Germany's 1918 electoral reform and the Reichstag's 'efficient secret'[*]

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1. Introduction

With a renewed interest in the history of electoral reform and the effects of electoral rules we become aware that our knowledge about the electoral system in place in most West-European countries before their switch to PR, namely the majority runoff system (MR), is still limited. This pertains especially to Germany, where we have a plethora of historical case studies, but until recently lacked systematic accounts of district-level electoral coordination in the first and runoff rounds and until today lack systematic studies of the discipline of the Reichstag's parliamentary parties. More importantly, MR has been operative in Germany over the whole period 1867-1918, i.e. in an era of fundamental socio-economic change within a major industrialized society under a fully-fledged, yet contested constitutionalist system. The German case might thus be quite compelling as a test case for investigating theoretical accounts of the workings of MR *and* as an important case for an investigation into the 'coevolution of capitalism and political representation' (Cusack/ Iversen/ Soskice).

We need to know more about the exact working of MR, since with limited knowledge about this electoral system any account of the switch to PR must remain limited, too. For instance, historians as well as political scientists have long argued that the adoption of PR increased

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party cohesion in parliament. But was greater voting cohesion indeed the effect of the switch to PR? And if so, why? Lacking roll-call vote data for the Kaiserreich, this assertion is not backed by conclusive historical evidence, as of yet. We know that party discipline was high in the Weimar Republic (Lehmann 2010), but was that much different in the Reichstag before 1918? If so, to what extent was there variation in voting cohesion across parliamentary groups?

Similarly, in his famous conjecture about the introduction of PR as the "standard" electoral system in European democracies, Rokkan points to problems of electoral coordination as one central motive for parties of the right to abandon majoritarian electoral systems (Rokkan 1970; Boix 1999). But was the task of coordinating against the left indeed a major impediment to electoral success for liberal, agrarian and conservative parties? And did coordination problems within MR indeed become more serious over the years, up to a level leaving it unsustainable as a system from an electoral point of view, as the introduction of PR at one point in time would lead us to think? Again, Imperial Germany with its strong Social Democratic party (the SPD) and a rather diverse rightist party spectrum forms an ideal case for the Rokkan-conjecture. We know from aggregate data that the Social Democrats were particularly unsuccessful in runoff elections (Ritter and Niehuss 1980) – an indication that after all (at least in Germany) the anti-left 'cartel' may have worked much more effectively than Rokkan assumed. But lacking systematic constituency level data on pre-electoral and runoff coalitions we can draw few inferences whether problems of electoral coordination played any role when the right acquiesced to PR in 1918/19.

In this paper we present – preliminary yet systematic – data on pre-electoral and runoff inter-party coordination (reporting the fate of coalitions at the constituency level), on voting cohesion in the Reichstag (using roll call vote data) and on continuity and change in Reichstag membership (calculating legislative turnover of Reichstag-MPs). We provide these data in support of a thesis that has rarely been put forward in the 'Why PR?'-debate. We claim that the two rounds/ two ballots systems did not pose a coordination problem for the right in terms of securing a parliamentary majority, at least not of the magnitude ascribed to it by Rokkan. Bourgeois parties were in fact quite successful when it comes to hinder Social

Democrats – wherever possible – from entering parliament. In contrast, i.e. given *successful electoral coordination*, we claim that centre-right MPs faced grave problems in terms of coordinating on collective support of preferred legislation in the Reichstag. We show that voting cohesion of centre and rightist MPs had been considerably lower than voting cohesion of the social-democrat left in the period 1903-1918. As a consequence, even if the right did not fail in translating votes into mandates when *elections* were called, it faced considerable challenges to translate mandates into laws once the *roll* was called. Thus, the right rather struggled with the *consequence* of successful and widespread electoral coordination than with coordination itself.

PR fosters parliamentary cohesion primarily via the control exerted by party leadership through placing candidates on the party list (Carey and Shugart 1995). In this respect, the old two round/two ballot system that in most European countries preceded PR (Blais et al. 2004) was particularly unresponsive to leaderships' demands, since election success often depended on local coalitions mostly already in the first, sometimes in the second round (Reibel 2007). But district coalitions often reflected purely local circumstances and they often came with detailed agreements about a designated MP's future parliamentary voting behaviour (Reibel 2007: passim). MPs therefore were district delegates sent into parliament, tied to a diversity of locally-minted behavioural constraints, rather than political trustees representing a clear-cut party stance on important policy-questions (Andeweg and Thomassen 2005; Pitkin 1967). Our data imply that the district coalitions' local character was an impediment for parliamentary parties' attempts of cohesive position taking. This pertained especially to parties which could not count on many safe seats, i.e. whose electoral success depended on electoral coordination with other parties, i.e. who did not enjoy many regional strongholds. This was true of the diverse liberal parties, but also became more and more true of the conservative parties.

With this we do not venture to say that German parties of the centre-right opted for PR *because* of *parliamentary* coordination failure under the majority runoff system (instead of *electoral* coordination failure, as Stein Rokkan initially had assumed). We will not offer yet another answer to the intricate question why Germany opted for PR in 1918/19. But what

we *can* say, comparing the two electoral rules and their electoral and parliamentary consequences, is that intra-party organisation, stability of parliamentary membership and voting cohesion of rightist MPs all increased as dramatically as swiftly, following the switch to PR. In terms of explaining the institutional development of Germany's political economy, the road to large-scale *national* regulation of German capitalism was open (Cusack et al. 2007, 2010), an option before blocked by the local character of electoral coordination.[1] As a (preliminary) conclusion, we ascribe this to a re-location of constraints of individual MPs from the local level (i.e. 397 constituencies isolated from each other in terms of the allocation of mandates under MR), to the national level (i.e. an in fact nation-wide mechanism under PR). Such was the "efficient secret" of the introduction of PR as a means to foster intra-party parliamentary cohesion in Germany.

In this paper, we make first use of a comprehensive dataset on electoral alliances for all constituencies and all general elections in the period 1890-1912. We show that electoral coordination among rightist parties was a phenomenon as frequent as to conceive of it as characteristic of electoral politics in Wilhelmine Germany. We however also show the pattern of electoral alliances in individual constituencies to be rather diverse, in terms both of number and of the identity of participating parties. We then turn to the effects PR had on party organisation in terms of assigning people to mandates in the Weimar era. Following this comparative characterisation of the *electoral arena* under MR and PR, we address consequent problems of legislative coordination among MPs in the *parliamentary arena*. We first address MPs as "backbenchers." We show that voting cohesion of rightist MPs was considerably and consistently lower than voting cohesion of their SPD colleagues before 1918. This is in stark contrast with recent findings on voting cohesion of the right in Weimar (Lehmann 2010). We then turn to "frontbenchers", i.e. to parliamentary elites as the nucleus of centre-right party leaderships in Germany. Using turnover data[2] on the period 1867-1924,

[1]Insofar as *parliamentary* regulation was concerned. National regulation of capitalism before was carried out by the German bureaucracy. In other words: The switch to PR secured national regulation of capitalism under the changed circumstances of the early 20th century, namely full parliamentary responsibility of government.

[2] This serves as a preliminary indicator; we are currently in the process of broadening our empirical basis on the "anatomy" of parliamentary groups, inter alia identifying senior members of

we analyse the formation of these elites as the actors most strongly interested in getting in control of backbenchers' voting behaviour. Here we demonstrate that a large-scale "re-selection" of individual MPs in the immediate aftermath of the introduction of PR took place, predominantly within rightist parliamentary groups. Most rightist MPs quit the Reichstag in 1919, never to return to it. We do not find this to hold for the SPD or the Center Party, i.e. to parties that had managed to form a mechanism for the selection of candidates within their respective party organisations. We interpret this to result from the availability of party lists as an instrument for candidate recruitment in the hands of party leaderships (vis-à-vis "self-selection" of candidates at the local level as was typically the case under MR) only after the switch rather than from an "abdication en masse" of veteran Kaiserreich MPs.

In this paper we first sketch our argument about the party-organizational and the parliamentary-behavioural consequences of the switch to PR (Section 2). We then present our empirical evidence: data on district level coalitions in the elections from 1890 to 1912, data on parliamentary turnover for the entire Kaiserreich from 1871 to 1918 and finally roll-call vote data for the 11th, 12th and 13th Reichstag-term, i.e. from 1903 to 1914 (Section 3). A short summary concludes (Section 4). This is a report from work in progress. We hope that we can soon present more complete data, especially the entire roll-call vote records from 1867 to 1918, plus data on co-sponsorship for bills introduced into the Reichstag and a host of other indicators of MPs' parliamentary activity like committee membership etc. But already our preliminary evidence on district coalitions and their consequences provides us with a systematic account of the interplay between electoral and parliamentary coordination under the majority runoff systems.

parliamentary groups via data on committee membership, parliamentary functions and incumbency of safe seats.

2. PR and the nationalization of the electoral arena

2.1 PR and the reform of internal party structures

PR's main characteristic is that voters do not choose directly among individual candidates running for parliament. Instead, they cast their vote for regional or national party lists. The position of each candidate on the list, as well as the relative share of votes cast for the list, determines who wins office and who does not. Thus, when Germany adopted PR after then end of the First World War, a necessary consequence of the switch from the majority runoff system with its 397 Single Member Districts (SMD) was the introduction of larger constituencies in which party lists could compete. Regional-level units had to be constructed to allow for the votes cast in towns and municipalities to be allocated to lists. In the mixed-member PR system of contemporary Germany, these lists compete on the level of the country's powerful states. However, with the general trend towards centralisation rather than federalism in the Weimar constitution (Schulz 1963), the new regional list constituencies existed rather independently of the 24 and later 18 German states: out of 397 small pre-war constituencies grew 35 large electoral units (Ritter 1976).

Under this system, a party gained one mandate per 60,000 votes in each of the 35 regional constituencies; left-over votes were transferred to the level of 17 so-called constituency units (*Wahlkreisverbände*) consisting of two or three of these large constituencies each. On this level, again, one mandate equalled 60,000 votes; in a final step, remaining votes from these constituency units were allocated to national party lists by one mandate per 60,000 votes plus another mandate for a final remainder over 30,000 votes. Parties were entitled to allocate their remaining votes to as many mandates on national party lists (Reichswahlvorschläge) as they had won in the two previous allocation rounds (Nohlen 1990, 186).

These changes in electoral geography at the onset of the Weimar Republic made it necessary for political parties to reform their organisational structures. What was needed were geographical equivalents of the new, regional list constituencies within each party. The reason was simple: for each of the new constituencies, political parties required a forum to

decide on the composition of the new party lists. Who would be nominated as a candidate for parliament and in which order would contesters appear on the list? Since geographically corresponding party levels either did not exist before or did not possess sufficient statutory powers, they had to be created. The result was a considerable change in the balance of powers within political parties, a transfer of influence from the local level towards the new party authorities. The latter turned into the locus of decision-making on the composition of the all-important party lists and thus became gatekeepers between hopefuls from the party membership and parliamentary office.

The best example of this process is the SPD, the organisationally most progressive party of its time and, due to its steadily growing electoral success, a trend-setter for organisational party reform well into the Weimar era. The party's organisational transformation was a direct response to the introduction of PR, leading to a new organisational statute for the SPD in 1919. Henceforth, decisions about candidates were no longer made on the level of the so-called lower districts (*Unterbezirke*) that had corresponded geographically with the former small constituencies. Instead, the newly introduced regional districts (*Bezirke*) were mainly drafted along the borders of the new, larger list constituencies required under PR. From that point onwards, it was at the regional level that candidates were nominated, party lists drafted and delegates to the national party conference elected, although still based on the recommendations of the *Unterbezirke*. Although party statutes officially ruled that the *Bezirk* conference was the ultimate authority on the matter and that the regional party board should merely pool the recommendations from the local level, in fact, the order of candidates was usually already negotiated and informally decided on by the *Bezirk* party board in preparation for the actual regional conference. On the level of the Reich, the party conference had no role to play at all: the national party list was drafted jointly by the national party board and the national party committee (Hunt 1964, 87).

The example of the SPD hints at the way in which the party's new structural setup prompted by the introduction of PR helped increase party discipline. The mechanism was straightforward: under the new PR suffrage, MPs no longer depended on their local party organisation for re-election. Instead, what mattered now for staying in office was to secure a

promising position on the party list. And the say over the latter's composition lay at the new regional party level – or even on a national one, if candidates were running on the national list. This logic provided influential regional and national party leaderships with an important means of power: they could now credibly threaten to deny re-nomination to MPs defecting from the official party line. For incumbents as well as aspirants, coming to terms with the emerging regional and national party bureaucracy thus became a central precondition for running for office (Nohlen 1990, 188).

Commentators in the Weimar Republic very clearly saw the link between the introduction of PR and increasing levels of discipline and cohesion. In the last days of Weimar democracy, for instance, Karl Braunias pointed to the example of the 1930 Reichstag elections when 91 of a total of 577 members of parliament had been elected from the so-called *Reichswahlvorschläge*, the national lists composed by the party leaderships to allocate the votes left-over from the two previous rounds of regional allocations. Thus, about 15 per cent of MPs had never run on a list that any voter had directly cast their vote for, but had instead been hand-picked by the national party leadership. Braunias (1932, 1:89) therefore blamed PR for weakening the concept of specific political personnel selection in favour of a new procedure in which voters effectively provided powerful party leaderships with carte blanche. For party leaderships, this development obviously posed a huge incentive for the turn to PR.

But when comparing the incentive structures of the two-round/ two-ballot system in place before 1918 with that of PR in place after, regional or national party leaders' new sanctioning options vis-à-vis 'their' members of parliament might not even have been the most important consequence of electoral reform. At least as important was that the election of individual MPs was not related to electoral coordination in terms of forming coalitions of (notionally) like-minded party committees at the constituency level anymore. Consequently, MPs were now freed from constraints imposed upon them by their local coalition partners, whose satisfaction with an MP's behaviour in the Reichstag had been crucial for re-election before. Coalition building at the district level, being dependent on local interests and volatile, often made election conditional on the promise of a certain parliamentary

behaviour. It also translated the district's socio-economic structure directly into political representation (Nipperdey 1993: 500). If many MPs were bound by a quasi-imperative mandate, the development of programmatically coherent party-positions in parliament was hard to achieve. But relatively coherent voting patterns in the Reichstag were – of course – a precondition for voters casting a party- instead of a personal vote (Cox 1987), and, consequently, a precondition for MPs turning from district delegates into policy-trustees. So, with the three big trends: pluralisation of societal interest, the advent of the regulatory nation-state, and 'politicization' of society (mainly through suffrage extension) (Nipperdey 1993: 517-518), parties dependent on varying local coalitions for securing parliamentary weight clearly were at a disadvantage. In contrast, parties with a large and regionally concentrated followership– Social Democrats in industrialised areas, the Center party in catholic regions and the Conservative Party in protestant and rural districts – were at an advantage (once in parliament), because they won the bulk of their mandates without being dependent on pre-electoral coordination.

Moreover, if a district was also "safe" for a party in terms of large majorities for it at the ballot box, high re-election chances for the respective candidate resulted. A "hard core" of parliamentary party-personnel could then form, subject only to its own interests and not to the whim of local notables. This was important for the (piecemeal) establishment of a Berlin-based party-leadership. Once established, this party leadership developed an interest in voting coherence in parliament, interest homogeneity, and the party's programmatic 'identifiability'. Being forced to temper one's programmatic spirit when it came to transform manifestos into legislation on grounds of due consideration of dozens or even hundreds of district-level odds and ends was a most unwelcome circumstance then.

Also, with the formation of a *national* political agenda on the big regulatory and redistributive questions since the 1890's, parties less dependent on the idiosyncrasies of local coalition building received a crucial advantage towards their locally-bound competitors, when it came to mobilize the public for the "right cause", i.e. at the polls (the huge social democrat success in the elections of 1912, following a sweeping campaign against rises in indirect taxation on edibles being a case in point). In the electoral arena (as distinct from the

parliamentary arena) parties tied to local coalitions thus faced a dilemma: not being able to mobilize on a clear platform, electoral success was threatened by the very ties that once produced it. Consequently, they developed an interest to loosen the local ties. This twofold independence - both in the electoral and in the legislative arena – is what was accomplished with the introduction of PR finally. The 'nationalization' of politics was successfully established.

2.2 PR and the strengthening of front benchers in parliament

Electoral reform had led to the creation of the regional *Bezirke* as completely new and influential levels of inner-party politics and it also had strengthened the position of the already existing party leadership in parliament. The adoption of PR increased the clout of the parliamentary groups and their leaders over individual voting behaviour. As we argued, this was due to the fact that threatening with withdrawal from electoral lists had become a very effective sanctioning instrument and also due to the fact that the new electoral rules made MPs more independent from local coalitions. This reinforced a centralization process which parliamentary parties were undergoing since quite some time.

Under the old SMD system in place up until Weimar, two major attempts to form a nationwide electoral and legislative coalition of the center-right had been undertaken: Bismarck's cartel (1887) and the so-called Bülow bloc (1907). But these agreements proved to be extremely short-lived as their main purpose was not to organise joint legislation but simply to fight off manifest influence of parties outside the consensus of major rightist parties in parliament (Ullmann 1995). If more than ad-hoc measures were meant to prevail, i.e. if the implementation of a coherent legislative program was the goal, then streamlined political leadership was required and strong front benchers vis-à-vis their own parliamentary groups. Such leadership status was hard to achieve with MPs who for re-election depended on local coalitions.

Officially, German politics remained loyal to the conservative-monarchist ideal rejecting the idea of party politics in the Wilhelmine era. However, despite being mentioned neither in the constitution of the German Reich nor in the statutes of the Reichstag, parliamentary groups (Fraktionen) evolved. They have been dubbed a 'cardinal example' of the 'difference between "constitutional law" (*Verfassungsrecht*) and "constitutional reality"' (*Verfassungswirklichkeit*) (Huber 1993, 359). Fraktionen could be formed by groups of at least 15 MPs, and parliamentary procedures provided MPs with incentives to join: being part of a parliamentary group was a way to achieve a seat on the important parliamentary committees and on the council of elders managing the parliament's internal and administrative affairs. What evolved 'informally' had to overcome procedural barriers, too: The writers of parliamentary law had tried to circumvent the concept of party groups by allocating MPs randomly to one of seven mixed and thus politically neutral units (*Abteilungen*) instead of letting MPs join party groups on the grounds of political conviction. However, constitutional reality soon proved to be different from legal ideology. For instance, Mittmann (1976, 34) has called the procedure of composing random units of MPs a 'fictional lottery'. In fact, leaders of political party groups organised the composition of committees by influencing the allocation of MPs to the units in accordance with political considerations. Evidence dates back as long as 1877 when front benchers in the council of elders (*Seniorenkonvent*) allocated MPs to committees in accordance with their parties' seat shares. In order to make this party-political allocation process as precise as possible, front benchers adjusted the size of specific committees. Accordingly, an agreement reached in the council of elders in 1893 explicitly mentioned 'the number of specific parties in every committee' (quoted in Hatschek 1915, 186). Yet, the existence of party groups was only formally recognised in 1909, when the council of elders explicitly mentioned them for the first time, deciding that the substitution of one committee member by another MP was only possible if endorsed by their party group (Hatschek 1915, 185 f.).

Crucial for establishing parliamentary parties as central legislative actors was to establish clear rules regarding the question under which circumstances of group of MPs would be recognised as a party group and equipped with the same say over the organisation of parliamentary procedures. In 1912, the council of elders formally agreed that a group of MPs

would be recognised as a party group if it consisted of 15 members. This ruling codified parliamentary governance that had been followed before. Parliamentary law ruled that the right to request roll calls applied to a group of 15 MPs, and after a series of controversies, this number was also agreed upon with respect to budget resolutions in 1891 (Hatschek 1915, 229). In essence, both the traditional number of 15 MPs and the idea of units (*Abteilungen*) were concepts that had been introduced by lawmakers envisaging a parliament free of political fractions. In fact, however, soon party groups began to structure parliamentary routine along the borders of party-politics. As opposed to legal ideology, constitutional reality was one in which *Fraktionen* evolved which developed a strong interest in inner-party cohesion. As we will show, the parliamentary incentive- and sanctioning structure alone was not enough to secure those high rates of party discipline which parties that were more independent in the electoral agenda could achieve.

2.3 Party elites and the benefits of PR

The adoption of PR fuelled two main developments in German politics. First, it motivated a transfer of inner-party power away from dispersed local bodies towards a new, more centralised level of regional authorities. Second, and in a quite similar manner, the balance of power within parliament moved away from difficult-to-control individual MPs and towards front benchers at the helm of parliamentary groups. Both of these two consequences of electoral reform mainly benefitted one group across all parties: an emerging caste of professional political elites. Consequently, it was they who were the most supportive of the turn to PR. The key to understanding the mechanism by which the consequences of PR benefitted the new party elites lies in the repercussions the organisational changes discussed so far had for political parties. Again, the most lucid example was the trend-setting social democratic movement, but as will become clear, the same pattern was also at work in the main parties of the political right.

The increasing levels of party and parliamentary discipline fuelled by PR were effectively signs of the development of what Duverger (1958) called ‘mass parties’ out of former ‘cadre

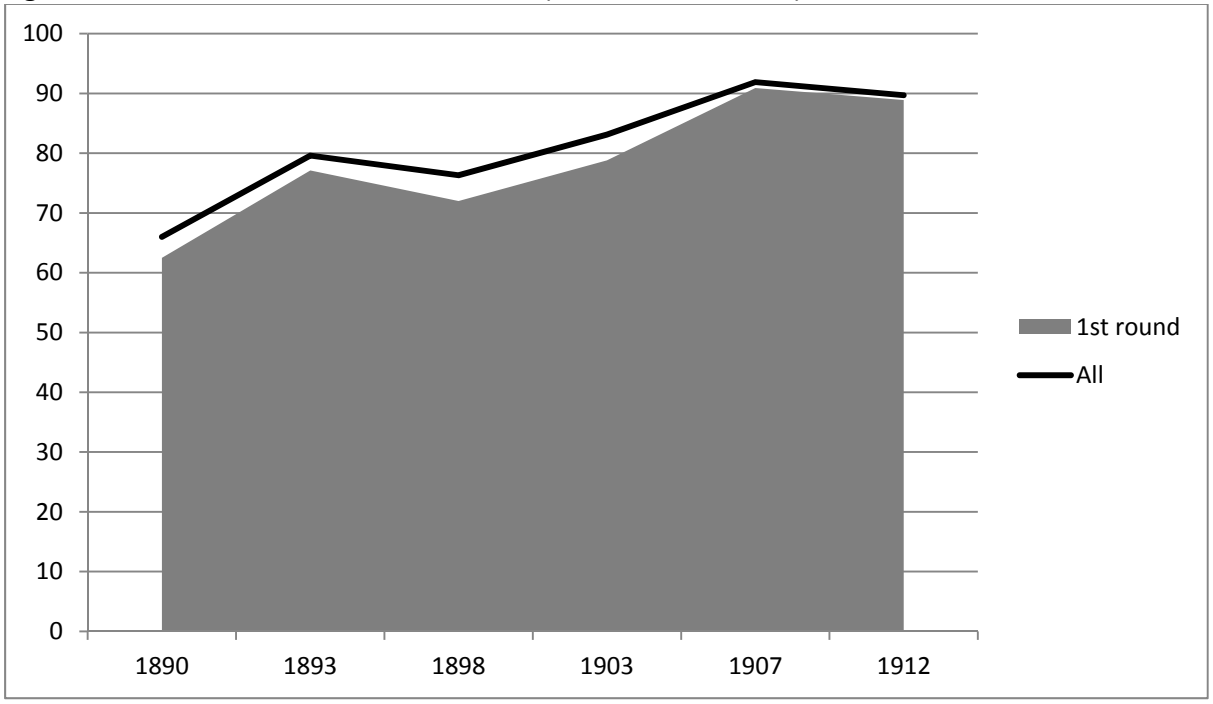
parties', requiring professional management (Katz and Mair 1995). Although this process had already been under way in Germany before 1914, it gained considerable momentum after the war through the introduction of party lists and corresponding regional party bodies. The centralisation of political power on the regional and national levels came along with the professionalisation and bureaucratisation of politics, and the main reason for this interdependency was the fact that the new suffrage made it lucrative, and for smaller parties even inevitable, to compete for geographically dispersed voters. Hence, the building of a party organisation capable of efficiently managing the challenges of the dawning age of mass politics became a central precondition for electoral success. The only politicians prepared to deliver this style of managing political affairs formed the new bureaucratic elites. They were professionals paid by their parties (or union secretaries in the case of the SPD), conducting their job in a technocratic manner, as famously depicted at the time by Max Weber in his *Politics as a Vocation* (2004). Regional party organisations thus became the power-bases and strongholds of these functionaries, exerting growing influence over both the party's personnel and its policies (Ritter 1976: 141).

In the following section we present first results from the Bremen Reichstag project. We start by looking at the district level coalition since 1890 and then move on to turnover rates by party and to the roll call votes in the 10^{th}, 11^{th} and 12^{th} diet.

3. District coalitions (1890-1912), legislative turnover (1871-1918) and roll-call-votes (1903-1914) in the *Kaiserreich*

3.1 District level coalitions, 1890-1912

Figure 1: Districts with Electoral Alliances (as % of all Districts), General Elections 1890-1912



Note: Hardly ever did 1st-round alliances break in 2nd round (<1% of instances).

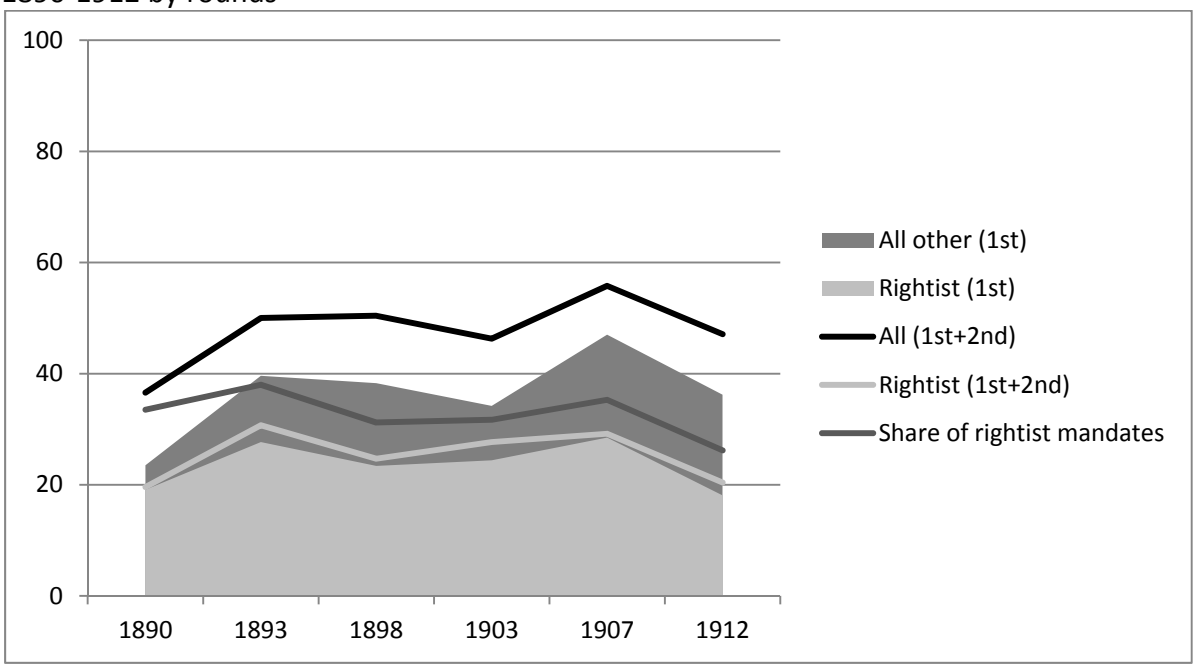
Our findings show electoral alliances as a rather common phenomenon. Additionally, most alliances were formed before elections (Figure 1). To a considerable degree, they were formed among rightist parties (see below). Thus, coordination among parties on a single candidate does not appear to have been an insurmountable problem for the right.

Table 1: Parties Participating in Electoral Alliance (% of districts)

	1890	1893	1898	1903	1907	1912	Mean
no alliance	63,4	50	49,6	53,7	44,2	52,9	52,3
2	20,9	19,9	18,9	21,2	17,4	19,9	19,7
3	13,1	17,9	15,4	10,6	9,1	17,4	13,9
4	2,3	8,1	8,8	8,1	12,3	5,5	7,5
5	0,3	3	4	4,3	9,1	2,8	3,9
6	0	0,8	2,8	1,8	5,8	1,5	2,1
7	0	0,3	0,5	0	1,3	0	0,4
8	0	0	0	0,3	0,8	0	0,2

However, electoral alliances were rather diverse in terms of participating parties. From 1893, two-member alliances only represented some 20 percent of successful – in the sense of mandate winning – district-level coordination (see Table 1). This translated into rather diverse electoral platforms for candidates to build upon in the legislative arena. This especially concerned rightist MPs. They often had to rely on a universe of (would-be-)notables, organised in local formations (as, inter alia, the *Mittelstandsvereinigungen* and *Handwerkerbünde*); local and/or regional representatives of economic interest groups (e.g. the *Bund der Landwirte*); Antisemite splinter groups (e.g. the Christian Socials, German Social, German Reform Party) of varying local importance. As a consequence, many MPs were linked to some alliance at the district level, even once in parliament. Notably, most rightist MPs were (see Figure 2).

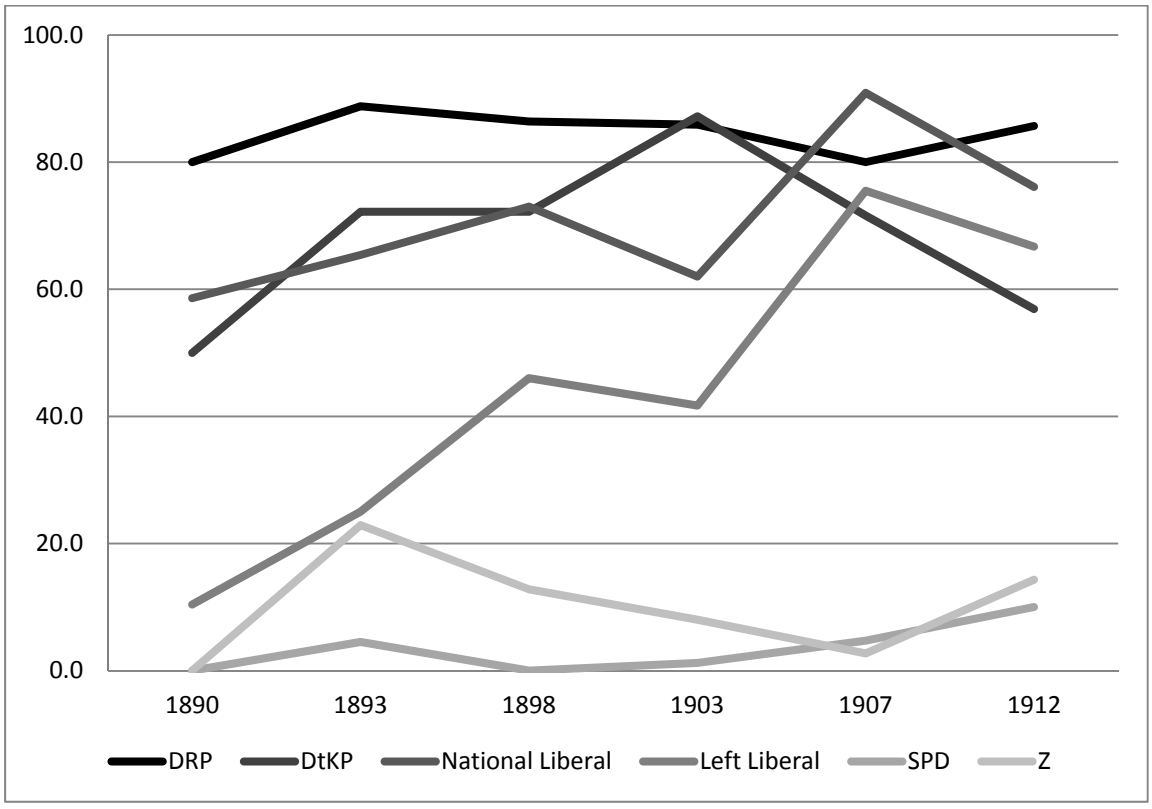
Figure 2: Districts with MP Elected within Electoral Alliance, Successful Rightist (DRP, DtKP, National Liberal) Alliances, and Rightist Mandates (as % of all Districts), General Elections 1890-1912 by rounds



Rates of MPs elected following 1st round-coordination varied among parties. However, rightist factions were most – and increasingly ! – affected (see Figure 3). At this point, we can only refer to alliances formed already for the 1st rounds, since they (as opposed to 2nd round coordination) overwhelmingly accounted for successful rightist coordination in the

electoral arena, as Figure 1 shows. It would, of course, also hardly be suitable to reference 2nd round alliances, due to roughly 50% of districts not witnessing 2nd rounds.

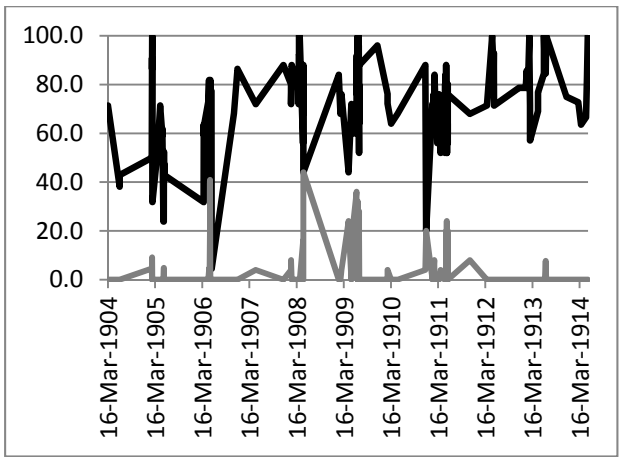
Figure 3: Share of MPs Elected within Alliances at 1st round (% of individual factions)



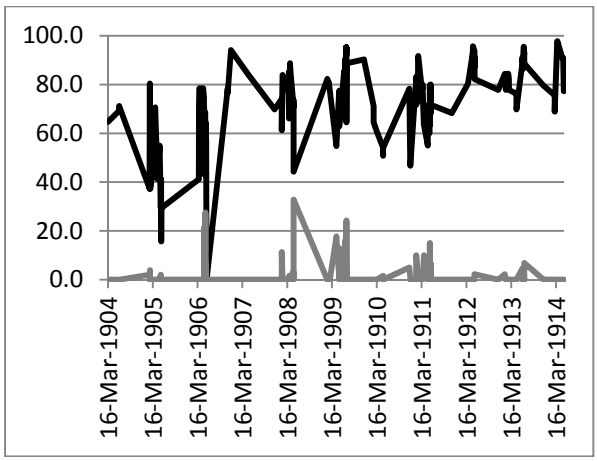
3.2 Roll-call votes (1903-1914)

We define the "position" of a party as deriving from the vote a majority of its MPs took. This position could either be "Yes" or "No". If the majority of MPs of a factions abstained or did not participate at an RCV (which at times happened), we – for obvious reasons – still took "Yes" or "No" when deriving positions. We are also interested in the degree to which MPs in open dissent with the party voiced their objection even in the floor. We assess this taking those votes that obstruct a party's parliamentary thrust; i.e. if a party's position was "Yes", we counted the "No's" as well, defining them as "dissident." We report results from the analysis of all Roll Call Votes of the 11th (N = 48), 12th (N = 145) and 13th Reichstag-term (N = 54), from 1903 to 1914, a total of 247 RCVs.

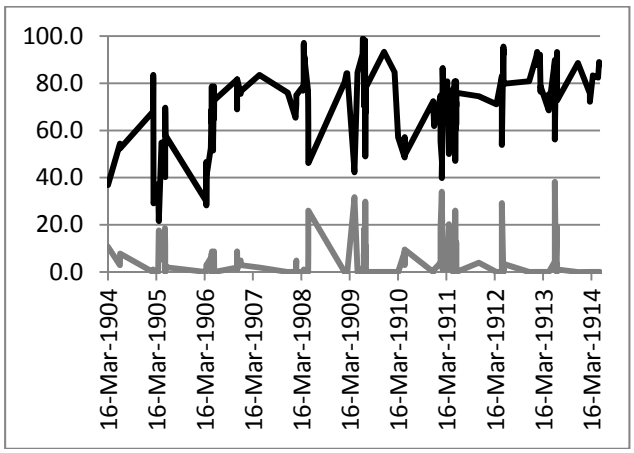
Figure 4: Voting Cohesion, 11th to 13th Reichstag term, 1903-1914, according to parliamentary party



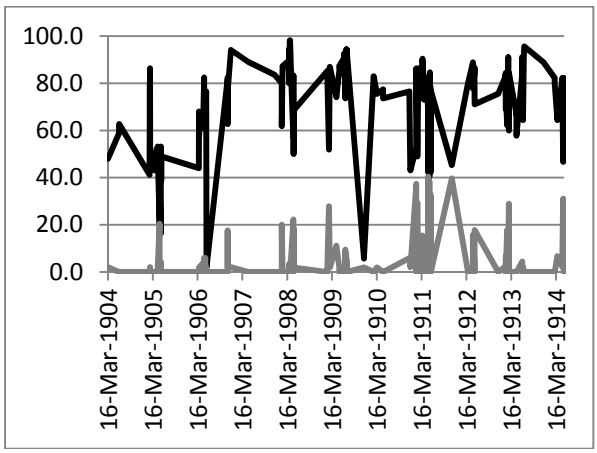
DRP



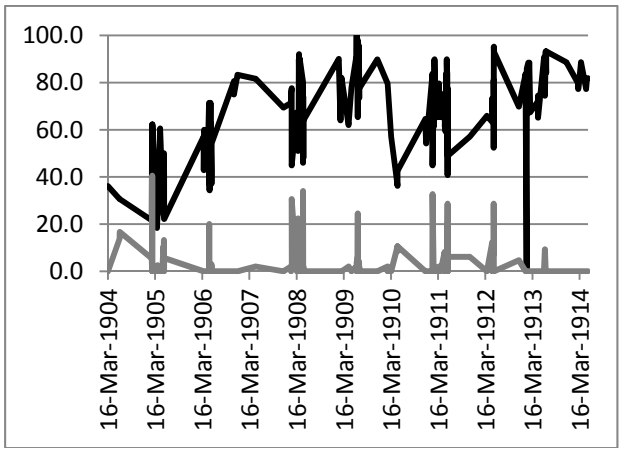
DtKP



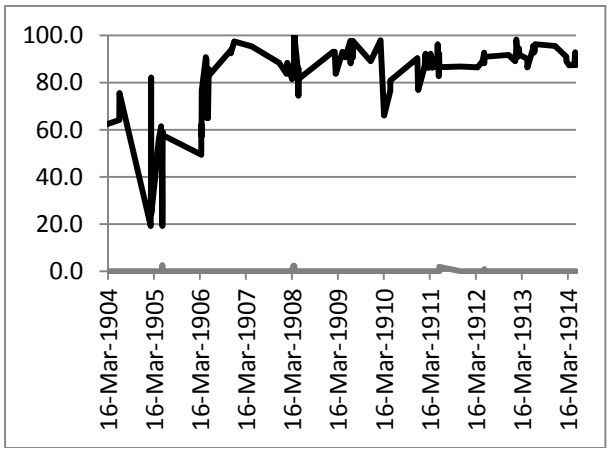
Zentrum



National Liberal



Left Liberal (DtVP, FVg, FrVP, FVP)



SPD

Note: Black: mobilised in favour of party position as percentage of party's mandates; Grey: Dissident voting behaviour.

A shortest glimpse at Figure 4 shows voting cohesion between virtually any of the non-socialist parties to be quite different from that of the SPD: not only do rightist parties struggle to mobilise on their own positions. They also frequently witness a considerable degree of dissident voting behaviour within their own rank and file. Descriptive statistics tell just this story (Table 2). Higher dissent even comes together with significantly higher abstention rates, abstention being very often a kind of 'hidden' dissent. The share of dissenting votes plus abstentions on average is 16 % for the SPD, but nowhere below 27 % in all other parliamentary groups, sometimes twice that big. Ever since the elections of 1907 the SPD had managed to achieve levels of mobilisation on its position at or above 90%. Once it regained its parliamentary strength (in terms of mandates) in 1912 it was able to form an intimidating phalanx of deputies unbound by local constraints but subject to the party leadership. Differences in mobilisation capacities between the right (of around 75%) and the SPD, the former additionally plagued by frequent dissident behaviour (reducing mobilisation by some further 6-10%) did hardly lend themselves to pursuing any long term policy on part of the non-socialist members of the house.

Table 2: Voting cohesion in the Reichstag, summary statistics

	DRP			DtKP		
	Mean	Median	St. Dev.	Mean	Median	St. Dev.
mobilisation (%)	76,7	80,0	17,5	75,4	78,4	16,1
dissident (%)	10,7	4,8	9,6	6,4	3,3	7,0
yes (%)	48,4	61,9	38,8	44,8	58,8	38,6
no (%)	31,5	4,0	37,6	32,4	2,2	38,0
other (abstention, ill, etc., %)	20,1	34,1	23,6	22,8	39,0	23,4
	Z			National Liberal		
	Mean	Median	St. Dev.	Mean	Median	St. Dev.
mobilisation (%)	75,5	77,9	16,2	76,0	80,8	16,8
dissident (%)	7,3	3,8	8,4	7,2	3,8	9,1
yes (%)	40,5	41,2	37,6	45,7	57,8	37,6
no (%)	38,8	18,6	38,4	34,3	5,9	38,3
other (abstention, ill, etc., %)	20,7	40,2	24,0	20,0	36,3	24,1
	Left Liberal			SPD		
	Mean	Median	St. Dev.	Mean	Median	St. Dev.
mobilisation (%)	71,4	75,5	18,6	86,0	90,4	14,9
dissident (%)	9,3	6,1	9,5	2,0	2,3	0,7
yes (%)	39,3	40,5	37,1	39,1	0,0	44,5
no (%)	34,9	10,6	37,0	46,9	59,0	43,8
other (abstention, ill, etc., %)	25,8	48,9	25,9	14,0	41,0	11,7

3.3 Legislative Turnover, 1871-1918

Turnover-data are highly relevant in or context since they inform us about a party's share of safe seats, by implication about its independence from electoral coordination with other parties, and about the likeliness of re-election, i.e. about the chances that a parliamentary party comprised of experienced MPs would become established. Safe seats also partly allowed a party to get for control over the composition of its parliamentary personnel. A party with a high number of regional strongholds could – via the nomination – exert better control over who would sit in parliament in its name, since in a safe district re-nomination meant re-election. In Germany, particular three parties benefited from a high number of safe seats: the conservatives in the rural districts of East-Prussia, the Social Democrats in the industrial centres of the Reich (the Ruhr-area and Saxony plus larger cities), the Catholic Centre in the catholic regions of Imperial Germany.

A first empirical take on this would be to compare the average RT-tenure of MPs according to party, both in absolute numbers and as percentage points (see Tables 3a and 3b).

Table 3a: Last party affiliation and number of terms served, Reichstag-MPs 1871-1918, absolute numbers

	RT-Terms												
Party Group	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**	**13**
DFV	24	6	4	3	1	2		1	1				
Conservatives	148	69	43	19	14	7	14	3	2	1			
DRP	84	30	14	20	10	2	3	2	1	1			
NationLib.	276	110	55	34	11	6	4	5	2				
Poles	36	28	13	6	6	1	3		1				
SocialDemoc.	82	28	23	17	6	4	1	3	3		1		
Center	181	83	76	50	36	14	14	8	6	4	3	1	1

Table 3b: Last party affiliation and number of terms served, Reichstag-MPs 1871-1918, in percentage points

RT-Terms															
Party Group	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**	**13**	**≥ 3**	**≥ 4**
DFV	57.1	14.3	9.5	7.1	2.4	4.8	0.0	2.4	2.4					28.6	19.0
Cons.	46.3	21.6	13.4	5.9	4.4	2.2	4.4	0.9	0.6	0.3				**32.2**	**18.8**
DRP	50.3	18.0	8.4	12.0	6.0	1.2	1.8	1.2	0.6	0.6				**31.7**	**23.4**
Nat.Lib	54.9	21.9	10.9	6.8	2.2	1.2	0.8	1.0	0.4					23.3	12.3
Poles	38.3	29.8	13.8	6.4	6.4	1.1	3.2		1.1					31.9	18.1
SocDem	48.8	16.7	13.7	10.1	3.6	2.4	0.6	1.8	1.8		0.6			**34.5**	**20.8**
Center	37.9	17.4	15.9	10.5	7.5	2.9	2.9	1.7	1.3	0.8	0.6	0.2	0.2	**44.7**	**28.7**

Conservatives, Social Democrats and MPs of the Catholic Center (together with Poles) show indeed longer parliamentary tenures than liberals. The share of MPs with 3 or more terms are 45 % (Center), almost 35 % (SD), and 32 % for both the Poles and the Conservatives, whereas National Liberals or the Freisinn had a share around 23 % or 29 %, respectively. While these differences do not seem to be overly impressive, we have to be aware, though, that the numbers tend to give a misleading picture insofar as they do not control for electoral success: with a steadily increasing vote share, the Social Democrats and in part also the Center saw a steady inflow of parliamentary 'freshmen', thus increasing the share of those with fewer years of Reichstag-membership. With right-censored data, this leads to an underestimation of the advantage that these parties enjoyed over their liberal and partly also over conservatives competitors.

In our context, however, we should be more interested in the picture at the end of the Imperial Diet, in its 13th term (see Table 4a and 4b). Here, the effect of the higher share of safe seats, i.e. the lower geographical dispersion of political preferences in the case of the Catholic Center and the Social Democrats, becomes clearly visible.

Table 4a: Last party affiliation and number of terms served, Reichstag-MPs in the 13th term

	RT-terms												
Party Group	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
DFV	22	6	4	3	1	2		1	1				
Conservatives	19	13	7	5	3	2	1						
DRP	5	3	1	4		1							
Nation.Liberals	33	9	2	4	1	2		1					
Poles	8	6	4			1		1					
SocialDemoc.	53	11	16	10	5	3	2	2		1			
Center	42	20	14	15	10	1	2	2		1	1	1	

Table 4b: Last party affiliation and number of terms served, Reichstag-MPs in the 13th term, percentage points

	RT-terms														
Party Group	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	**≥ 3**	**≥ 4**
DFV	55.0	15.0	10.0	7.5	2.5	5.0	0.0	2.5	2.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	30.0	20.0
Conservatives	38.0	26.0	14.0	10.0	6.0	4.0	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	**36.0**	**22.0**
DRP	35.7	21.4	7.1	28.6	0.0	7.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	**42.9**	**35.7**
Nation.Liberals	63.5	17.3	3.8	7.7	1.9	3.8	0.0	1.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	19.2	15.4
Poles	40.0	30.0	20.0	0.0	0.0	5.0	0.0	5.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	30.0	10.0
SocialDemoc.	51.5	10.7	15.5	9.7	4.9	2.9	1.9	1.9	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	**37.9**	**22.3**
Center	38.5	18.3	12.8	13.8	9.2	0.9	1.8	1.8	0.0	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.0	**43.1**	**30.3**

When it comes to elite-circulation, Table 5 shows for the liberal and conservative party spectrum an almost complete replacement of the parliamentary personnel after the switch to PR. For these parties and in stark contrast to SPD and Center, we observe almost no continuity in Reichstag-membership in the transition from MR to PR. So the 'self-selection' of candidates at the local level that for these parties was typical under MR got replaced by a new mechanism: party lists as an instrument for candidate recruitment in the hands of party leaderships. The "abdication en masse" of veteran Kaiserreich MPs then also helped to implement a new logic of electoral and parliament behaviour: the parliamentary adherence to national party positions instead of the translation of parochial district interests into legislative behaviour. We see the dramatic increase in party discipline in the Weimar Reichstag as the result of this process.

Table 5: Number of Reichstag-MPs with pre- and post-1918 membership by party group

Party group	Parliamentary membership both before 1918 and after 1918 (N)	Average tenure
DFV	15	2.9
Conservatives	5	2.1
DRP	1	2
Nation.Liberals	9	1.6
Poles	-	-
SocialDemoc.	**67**	**2.12**
Center	**33**	**2.52**

4. Conclusion

The pressing regulative and redistributive questions that came on the national agenda with rapid industrialization in late 19th and early 20th century Germany were first answered by the Prussian bureaucracy at a time when the German political system still functioned in a 'constitutionalist' mode. In this period of '*Spätkonstitutionalismus*' the Reichstag saw its main duty in controlling an executive that acted to some extent still independent from parliamentary majorities (or sought ad-hoc parliamentary majorities for its legislative program). When this mode became increasingly untenable with the establishment of a democratic mass market, parties were called upon to posit themselves in the dominant conflicts of the times and to develop coherent legislative programs over which voters would then decide. But the majority runoff electoral system in place posed considerably barriers to do so – especially for those parties that strongly depended on district coalitions for their electoral success. District-level pre-electoral coordination reflected local idiosyncrasies, constrained MPs' parliamentary behaviour, hindered the party-leadership from gaining control over candidacies and therefor over the composition of its parliamentary personnel. Parties without a high number of safe seats were consequently plagued by low voting discipline of those MPs that ran on their ticket, could not develop coherent positions on the pressing political problems of the day and therefore had profound problems in transforming themselves from cadre- to mass-parties, attracting party- instead of candidate-votes.

Compared to modern mass parties like especially the SPD, but partly also the Catholic Center, these parties clearly were put at a disadvantage under MR. All this changed with the introduction of PR in 1918/19. The way for a nation-wide *political* (instead of bureaucratic) regulation of capitalism was open. We do not claim that this had been the decisive *cause* for electoral reform in Germany. While our story is therefore very different from the Rokkanian or VoC-explanation for electoral reform, we do agree with one central argument in the Cusack/ Iversen/ Soskice argument: PR critically helped to de-localize, i.e. to 'nationalize' economic interests and politics.

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