitutes a considerable challenge for the multilingual cantons. Its main shortcoming is the absence of indirect guarantees for representation of intracantonal linguistic minorities (via smaller electoral districts).

Table 3: Linguistic composition of mandates of the multilingual cantons, National Council, 1979-2007

<i>Canton</i>		<i>Cantonal population share (1980-2000)</i>		<i>Seat share (PR)</i>
<i>Berne</i>	German speakers	90.5 %	91.8 %	(180)
	French speakers	8.8 %	8.2 %	(16)
<i>Fribourg</i>	French speakers	65.5 %	67.4 %	(29)
	German speakers	33.1 %	32.6 %	(14)
<i>Grisons</i>	German speakers	69.8 %	42.9 %	(15)
	Romansh speakers	20.3 %	54.3 %	(19)
	Italian speakers	8.8 %	2.9 %	(1)
<i>Valais</i>	French speakers	65.2 %	65.3 %	(32)
	German speakers	33.6 %	34.7 %	(17)

Sources: www.parlament.ch; Swiss Federal Statistical Office. **Notes:** See Table 1, and 2.

A look at the results of seven federal elections held from 1979 to 2007 shows that this concern is not confirmed (Table 3). In Berne, Fribourg and Valais, the linguistic minorities have obtained a fair share of seats in the National Council with respect to their proportion in the population of the respective cantons. Only in the Grisons was the Italian-speaking minority underrepresented, with only one mandate gained in that period. By contrast, Romansh speakers have been largely overrepresented with 54 percent of the Grisons' mandates.

Shall we conclude that federal elections do not pose any problems in the multilingual cantons? A closer examination suggests that we exercise more caution. In fact, the mean values presented in Table 3 hide some considerable disequilibria. A closer inspection of the 2003 elections to the National Council (Table 4) shows that three out of the five linguistic minorities were considerably underrepresented in relation to their shares of the respective cantonal populations (French speakers in Berne, German speakers in Valais, and Italian speakers in the Grisons).

The central question, then, is as follows: was this situation a salient political issue in these three cantons? I will illustrate this question through three brief case-studies.

Table 4: Linguistic composition of mandates of the multilingual cantons, National Council, 2003 election

Canton		Cantonal population share (2000)		Seat share (PR)
Berne	German speakers	90.9 %	96.2 %	(25)
	French speakers	7.5 %	3.8 %	(1)
Fribourg	French speakers	65.9 %	71.4 %	(5)
	German speakers	32.5 %	28.6 %	(2)
Grisons	German speakers	73.5 %	60.0 %	(3)
	Romansh speakers	16.9 %	40.0 %	(2)
	Italian speakers	8.4 %	-	(0)
Valais	French speakers	66.3 %	85.7 %	(6)
	German speakers	32.5 %	14.3 %	(1)

Source and notes: See Tables 1, 2, and 3.

Grisons

Since 1848 only two Italian speakers from the Grisons have been elected to the National Council: Ettore Tenchio (national councillor from 1947 to 1971) and Silva Semadeni (national councillor from 1995 to 1999). So, the loss of the last Italian-speaking mandate occurred four years before the 2003 elections. In the 1999 elections Semadeni obtained the second-best personal result in the canton. In spite of that, she was not reelected because her party (SP/PS) won only one of the five seats attributed to the Grisons. That seat went to the candidate placed first on her party-list, who also gathered the largest number of personal votes in the canton.

The fact that Italian speaker Semadeni was not reelected in spite of an excellent personal result was attributed by the local media to the PR electoral system, because it privileges parties instead of candidates.¹⁹ In other words, if, hypothetically, majoritarian rule had been applied in the 1999 elections to the National Council in the Grisons, Italian speakers would have maintained one seat. What were the public reactions in the Italian-speaking regions in the aftermath of these elections? I have not found any evidence of protests, letters to the newspapers, political acts in the cantonal parliament, etc. This indicates a low salience of language in the Grison's politics.

¹⁹ Die Südostschweiz, 25 Oct. 1999.

Berne

The question of representation of French speakers from Berne in the National Council has been a sensitive issue in this canton since 1995. From that year on, only one French speaker (Walter Schmied) from the French-speaking region of Jura bernois²⁰ has been elected to the National Council. This situation is new. Six French speakers were elected to the National Council in 1979, four in 1983, three in 1987, and three in 1991 (Weibel 1990: 172).

In the 1995 electoral campaign one of the main French-speaking candidates declared that “the canton of Berne would not be credible without a representative from the Jura bernois in the National Council.”²¹ In the 1999 elections the issue of the French speaking representation was, again, at the centre of the debate. The president of *Unité bernoise*, a pro-Berne French-speaking association, said that since the canton of Berne constitutes a single electoral district for the elections to the National Council, the chances of French speakers to get elected are “unequal”, as they depend on the support of the German-speaking majority.²² As a matter of fact, a number of German-speaking politicians, as well as the media, appealed to German speakers to vote for French-speaking candidates. “You should vote for French speakers!”, wrote the major Berne’s German-speaking newspaper “*Der Bund*” a few days before the election. If the Jura bernois were to lose its seat in the National Council, the consequence would be “a symbolic exclusion of the French-speaking citizens of Berne.”²³ In the end, Walter Schmied succeeded in getting reelected but only with a very narrow margin of votes.

Analogous concerns were expressed in the 2003 electoral campaign. The president of the French-speaking section of the SP/PS affirmed that with a population of less than 10 percent French speakers “mathematically have no chance” to get elected.²⁴ In order to improve the chances of French-speaking candidates, three main cantonal parties decided to place their French-speaking candidates on the top of the respective party lists.²⁵ “If no French speaker gets

²⁰ Jura bernois is the southern part of the larger French-speaking Jura region. In the aftermath of the several referendums held in the 1970s, the majority of citizens of the northern Jura seceded from the canton of Berne and, in 1979, created a new canton of Jura. In the southern Jura a majority opted for remaining a part of the canton of Berne. A secessionist faction is still politically active there but it usually receives support from less than one third of the electorate.

²¹ *Der Bund*, 27 Sept. 1995. All translations are mine.

²² *Der Bund*, 1 Oct. 1999.

²³ *Der Bund*, 2 Oct. 1999.

²⁴ *Journal du Jura*, 15 Oct. 2002.

²⁵ Because of the free list PR system applied in the elections to the National Council this decision of Berne’s party elites had a mere symbolic value. In such a system, voters have as many votes as there are seats to be filled. These votes can be distributed to candidates either

elected, it could lead to new tensions in Jura bernois”, said the German-speaking president of the cantonal section of the SVP/UDC.²⁶ In the end, again, out of 49 French-speaking candidates, only Walter Schmied succeeded in getting re-elected.

In the light of the present article it should be stressed that a number of commentators have claimed that only a *separate electoral district* for Jura bernois within the canton of Berne would ensure the representation of French speakers in the National Council. Hubert Frainier, a French-speaking member of the cantonal parliament, made demands to the cantonal executive on three occasions (1995, 1999, and 2002) for the introduction of such a measure. In its answers, the cantonal government stressed the legal problem – the definition of electoral districts for the elections to the National Council is fixed by the federal constitution – and, instead, appealed to political parties to favour French-speaking candidates on their party-lists.²⁷ In March 2002, the French-speaking cantonal minister Mario Annoni stated that for the cantonal government a “good representation” of French speakers from Berne in the federal parliament was an issue of “utmost importance”.²⁸ And in June 2002 the cantonal executive stated:

“Pour le Conseil national, outre le fait qu’il faudrait modifier la Constitution fédérale et la loi fédérale sur les droits politiques pour introduire une exception à la règle selon laquelle chaque canton forme un *cercle électoral*, ce sont *avant tout* les principes applicables au *système proportionnel* qui s’opposent à l’octroi d’une garantie en faveur du Jura bernois car un tel système exige un nombre minimal de personnes à élire qui dépasse nettement celui auquel le Jura bernois pourrait prétendre.”²⁹

In sum, contrary to consociational theory, the cantonal executive considered PR as the main *obstacle* for ensuring an adequate representation of French speakers in the National Council.

within a single party lists or across several party lists. In fact, within the PR family, Lijphart recommends the system of closed lists in which electors are restricted to voting only for one party, and cannot express a preference for any candidate within a party list (Lijphart 2004: 101; see also IDEA 2005).

²⁶ Berner Zeitung, 4 Oct. 2003.

²⁷ Canton of Berne. Journal du Grand Conseil 1996, p. 2761.

²⁸ http://www.be.ch/aktuell/beilagen/allocution-annoni_f.pdf (consulted on 31 Aug. 2006).

²⁹ Réponse du Conseil-exécutif du 5 juin 2002 à l’interpellation Frainier du 20.3.2002 ; emphases added. Source: www.be.ch (consulted on 31 Aug. 2006).

Valais

The day after the 2003 federal elections, the Valais's media published a lot of comments concerning the non-election of the German-speaking candidates from the region of Oberwallis. The main local Francophone newspaper spoke of an "electoral earthquake".³⁰ What happened? The linguistic ratio of Valais's seven seats in the National Council has usually been five French speakers and two German speakers. From 1987 to 2003 German speakers even held three seats.³¹ Yet, in the 2003 elections they won only one seat, two representatives of Oberwallis not being re-elected. The main local Germanophone newspaper from Valais blamed the "back-crushing political overpower" of French speakers for that defeat.³² A German-speaking commentator proposed nothing less than the separation from the French-speaking part of the canton and the creation of a half-canton of Oberwallis.³³ The Francophone media further spoke of "ethnic vote". This expression was used in relation to the low support that French speakers received in Oberwallis.³⁴ But the same could be said of the lack of support that German speakers received in the French-speaking regions. A German-speaking member of the cantonal government affirmed that the results were due to the "fatality of proportional representation."³⁵

It is, therefore, no surprise that the overwhelming majority of German-speakers (69 percent) rejected, in September 2005, a popular initiative launched by the Social Democrats (from both linguistic communities) demanding the introduction of a PR electoral system in a single district for the elections of the cantonal government (Stojanović 2006). All major parties that opposed the referendum claimed that PR would put in danger the second seat of Oberwallis in the government. In other words, in Valais the linguistic *minority* clearly expressed its wish to maintain the *majoritarian* system of elections of the government. The rejection of PR in the German speaking Oberwallis was so strong that in the end the popular initiative was rejected in the canton as a whole (54 percent of "no" votes), despite the fact that a majority of French speakers (51 percent) voted in favour of PR.

³⁰ Le Nouvelliste, 20 Oct. 2003.

³¹ The overrepresentation of German speakers was due to the fact that, in 1987, Peter Bodenmann, a particularly popular German-speaking politician and later president of the Swiss Social Democrats, was able to win an additional seat for his party by gaining votes both in Oberwallis and in the French-speaking part of the canton. See Blick, 25 Nov. 1987, Luzerner Neuste Nachrichten, 28 Nov. 1987.

³² Walliser Bote, 20 Oct. 2003.

³³ Walliser Bote, 21 Oct. 2003.

³⁴ Le Nouvelliste, 21 Oct. 2003.

³⁵ Le Nouvelliste, 21 Oct. 2003.

Is majoritarian rule better for the multilingual cantons?

In sum, in all three case-studies drawn from the multilingual cantons of the Grisons, Berne, and Valais, there is evidence that PR is often considered to be a hindrance for the adequate representation of linguistic minorities. These findings clearly contradict consociational theory. Would majoritarian rule do a better job?

There are two ways to give an answer to this question. We can look either at the elections to the Council of States or at the elections to the cantonal governments, both of which are conducted with majoritarian methods in electoral districts that follow the cantonal boundaries.

Table 5 shows that the majoritarian system used for the elections to the Council of States was not an obstacle for obtaining an *overrepresentation* of the larger (i.e. more than 20 percent of the population) linguistic minorities (German speakers in Fribourg and in Valais, Romansh speakers in the Grisons). It did not, however, allow for any representation of the smaller (i.e. less than 10 percent of the population) linguistic minorities (French speakers in Berne, Italian speakers in the Grisons).³⁶ Yet, because of the very limited number of mandates that each canton has in the upper house, the focus upon the Council of States does not seem appropriate for drawing broader conclusions.

As for the elections to the cantonal governments, it is a fortunate coincidence that in two cantons – Fribourg and the Grisons – the number of mandates in the National Council perfectly fits the number of seats in the respective cantonal governments. A similar pattern can be found in Valais as well (7 mandates in the National Council, and 5 seats in the government). Since in both elections the electoral districts reflect the respective cantonal boundaries, direct comparisons between the PR elections to the National Council (Tables 3 and 4) and the majoritarian elections to the cantonal governments (Table 5) are easy to draw.

In the case of Fribourg we can spot no significant difference as far as the representation of the German-speaking minority is concerned. But, in Valais, German speakers have been much better off in the cantonal governments than in the National Council. The same applies to Italian speakers in the Grisons. And even French speakers from Berne are better represented in the cantonal government than they are in the National Council.³⁷ In other words, majoritarian

³⁶ Up to 1979 – that is, before the secession of the northern Jura, when the share of French speakers in Berne was around 15 percent – French speakers usually had one seat in the Council of States. It should be emphasised that, at that time, Berne's representatives in the upper house were elected by the cantonal parliament and not by direct popular elections (Weibel 1990: 172).

³⁷ The constitution of Valais guarantees one seat to each of the three regions. Therefore, it indirectly guarantees at least one seat to German speakers from the region of Oberwallis.

electoral system not only did not exclude minorities from the government, but it actually provided them a larger share of the seats than PR in some cases.

Table 5: Linguistic composition of mandates of the multilingual cantons, Council of States, and in cantonal governments, 1979-2007 approx.

Canton	Seat share in Council of States (majoritarian)		Seat share in cantonal governments (majoritarian)	
Berne	German speakers	100.0 % (14.0)	84.9 %	(45.0)
	French speakers	- (0)	15.1 %	(8.0)
Fribourg	French speakers	50.0 % (7.0)	71.4 %	(25.0)
	German speakers	50.0 % (7.0)	28.6 %	(10.0)
Grisons	German speakers	60.7 % (8.5)	55.7 %	(19.5)
	Romansh speakers	39.3 % (5.5)	32.9 %	(11.5)
	Italian speakers	- (0)	11.4 %	(4.0)
Valais	French speakers	50.0 % (7.0)	60.0 %	(21.0)
	German speakers	50.0 % (7.0)	40.0 %	(14.0)

Sources: www.parlament.ch; Swiss Federal Statistical Office. For the linguistic composition of the governments of Berne, Fribourg, and Valais: Weibel (1996). For the Grisons: personal research. Notes: Cantonal elections considered: Berne (1982, 1986, 1990, 1994, 1998, 2002, 2006), Fribourg (1981, 1986, 1991, 1996, 2001), Grisons (1982, 1986, 1990, 1994, 1998, 2002, 2006), Valais (1981, 1985, 1989, 1993, 1997, 2001, 2005). One member of the cantonal governments - Christoffel Brändli, from the Grisons (1983-1994) - has been considered bilingual (German / Romansh speaker).

Two disclaimers

Before reaching the conclusion of the article, I wish to present two disclaimers and underline what this article does *not* say.

“Groups”, “minorities”, and language

Throughout the article I have used the expressions “linguistic groups” and “linguistic minorities”. Other terms with even more homogenising connotations like “segments”, “communities”, “subcultures”, not to speak of “nations”, “ethnicities”, “races” and the like, have been explicitly avoided, because they are inappropriate for describing linguistic heterogeneity in Switzerland. Still, the

Since 1979 the constitution of Berne has guaranteed one seat to the French-speaking minority from Jura bernois. Yet in most occasions French speakers were able to gain a seat in the cabinet in the regular electoral procedure, that is, without taking profit of this provision.

terms “group” and “minority” can be misleading, too. I wish to stress that I have not referred to German, French, Italian and Romansh speakers as substantial entities to which “identity, agency, interests and will” can be attributed “as if they were internally homogenous, externally bounded groups, even unitary collective actors with common purposes” (Brubaker 2002: 164, 183). As a matter of fact, from historical and constitutional standpoint the constituent units of Switzerland are the cantons and not the linguistic groups. Linguistic groups do not enjoy a legal status and special rights in the Swiss constitution. They are definitely not “nations” of a “multination” state, as some scholars have suggested (see Kymlicka 1995).³⁸ Similarly, the term “minority” also needs to be used with particular caution. For instance, French speakers are both a minority at the national level and a majority in all French-speaking cantons, as well as in the bilingual cantons of Fribourg and Valais. Moreover, the very term “linguistic minority” is not a part of the Swiss legal discourse which has traditionally been based on the principle of the equality of all national languages, independently of their size (Altermatt 1996: 141; Coray 2004: 267ff.).

Further, the article does not affirm that *language* is the most important social difference in Switzerland and that, as a consequence, native linguistic “groups” and/or “minorities” are the only social groups that we need to take into consideration when we discuss Switzerland as a multicultural country. There are many features of Swiss politics and society that speak against an a priori emphasis on language: the absence of (ethno)linguistic parties, a high degree of intralinguistic heterogeneity, the fact that linguistic identity is not necessarily the primary focus of people’s identity, the weakness of linguistic nationalism. Moreover, in literature we find references to other important cultural differences like religious cleavage, the urban vs. rural (or centre vs. periphery) divide, the perceptions of the social status of women, cultures and languages of immigrants, etc. (Kriesi 1995: 67f.; Altermatt 1996: 115ff.). Therefore, it should be stressed that the conclusions of this article do not necessarily apply to other (non linguistic) groups.

Nevertheless, there are at least two reasons why a focus upon linguistic groups is justified in the context of this study. First, most studies on consociationalism and multiculturalism consider, above all, linguistic differences when they discuss the Swiss case (see McRae 1983; Kymlicka 1995). For instance, in one of his recent articles Lijphart distinguishes between *religious* and/or *ideological* consociationalism in countries like the Netherlands and Austria, and *linguistic* consociationalism in Belgium and Switzerland (Lijphart 2002: 172ff.). Since this article is a critical account of the role of PR in consociational theory, it makes sense to look upon the units of analysis used in that theory.

³⁸ For a discussion of why Switzerland should not be considered a “multination” state see Stojanović (2000), Grin (2002).

Second, a number of studies published since the early 1990s have pointed out the hardening of the linguistic cleavage in Switzerland, especially between French and German speakers (Altermatt 1996: 145ff.; Kriesi et al. 1996). Moreover, there is evidence that especially in the bilingual cantons (but not in the trilingual canton of the Grisons) linguistic identity is particularly salient (see Helbling 2004).

Descriptive representation

Throughout this article it has been assumed that what matters is the descriptive representation of linguistic differences: the legislature needs to mirror the linguistic composition of the population. Thus, I have looked at the proportions of linguistic groups in the population and compared these numbers with their share of parliamentary seats. The underlying assumption has been that the more accurate the mirroring of linguistic groups is, the better it is.

In political theory this claim has been controversial (see Kymlicka 1995: 131ff.). Critics of descriptive representation have particularly stressed the “problem of essentialism.” It is exemplified by claims such as: “it is impossible for men to represent women” (Boyle 1983: 797). In the Swiss context this would mean, for instance, that it is impossible for German speakers to represent Italian, French, or Romansh speakers. Another advocate of descriptive representation affirms that “no amount of thought or sympathy, no matter how careful or honest, can jump the barriers of experience” (Phillips 1994: 76). But then, as Kymlicka (1995: 140) notes, “how can anyone represent anyone else?” In other words, taken to its conclusion the principle of descriptive representation is contrary to the very concept of representative democracy.

This article does not endorse the essentialist approach of the advocates of descriptive representation, as it does not reflect the Swiss experience where, generally speaking, the partisan and/or ideological identification of the citizens with their political representatives is much stronger than the linguistic one. The probability that right-wing conservative Italian speakers feel “represented” by a liberal Social-Democratic Italian-speaking member of parliament is extremely low. On the other side, the probability that they consider a right-wing conservative German speaker as their representative is high.³⁹

Still, for at least two reasons it would be wrong simply to ignore descriptive representation of linguistic groups. First, it is highly plausible that the dominance

³⁹ For instance, Christoph Blocher – a German-speaking politician from the SVP/UDC, who since 2004 has been the Swiss minister of justice and police – is very popular among right-wing conservative voters from all linguistic regions. At the same time, liberal and/or leftist German speakers hardly consider him as their representative.

of partisanship/ideology over linguistic political identification is at least partially related to the fact that all linguistic groups have been adequately represented in parliament (both at the federal level and in the multilingual cantons) according to their share of the population. If that had *not* been the case, the question of linguistic representation would probably become a salient political issue, as the example of certain elections to the National Council in the multilingual cantons suggests.

Second, studies have shown that descriptive representation does produce some positive and tangible results for minorities, and so improves the quality of representative democracy (see Mansbridge 2000). In Switzerland, too, there is evidence that the linguistic identity of the members of parliament plays an important role in certain contexts, for instance in the discussions over issues closely related to linguistic or cultural policy.⁴⁰ Moreover, in recent years a number of parliamentary interventions have brought to the surface the problem of the underrepresentation of French and Italian speakers in the state administration,⁴¹ the uneven distribution of public purchases among linguistic regions,⁴² and the insufficient translations of official documents into Italian,⁴³ etc. The vast majority of these interventions have been typically brought forth by parliamentarians from linguistic minorities. Especially Italian-speaking members of parliament bring forth such interventions in the name of all Italian-speaking parliamentarians (Deputazione ticinese), independently of partisan/ideological differences.

⁴⁰ See “Loi fédérale sur les langues nationales” (Parliamentary Initiative Nr. 04.429 by Christian Levrat, 2004); “Nouvelle loi sur les langues nationales” (Parliamentary Initiative Nr. 04.3217 by Fabio Abate, 2004). All parliamentary interventions can be found on the web page www.parlament.ch (31 Aug. 2006).

⁴¹ See “Régies fédérales. Des monopoles ethniques et masculins?” (Parliamentary Interpellation Nr. 01.3059 by Fulvio Pelli, 2001); “Représentation des minorités linguistiques au sein des offices fédéraux” (Parliamentary Motion Nr. 05.3152 by Didier Berberat, 2005); “Discriminations linguistiques. Quousque tandem abutere patientia nostra?” (Parliamentary Interpellation Nr. 05.3672 by Chiara Simoneschi-Cortesi, 2005).

⁴² See “Achats de la Confédération. Équité et transparence” (Parliamentary Interpellation Nr. 03.3589 by Christophe Darbellay, 2003); “Discrimination grossière des fournisseurs tessinois et romands” (Parliamentary Interpellation Nr. 05.3733 by Roger Nordmann, 2005).

⁴³ See “Publications en anglais, mais non en italien?” (Parliamentary Interpellation Nr. 04.3738 by Fabio Abate, 2004).

Conclusion

The aim of this article has been to explore the consociational theory claim that PR electoral systems should necessarily be recommended for multicultural societies as a means for ensuring adequate representation of all relevant cultural groups in parliament. In the light of this assertion I have proposed a new interpretation of the Swiss case, one of the few remaining “prime examples” of consociationalism.

The article has shown that the choice of electoral system did not per se have an impact on representation of the four linguistic groups in the Swiss parliament. In fact, in the context in which (1) groups are territorially concentrated, (2) electoral districts reflect territorial concentration of the groups, and (3) electoral districts are represented in parliament according to their share of the population, these groups will inevitably be adequately represented in parliament. In other words, in such a context, proportionality is achieved through territoriality.

The second finding of the article is that in the settings in which proportionality cannot be ensured through territoriality – as in the four multilingual cantons, as far as federal legislative and cantonal executive elections are concerned – the majoritarian system sometimes produces a better representation of linguistic minorities than does PR.

These findings challenge one of the pillars of consociational theory: the adoption of a PR electoral system in multicultural societies. They do not necessarily suggest that in other multicultural contexts – especially in deeply divided societies that do not have the long record of peace and democracy that Switzerland does, and where “ethnic” cleavage dominates over all other social differences – “institutional designers” shall recommend majoritarian rule instead of PR. The implications of this article are much more modest: it is not appropriate to cite Switzerland as an example of a multicultural country where the share of power among linguistic groups is ensured primarily through PR.

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Le système proportionnel est-il vraiment nécessaire pour les démocraties multiculturelles? Contre-exemples de la Suisse

L'un des éléments centraux de la théorie consociationnelle est l'argument selon lequel les sociétés multiculturelles ont besoin d'un système électoral basé sur la représentation proportionnelle (RP) afin d'assurer une représentation adéquate des groupes culturels au parlement. Dans ce contexte, la Suisse est souvent citée comme un pays qui applique exclusivement la RP et aussi comme l'exemple principal du consociationalisme. Or, l'article démontre que l'expérience de la Suisse ne soutient pas la théorie consociationnelle sur ce point. Des contre-exemples peuvent être trouvés en examinant les systèmes électoraux appliqués en Suisse, aussi bien au niveau national, que dans les quatre cantons plurilingues. L'article soutient que la territorialité (c'est-à-dire la définition des cercles électoraux) constitue la variable principale pour assurer la proportionnalité linguistique au niveau législatif. Lorsque ceci n'est pas possible, comme pour certaines élections dans les cantons plurilingues, les systèmes majoritaires produisent parfois des meilleurs résultats que la RP.

Ist das Proporzwahlssystem wirklich notwendig in multikulturellen Gesellschaften? Gegenbeispiele aus der Schweiz

Eines der zentralen Elemente der konsoziationalen Theorie ist die Behauptung, dass multikulturelle Gesellschaften das Proporzwahlssystem brauchen, um die angemessene parlamentarische Vertretung kultureller Gruppen sicher zu stellen. Hier wird oft die Schweiz zitiert, sowohl als reines "Proporz-Land" wie auch als zentrales erfolgreiches Beispiel des Konsoziationalismus. Dieser Artikel zeigt, dass der Fall Schweiz die konsoziationale These in Bezug auf die Vertretung der Sprachgruppen nicht bestätigt. Gegenbeispiele werden gefunden, wenn man verschiedene Wahlsysteme analysiert, die auf nationaler und kantonaler Ebene benützt werden. Der Artikel deutet an, dass Territorialität (d.h. Festlegung der Wahlkreise) die wichtigste Variable für Sicherstellung des Sprachenproporz in Parlamenten ist. Wenn das nicht möglich ist, wie in gewissen Wahlen in den vier mehrsprachigen Kantonen, sind die Majorzsysteme manchmal dafür besser geeignet als Proporzsysteme.

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