

The Party Politics of Electoral System Choice

The Party Politics of Electoral System Choice

Stacking the Deck in First-Wave Democracies

Patrick Emmenegger
André Walter

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Great Clarendon Street, Oxford, OX2 6DP,
United Kingdom

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship,
and education by publishing worldwide. Oxford is a registered trade mark of
Oxford University Press in the UK and in certain other countries.

© Patrick Emmenegger and André Walter 2026

The moral rights of the authors have been asserted.

This is an open access publication, available online and distributed under the
terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial-No Derivatives 4.0
International licence (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0), a copy of which is available at
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>.
Subject to this licence, all rights are reserved.



Enquiries concerning reproduction outside the scope of this licence should be sent
to the Rights Department, Oxford University Press, at the address above.

Links to third party websites are provided by Oxford in good faith and
for information only. Oxford disclaims any responsibility for the materials
contained in any third party website referenced in this work.

Published in the United States of America by Oxford University Press
198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016, United States of America

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Data available

Library of Congress Control Number: 2025941709

ISBN 9780192885661

DOI: 10.1093/9780191980824.001.0001

The manufacturer's authorized representative in the EU for product safety is
Oxford University Press España S.A. of Parque Empresarial San Fernando de Henares,
Avenida de Castilla, 2 – 28830 Madrid (www.oup.es/en or product.safety@oup.com).
OUP España S.A. also acts as importer into Spain of products made by the manufacturer.

Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	vii
<i>List of Tables</i>	ix
<i>Preface</i>	xi
1. The most manipulative instrument of politics	1
1.1 Electoral systems matter!	2
1.2 What are electoral systems?	4
1.3 What explains electoral system choice?	8
1.4 Engineering electoral markets	10
1.5 The main argument: Endogenizing Rokkan	13
1.6 Case selection	19
1.7 Plan of the book	22
2. Containment measures and electoral system choice	26
2.1 Stein Rokkan's long shadow	26
2.1.1 Rokkan's first road: Electoral threats	27
2.1.2 Rokkan's second road: Seat-vote distortions	32
2.2 Stacking the deck in their favour	38
2.2.1 What about the other parties?	49
2.2.2 Democratic norms and other forms of electoral manipulation	50
2.2.3 Limits to containment?	52
3. Neutralizing electoral threats in MR systems	55
3.1 Electoral alliances and runoffs	57
3.2 Malapportionment	66
3.3 Gerrymandering	82
3.3.1 Gerrymandering in Canada and the USA	85
3.3.2 Gerrymandering in Switzerland	91
3.4 Conclusion	97
4. Distortions, coalitions, and support for PR	101
4.1 Containment, party preferences, and support for PR	102
4.1.1 Rural parties	103
4.1.2 Urban parties	105
4.1.3 Discussion	108
4.2 Two types of coalitions in favour of PR	110
4.3 The extra-parliamentary politics of PR	112

5. The politics of electoral system choice	118
5.1 Party positions on the adoption of PR	119
5.2 What explains parties' position on the adoption of PR?	122
5.3 Reform coalitions and the adoption of PR	134
5.4 Extra-parliamentary channels to electoral reform	143
5.5 Comparative discussion	147
6. Designing districts for new PR systems	181
6.1 Variety of district maps in PR systems	183
6.2 Literature review	184
6.3 District design for new PR systems	186
7. The politics of district design in new PR systems	193
7.1 Quantitative evidence	194
7.1.1 Research design and data	194
7.1.2 Empirical findings	200
7.2 Qualitative evidence	206
7.2.1 Denmark	206
7.2.2 Germany	208
7.2.3 Norway	210
7.3 Conclusion	212
8. Electoral system choice in Belgium and Switzerland	223
8.1 Switzerland: Gerrymandering and direct democracy	225
8.1.1 Literature review	225
8.1.2 Liberal containment of electoral threats	228
8.1.3 Breaking the Liberals' dominance by extra-parliamentary means	240
8.2 Belgium: Fragile majorities and pre-emptive PR adoption	252
8.2.1 Literature review	252
8.2.2 The constitutional debates in 1893/1894	257
8.2.3 A majority built on sand, 1894–1898	261
8.2.4 The Conservatives' vote for PR, 1898–1899	269
8.3 Comparative discussion	282
9. Conclusion	289
9.1 A neo-Rokkanian account of electoral system choice	289
9.2 Alternative accounts of electoral system choice	292
9.3 Democratization as a game of manipulation	299
9.4 Avenues for future research	304
<i>Bibliography</i>	308
<i>Index</i>	326

List of Figures

2.1 Malapportionment, 1997–2015	41
2.2 Partisan gerrymandering, 2012–2022	44
2.3 Logic of the argument	48
3.1 Share of candidates supported by electoral alliances	62
3.2 Runoffs, electoral alliances, and anti-socialist bias: Country-specific estimates with 95% confidence intervals	65
3.3 Geographical distribution of the population (Gini index for selected countries)	69
3.4 Development of occupational diversification, 1858–1918	70
3.5 Malapportionment for selected countries	72
3.6 Correlation of party vote shares and malapportionment	74
3.7 Correlation of socialist vote share, socialist seats, and the number of voters in the German part of Austria (1907–1911)	79
3.8 Disproportionality by electoral system, 1875–1940	99
5.1 Containment and disproportionality	128
5.2 Number of countries using PR systems for parliamentary elections to the lower chamber, 1899–1939	144
6.1 Development of the effective electoral threshold in mean-sized districts	187
6.2 Pre-reform and post-reform districts in France	191
7.1 Party influence, electoral geography, and district magnitude	204
7.2 Bivariate density plot for pre-reform district vote shares and maximum vote shares in neighbouring districts	204
8.1 District maps of Luzern	233
8.2 Seat shares and electoral disproportionality, Switzerland, 1848–1917	236
8.3 District maps of Zürich	238
8.4 Effect of socialist electoral strength on support for PR conditional on disproportionality	250
8.5 Conservative vote and seat shares in elections to the Chamber of Representatives, Belgium, 1848–1919	256
8.6 Between-list and within-list variance of vote shares in districts in Belgium (1894, 1896, and 1898 elections)	262

viii List of Figures

8.7	Vote share difference of Conservatives and liberal-socialist alliance (existing or hypothetical), Belgium, 1896/1898	264
8.8	Conservatives' vote margins and share of agricultural workforce, Belgium, 1894, 1896, and 1898	265
8.9	Predicted probabilities of cartel vote share on conservative support for PR	276
8.10	District magnitude and cartel lists under MR and PR in Belgium	281
8.11	Histogram of vote-seat distortions in Switzerland, 1900–1918	287

List of Tables

1.1 District design and electoral geography with plurality voting and single-member districts	11
1.2 Year of PR adoption (first election using PR systems) in first-wave democracies	20
1.3 Electoral system transitions, 1899–2020	21
2.1 Partisan districting to contain electoral threats	45
3.1 Pre-PR electoral systems in the first half of the 20th century (PR adoption year in brackets)	60
3.2 Runoff statistics by country	61
3.3 Runoffs, electoral alliances, and anti-socialist bias	64
3.4 Level of urbanization (percentage of total population living in cities of 5,000 or more inhabitants)	68
3.5 Number and regularity of reapportionment	75
3.6 Redistricting in Switzerland, number of cantons, 1848–1917	94
3.7 Parliamentary votes on redistricting in Switzerland, 1881 and 1890	94
3.8 Determinants of redistricting in Switzerland, 1848–1917	96
3.9 Effectiveness of redistricting in Switzerland, 1848–1917	97
3.10 Summary statistics	100
3.11 Effectiveness of redistricting in Switzerland, 1848–1917: Estimations without single-member district cantons	100
5.1 Theoretical expectations	120
5.2 Party positions on the adoption of PR	123
5.3 Incumbent parties that could rely on district design as a containment measure	127
5.4 The impact of containment on disproportionality	129
5.5 Results for disproportionality, containment, and party positions towards PR	132
5.6 Geographical coalitions for electoral reform	137
5.7 PR with incumbent driving or resisting reform (incumbent parties in parentheses)	138
5.8 Patterns of PR reform	141
5.9 Country sample disproportionality estimation	149
5.10 Summary statistics: Results for disproportionality, containment, and party positions towards PR	150

x List of Tables

6.1	Distribution of PR district magnitude in 10 countries	183
7.1	Coding of party influence on electoral laws (district design)	197
7.2	District magnitude by country: Two subsequent reforms	199
7.3	Electoral geography and PR district magnitude	201
7.4	Electoral geography and PR district magnitude: District FE	203
7.5	Influence on design and disproportionality under PR	205
7.6	Reform proposals in Norway in 1919	211
7.7	Data sources	214
7.8	Coding of party influence variable	214
7.9	Summary statistics	216
7.10	Summary statistics by country	216
7.11	Robustness test: Negative binomial regressions excluding one country	219
7.12	Robustness test: Electoral geography and district magnitude without weights	221
7.13	Robustness test: Electoral geography and district magnitude: Mean vote share in neighbouring districts	222
8.1	Disproportionality, socialist electoral strength, and support for PR in Switzerland	249
8.2	Spatial concentration of party voters in Belgium	273
8.3	Penalized Logit models on PR votes	276
8.4	Cartel entry under MR (1894–1898) and PR (1906–1912) in Belgium	279
8.5	Summary statistics for analysis of Swiss roll-call data	287
8.6	Disproportionality, socialist electoral strength, and support for PR in Switzerland: Without socialist MPs	288

Preface

The idea for this book grew out of our shared interest in the intricate dynamics of electoral systems and their profound impact on democratic politics. Throughout our research, we observed that electoral systems are not merely technical details of governance but pivotal instruments that shape political power and influence. This realization led us to explore the mechanisms by which electoral systems are designed, manipulated, and changed.

The choice of an electoral system is one of the most consequential decisions in any democracy, affecting not only the political landscape but also how diverse societal interests are represented. Our initial inspiration for this book came from observing the ongoing debates and controversies surrounding electoral system reform in various democracies. Historical cases such as the adoption of proportional representation in Belgium and Switzerland provided a rich empirical ground for examining how established parties navigate new electoral threats. These cases exemplify the broader patterns of strategic behaviour by political actors seeking to optimize their fortunes through electoral reform.

The Party Politics of Electoral System Choice: Stacking the Deck in First-Wave Democracies delves into the strategic decisions behind electoral system choice, with a particular focus on the politics of containment and the design of new electoral systems. Our primary aim is to elucidate why and how political actors manipulate electoral systems in order to maintain or gain positions of power. We examine this through a comprehensive analysis of first-wave democracies, with a particular focus on the transition from majoritarian representation to proportional representation systems.

This book would not have been possible without the support and contributions of many individuals and institutions. We extend our deepest gratitude to our colleagues and peers who provided insightful comments on various drafts of this manuscript. We thank (in alphabetical order) Lasse Aaskoven, Amel Ahmed, Klaus Armingeon, Michael Becher, Reto Bürgisser, Lukas Hafert, Philip J. Howe, Carl-Henrik Knutsen, Marcus Kreuzer, Patrick Kuhn, Lucas Leemann, Philip Manow, Isabela Mares, Georg Picot, Klaus Petersen, Magnus B. Rasmussen, Jan Rovny, Jack Santucci, Dominik Schraff, Jonathan Slapin, Isabelle Stadelmann-Steffen, and Andreina Thoma. We are also grateful to Christian Bolliger, Ron de Jong, Thomas Ehrhard, Jasper Loots,

Klaus Petersen, Christina Zuber, and Regula Zürcher for sharing data with us. We have presented earlier versions of our work at various conferences and workshops. We thank the participants in Bergen, Bern, Bruxelles, Glasgow, Konstanz, Lausanne, Luzern, Odense, Oslo, Prague, Seattle, St. Gallen, Zürich, and the 2021 virtual conference of the European Political Science Association. We appreciate all the constructive feedback and suggestions, and we apologize to all of those who we have forgotten to mention here. Rest assured that we are grateful for your support.

We acknowledge the funding graciously provided by the Swiss National Science Foundation, which made this research possible (grants #:100017_184969 and #:201758). The contributions of our student research assistants were instrumental in the data collection and analysis stages. We thank Carmen Bauer, Theresa Berz, Christian Bruccoleri, Florence Caron, Alessio Di Giovanni, Hanna Engelhart, Mirjam Habenicht, Rahel Hollenstein, Sandro Lüscher, Christof Müller, Alessia Neuschwander, Julia Sifringer, Colin Stalder, Oona von Arx, and Linda Wanklin for their invaluable assistance. We thank our editor at Oxford University Press, Dominic Byatt, for his invaluable guidance and support as well as the reviewers for their insightful feedback. We also thank Phoebe Aldridge-Turner, Eloisa Harris, and Alyssa Taylor for their meticulous copy-editing of the manuscript. All translations of primary sources are ours (unless the statements were already translated in the sources we cite).

The development of this book was a rigorous process involving extensive research, data collection, and theoretical refinement. We drew on previously published works to build a cohesive narrative and theoretical framework. Chapters 2, 3, and 8 build on ‘Disproportional Threat: Redistricting as an Alternative to Proportional Representation’, published in the *Journal of Politics*, 2021, 83(3), 917–933, doi:10.1086/711059, ‘Partisan Districting and the Adoption of Proportional Representation: Gerrymandering and its Discontents’, published in the *European Political Science Review*, 2024, 16(2), 187–206, doi:10.1017/S1755773923000267, and ‘When Dominant Parties Adopt Proportional Representation: The Mysterious Case of Belgium’, published in the *European Political Science Review*, 2019, 11(4), 433–450, doi:10.1017/S1755773919000225. Chapters 6 and 7 build on ‘Designing Electoral Districts for New Proportional Representation Systems: How Electoral Geography and Partisan Politics Constrain Proportionality and Create Bias’, published in the *Journal of Politics*, 2023, 85(3), 1123–1138, doi:10.1086/723975. We thank the European Consortium of Political Research (*European Political Science Review*) and the University

of Chicago Press (*Journal of Politics*) for their permission to reprint this material. All rights are reserved.

Last but not least, we would like to thank the people who mean the most to us. Patrick thanks Malena and Julius, who on more than one occasion have kept him from getting completely lost in work and helped him to see what is really important in life. He dedicates this book to them, with love. André dedicates the book to Katharina and Mathilda for their endless patience.

1

The most manipulative instrument of politics

‘It’s time to talk about electoral reform’ because only ‘fundamental changes to the electoral rules’ can fix the dysfunction in politics. In his work, concerned with electoral manipulation and political gridlock, Tausanovitch (2023) proposes to change the American electoral system to protect the country’s democracy, but the same could have been written about democracies as diverse as Belgium, France, Hungary, India, Italy, Lebanon, and the United Kingdom. Hardly a year goes by in democracies without the issue of electoral system choice appearing on the political agenda. Sometimes demands are followed by action, and sometimes they are not. Over the last decades, political actors in numerous countries have sought electoral system change while others have resisted it. What has motivated these actors, and what explains why some reform attempts have succeeded, while others have failed?

The existing literature on the politics of electoral system choice offers several answers to these questions, but none of them has found consistent empirical support (Emmenegger & Petersen, 2017). Building on Stein Rokkan’s (1970) seminal contributions and focusing on the transition from majoritarian representation (MR) to proportional representation (PR) systems in first-wave democracies, this book offers a novel account of the politics of electoral system choice that addresses these shortcomings. Our ‘neo-Rokkanian’ theory of electoral system choice explains how parties take advantage of electoral geography, district design, and electoral alliances to contain electoral threats and engineer parliamentary majorities in both MR and PR systems. In this way, our theory illuminates why some incumbent parties pursue electoral system change, while others resist it, why insurgent parties often but not always favour change, and why successful reforms frequently feature surprising reform coalitions.

This book shows that parties manipulate electoral systems to gain partisan advantage. We thus take seriously Sartori’s (1968, 273) observation that electoral systems are ‘the most specific manipulative instrument of politics’. Electoral systems not only have important distributional consequences for

the ability of parties to gain access to power, but they are also constantly subject to attempts to stack the deck in some parties' favour. In particular, we emphasize the central role of district maps and electoral alliances, because questions of district design and voter coordination are intimately tied to questions of electoral system choice, since district maps and electoral alliances in MR systems offer far greater potential for electoral engineering than in PR systems. Thus, the politics of electoral system choice is defined by who rules the country, and, for better or for worse, the manipulation of electoral systems to ensure that ones' own party can do so.

In this introduction, we first discuss the differences between electoral systems and their effects. After briefly reviewing Rokkan's (1970) account of electoral system choice, we explain how parties can manipulate electoral markets for partisan advantage. The following section summarizes our main argument, which emphasizes how parties' ability to contain electoral threats relates to these parties' preferences for electoral system choice. Subsequently, we discuss how we test this argument empirically and why we focus on electoral system choice in first-wave democracies. The final section of this chapter previews the rest of the book.

1.1 Electoral systems matter!

In the 2015 general election, David Cameron was re-elected as prime minister of the United Kingdom (UK) with an absolute majority in the House of Commons. The clear victory of his Conservative Party was unexpected. Several polls had predicted a hung parliament—a term used to describe a situation in which no political party has an absolute majority. Moreover, in his previous term, Cameron had been forced to enter a coalition with the Liberal Democrats. It had been the first coalition government since the caretaker ministry led by Winston Churchill in 1945. In 2015, however, the Conservatives won 50.8% of all seats in the House of Commons, but they did so based on a vote share of only 36.8%. The Labour Party came in as a distant second, with a seat share of 35.7%, despite trailing the Conservative Party by only 6.4 percentage points in the overall vote share.¹

This election was of paramount importance. During the election campaign, Cameron had promised to hold a referendum on whether the UK should remain in the European Union (EU). This promise was a tactical move to appease the EU-sceptic wing of the party. In case of another hung

¹ These differences between vote and seat shares are not exceptional. For instance, in the 2024 election, the Labour Party won 63% of the seats with only 33.7% of the votes.

parliament, Cameron would have been forced into another coalition with the pro-EU Liberal Democrats. This would have given Cameron the perfect excuse to call off the referendum. However, controlling an absolute majority in parliament after the 2015 election, Cameron had little choice but to continue with the plans for a Brexit vote. On 23 June 2016, a narrow majority of UK citizens voted in favour of leaving the EU—against Cameron’s own recommendation. The next day, a few hours after the publication of the result of the Brexit vote, Cameron announced his resignation as prime minister. On the 31st of January 2020, the UK became the first country to leave the EU.

The British MR system rewards the strongest party and therefore facilitates single-party governments. Swedish prime ministers can only dream of such leeway. Sweden’s PR system is strongly proportional. Seat shares in the Riksdag and vote shares are almost identical. As the strongest party in the 2018 election, the Social Democrats won 28.7% of the seats in parliament with a vote share of 28.3%. Consequently, the Social Democrats were forced to form a coalition government together with the Green Party. However, with only 33.2% of all seats, this two-party coalition was far from having a majority in parliament. Instead, it was dependent on support from two other parties in the Riksdag. The Centre Party and the Liberal People’s Party agreed to support this minority government in return for policy concessions and the pledge to refuse the Left Party influence over government policy.

This complicated arrangement was made necessary because the left-wing alliance, consisting of the Social Democrats, the Greens, and the Left Party, had only obtained 41.3% of all seats in parliament in the 2018 election. In return for the parliamentary support by the two members of the bourgeois alliance, the Centre Party and the Liberals, the left-wing alliance had to jettison the far-left Left Party. Yet, even with the two bourgeois parties, the new red-green coalition had only the support of 47.9% of all members of parliament (MPs). The bourgeois alliance, consisting of the conservative Moderates, the Centre Party, the Liberals, and the Christian Democrats, could not form a government either. In fact, they had won exactly one seat less than the left-wing alliance. The missing piece is the Sweden Democrats, a right-wing populist party that won 17.8% of all seats in 2018. However, neither the left-wing alliance nor the bourgeois alliance wanted to engage with this far-right party. Instead, Swedish politics was forced into a succession of small minority governments, unusual coalitions, and, ultimately, political instability.

Although Sweden and the UK are clearly different in many respects, their different electoral systems—the British MR system and the Swedish PR system—go a long way towards explaining these outcomes. In the 2015 election, the right-wing populist UK Independence Party won 12.6% of the

4 The Party Politics of Electoral System Choice

vote, but this resulted in only *one* seat in the House of Commons. Most notably, it did not stop the Conservatives from winning an absolute majority in parliament based on only 36.8% of the vote. The Sweden Democrats, by contrast, won 17.8% of all seats in the Riksdag based on 17.5% of the vote. As a result, neither the left-wing alliance nor the bourgeois alliance could form a majority government in Sweden. In short, the British and Swedish examples show that electoral systems matter for political representation, government formation, and policy output.

This sentiment is echoed in the scholarly literature. Lijphart (1992, 207) writes that electoral system choice is arguably the most important ‘of all constitutional choices that have to be made in democracies’. Seminal contributions have developed detailed typologies of electoral systems and investigated their consequences on a diverse set of outcomes (e.g., Cox, 1997; Duverger, 1951; Rae, 1971). The most prominent formulations are certainly Duverger’s laws, the most famous of which states that ‘the simple majority single-ballot system favours the two-party system’ (Duverger, 1951, 217). In contrast, PR systems are conducive to the development of many parties. However, electoral systems have also been linked to other political and economic outcomes such as voter turnout, the political orientation of governments, or public spending (Alesina & Glaeser, 2004; Becher, 2016; Döring & Manow, 2017; Grofman et al., 1999; Iversen & Soskice, 2006; Lijphart, 2012; Persson & Tabellini, 2003).

1.2 What are electoral systems?

Electoral systems may be defined as ‘the set of rules that structure how votes are cast for a representative assembly or for a single office such as a president, and how these are then converted into seats’ (Gallagher & Mitchell, 2018, 24). In this book, we focus on the rules for elections to assemblies, primarily parliaments, which, as legislative bodies of government, are responsible for representing the electorate and making laws.

Electoral systems can differ on many dimensions (Gallagher & Mitchell, 2018; Lijphart, 1994). In the words of Eckstein (1963, 249), ‘it is the easiest thing in the world to get inextricably tangled among the complexities of electoral systems’. However, despite this complexity, the literature mainly distinguishes between MR and PR systems (Colomer, 2004; Duverger, 1951; Lijphart, 1994; Norris, 1997; Rae, 1971).²

² Colomer (2004) offers a detailed discussion of the intellectual origins of the different electoral systems.

MR systems come in various forms, but the basic principles are simple (Norris, 1997). Candidates win seats in a district if they get a plurality of the votes, which is also why such systems are sometimes referred to as first past the post. In some MR systems, a majority of votes is required with runoffs in subsequent rounds if none of the candidates manages to obtain a majority in earlier rounds.³ This first-past-the-post logic encourages parties to create electoral alliances, which denotes the endorsement of a candidate by more than one party (Cusack et al., 2007; Schröder & Manow, 2020). Today, MR systems typically rely on single-member districts, i.e. one parliamentary seat per district. However, in the past, multi-member districts were common. In fact, in the 19th century, most countries using elections relied on plurality/majority rules with multi-member districts and open ballots (Colomer, 2007, 265).⁴

Due to this winner-takes-all logic, MR systems tend ‘to exaggerate the share of seats for the leading party in order to produce an effective working parliamentary majority for the government, while simultaneously penalizing minor parties, especially those whose support is spatially dispersed’ (Norris, 1997, 299–301). Consequently, the leading party boosts its legislative base, often obtaining an absolute majority in parliament with only a plurality of the vote (Gallagher et al., 1995; Lijphart, 1994; Mackie & Rose, 1982; McGann, 2006). In this book, we refer to such differences between vote and seat shares as seat-vote distortions or disproportionalities. In the UK example above, the Conservative Party obtained an absolute majority of seats in the House of Commons—and thus control over the government—with only 36.8% of the vote. In this way, MR systems facilitate effective government but do not guarantee the adequate representation of minority views.

As mentioned, in MR systems, district magnitude, i.e. the number of seats in a district, tends to be low. As a result, district boundaries must be regularly changed to account for shifts in the population. If districts are not adapted in response to population shifts, the electoral system suffers from ‘malapportionment,’ i.e. the discrepancy between the shares of legislative seats and the shares of the relevant population held by districts (Grofman et al., 1997; Riera & Lago, 2023; Samuels & Snyder, 2001). For instance, let us assume that there are two single-member districts, named A and B, with 100 voters each. If five voters relocate from district A to district B, district B will have one seat in parliament for 105 voters, whereas district A will have one seat

³ A majority of votes means that a candidate has received more than half of the total votes cast in an election. A plurality, on the other hand, means that the candidate received more votes than any other candidate.

⁴ In contrast to secret ballots, vote choices are public in open ballot systems (Mares, 2015).

in parliament for 95 voters. Hence, if district boundaries are not redrawn in response to population shifts, parties with electoral strongholds in regions affected by depopulation benefit because they are able to win districts with a smaller number of votes. Malapportionment is thus a form of ‘partisan bias’, which we define, following Grofman et al. (1997, 458), as asymmetry in the way parties’ votes are translated into seats.

Regular reapportionment can ensure that districts are evenly spread out across the relevant population. In the above example, by redrawing district borders, the old districts can be changed into new districts of 100 voters each. However, such redistricting is rarely politically neutral, because voters are distributed unevenly across a polity.⁵ Given such electoral geographies, redistricting often results in ‘unintentional’ or ‘accidental’ partisan advantages (Chen & Rodden, 2013, 2015). Moreover, parties may also seek to benefit from a biased drawing of districts. This so-called ‘gerrymandering’ aims to influence the efficiency with which parties can translate votes into seats even in the absence of malapportionment (Grofman, 2016; Keena et al., 2021; McGhee, 2020). For example, districts might be drawn in a way that a party wins its districts with overwhelming majorities, thus wasting a lot of votes on few seats. In a two-party system with three single-member districts of 100 voters each, party A might win one of the three districts with a 90% majority, whereas party B wins the two other districts with narrow majorities of 60% each. This packing of party A voters into one district denies party A an efficient translation of votes into seats. Instead, party B manages to win two of the three districts despite having fewer voters than party A (130 party B voters to 170 party A voters).

Some authors rely on a broad definition of gerrymandering that also includes instances of malapportionment. In contrast, in this book, we rely on a narrow definition that keeps gerrymandering and malapportionment conceptually distinct (Grofman et al., 1997). Because both malapportionment and gerrymandering involve the drawing of district boundaries, we use ‘district design’ (or ‘districting’) when referring to both malapportionment and gerrymandering. In any case, district boundaries have to be regularly adapted in MR systems, and because district design is rarely politically neutral (McGann, 2006), this districting process has numerous consequences. Moreover, the possibility of malapportionment and gerrymandering provides parties with the opportunity to design for partisan advantage. We return to this point below.

⁵ The term redistricting is mainly used in the US context. In other countries, different terms are used (e.g., redistribution in Canada and the UK).

PR systems are the main alternative to MR systems. PR systems do not emphasize governability but focus on the inclusion of minorities (Norris, 1997). In the Sweden example above, the electorally strongest party, the Social Democrats, is far from having an absolute majority in parliament. In fact, party system fragmentation was such that the red-green coalition government was not in control of a parliamentary majority despite the support of two other parties in the Riksdag. The basic principle of proportional representation is that the seats in a district are divided according to the number of votes cast for a party. For this, a variety of electoral formulas can be used. For instance, in the case of highest averages methods, ‘the number of votes for each party [is] divided successively by a series of divisors, and seats are allocated to parties that secure the highest resulting quotient, up to the total number of seats available’ (Norris, 1997, 303). Examples of highest averages methods include the D’Hondt and the Sainte-Laguë formulas (Lijphart, 1994).

However, PR systems differ regarding their effective degree of proportionality (Bochsler et al., 2024; Boix, 1999; Gallagher, 1991; Walter & Emmenegger, 2019). While most research has focused on the difference between MR and PR systems, less attention has been paid to how these differences between PR systems have come about. As a rule, the proportionality of PR systems increases with district magnitude and decreases in presence of electoral thresholds (Cox, 1997; Gallagher & Mitchell, 2018; Lijphart, 1994; Sartori, 1968; Taagepera & Shugart, 1989). Clearly, it is difficult to divide a district with a magnitude of two between three equally strong parties, while electoral thresholds define minimum vote shares parties must receive to be eligible to win seats in parliament (Bol et al., 2015; Carey & Hix, 2011; Lijphart, 1994). Both small district magnitude and high electoral thresholds tend to hurt smaller parties.⁶

In PR systems, compared to MR systems, district design is less politicized. The reason is that in PR systems, the large multi-member districts are rarely redrawn, because shifts in population shares can be accommodated simply by adjusting the number of seats allocated to districts, while the boundaries can stay the same. For instance, based on a legally defined procedure, enshrined in Article 17 of the Federal Act on Political Rights, Switzerland reallocates the 200 seats of its lower chamber before every election. As a result, for the

⁶ Whereas proportionality tends to increase with district magnitude in PR systems, the opposite is true for MR systems. In MR systems, proportionality decreases with district magnitude because multi-member districts tend to produce landslide victories for the strongest party even if the strongest party only obtains a plurality of the vote. Single-member districts thus offer the potential for a more proportional distribution of legislative seats (Colomer, 2004; Eggers & Spirling, 2014; Taagepera & Shugart, 1989).

2023 election, the district of Zürich received an additional seat (now 36 seats), whereas the district Basel-Stadt lost one (down to four seats). In contrast, district borders remain untouched. The availability of such a straightforward alternative (adjusting district magnitude) makes the manipulation of district boundaries more difficult in PR systems (Birch, 2011; Grofman, 2016; Martínez i Coma & Lago, 2018; Norris, 2018). Any attempts to engage in ‘partisan districting,’ i.e. the (re)design of districts for partisan reasons, are easy to spot in PR systems because regular changes to district boundaries are simply not necessary. Below we argue that this crucial difference between MR and PR systems decisively influences parties’ preferences for electoral system choice.

1.3 What explains electoral system choice?

This book offers a novel theory of electoral system choice. While there is a rich literature on the effects of electoral systems, the choice of electoral systems received less attention (Benoit, 2007; Carey, 2018; Pilon, 2013; Rahat, 2011; Remmer, 2008; Renwick, 2018; Shugart, 2005). These systems were typically considered prime examples of the stickiness of institutions, with institutional change occurring only in exceptional historical situations (R. S. Katz 2005; Nohlen 1984, 217–218; Shugart 2001, 26–27). This lack of scholarly interest led Lijphart (1985, 3) to conclude that ‘the study of electoral systems is undoubtedly the most underdeveloped subject in political science’. Struggles over electoral system choice have only attracted researchers’ attention more recently, after the sudden wave of electoral reforms starting in the late 1980s, in countries such as France, Italy, Japan, and New Zealand as well as the transition of communist countries to democracy in the 1990s.

However, once the topic was on the agenda, it triggered a rich and highly sophisticated debate. Since the 1990s, numerous contributions have examined the politics of electoral system choice—with a particular focus on first-wave democracies (e.g., Ahmed, 2013; Andrews & Jackman, 2005; Bawn, 1993; Benoit, 2004; Blais et al., 2005; Boix, 1999; Bol, 2016; Calvo, 2009; Colomer, 2005; Cusack et al., 2007; Leemann & Mares, 2014; Lijphart, 1992; Norris, 1997; Pilet & Bol, 2011; Pilon, 2013; Remmer, 2008; Renwick, 2010; Rogowski, 1987). Scholarly interest has remained high in recent years, as electoral system change continues to be an important topic in both new and old democracies (e.g., Becher & González, 2025; Cox et al., 2019; Emmenegger & Walter, 2021a, 2024; Gjerløw & Rasmussen, 2022; Kreuzer & Neely, 2025; Penadés & Pavía, 2024; Schröder & Manow, 2014, 2020; Walter, 2021). Yet, despite this rich and sophisticated body of research, there

is little consensus on why countries change electoral systems, as we show in Chapter 2 (Bochsler, 2019; Emmenegger & Petersen, 2017; Kreuzer, 2010a; Renwick, 2018).

To account for electoral system choice, in particular the transition from MR to PR systems, the literature has turned to the seminal work of Rokkan (1970) who suggested two roads to explain why, in the context of mass suffrage, established parties support electoral system reform. Our discussion of Rokkan's two roads follows Calvo (2009).⁷ According to Rokkan's first road, established parties support the adoption of PR if insurgent parties endanger their future electoral viability. If insurgent parties gather enough support or have concentrated voter bases, they might pose an electoral threat to established parties. Facing the prospect of losing a significant number of seats, established parties might conclude that they are better off under PR (Boix, 1999; Leemann & Mares, 2014; Lijphart, 1992). According to Rokkan's second road, parties, both established and insurgent ones, support PR if they are adversely affected by growing seat-vote distortions and by uncertainty about election outcomes. For example, mid-sized parties with dispersed voter bases are disadvantaged by the mechanical effects (vote-to-seat translation) of MR systems because they are disproportionately likely to come in second (Calvo & Rodden, 2015). Such parties can thus be expected to prefer PR systems, which are less prone to such biases (Andrews & Jackman, 2005; Blais et al., 2005; Calvo, 2009; Colomer, 2005).

Our neo-Rokkanian theory of electoral system choice builds on Rokkan's two roads. Like Rokkan, our argument focuses on conflicts *between* parties, although in line with the recent literature on intraparty power dynamics (Cox et al., 2019; Schröder & Manow, 2020), we take conflicts *within* parties into account.⁸ However, we generalize Rokkan's arguments and add the distribution of voters across a polity (i.e., electoral geography), district design, and electoral alliances to the mix. More specifically, in case of both roads, Rokkan

⁷ Rokkan (1970), in turn, drew on Braunias (1932). Other contributions emphasize how public perceptions and democratic norms inform electoral system change (e.g., Blais & Massicotte, 1997; Bol, 2016; Bowler & Donovan, 2013; R. S. Katz, 2005; Rahat, 2011; Renwick, 2010). These accounts are typically used to explain electoral system choice in more recent decades but not in first-wave democracies (but see Blais et al., 2005). Another influential body of literature stresses the economic determinants of electoral system choice preferences, in particular exposure to trade and the degree of economic coordination (e.g., Cusack et al., 2007; Rogowski, 1987). These more structural accounts often fail to specify whose agency drives electoral reform (but see Becher & González, 2025). We will return to these alternative explanations in Chapter 9.

⁸ Recent literature on intraparty power dynamics has emphasized how PR enables party leaders to discipline party members and build more cohesive parties by influencing leaders' control over nominations (Cox et al., 2019; Schröder & Manow, 2020). In this book, we find evidence of intraparty conflict over electoral reform, but these conflicts primarily concern different programmatic factions rather than the relationship between party elites and backbenchers. We discuss the literature on intraparty conflict in more detail in Chapter 9.

and the literature that followed him assumes that parties react to changes in the market for voters. Thus, this literature does not allow for the possibility that parties manipulate the market for voters, especially through partisan districting and electoral alliances, in attempts to contain electoral threats (an exception is Ahmed, 2013).⁹ However, as we argue in the next section, in electoral markets, manipulation for partisan gain is widespread, and district design and electoral alliances give parties the necessary instruments to do so. Moreover, whereas the literature treats Rokkan's two roads as separate explanations, we argue that the two roads are in fact causally connected. There is simply no way to take just one road. Whatever parties do, they always travel on both roads. Acknowledging that the two roads are inevitably connected allows for several non-trivial insights that can also help account for the fact that the empirical evidence for both roads is surprisingly mixed.

1.4 Engineering electoral markets

In electoral markets, parties compete for voters to win elections. But electoral markets differ from free markets in goods and services (R. S. Katz & Mair, 2018, 129–138). For starters, electoral markets for parties are typically oligopolistic, because there is only a small number of parties competing for votes. For this reason, actors in the market are often able to affect the terms of the trade, for example by limiting voter voice by means of electoral alliances. In addition, a tight set of rules regulates both access to the market and competition in the market. These rules determine who is eligible to vote, the process of voting and competing, and how votes are translated into seats. Finally, unlike markets in goods and services, electoral markets are divided into separate segments. In case of electoral markets, districts are the main source of this segmentation. Districts organize and structure electoral markets. In this way, the organization of electoral markets into districts gives political parties the possibility of engineering them to their advantage. Crucially, the way districts organize electoral markets is systematically related to electoral system choice, because in MR systems, district magnitude is typically much smaller than in PR systems (often one), and district boundaries have to be redrawn periodically to account for population shifts.

The precise design of districts matters because of electoral geography. This term denotes the distribution of electoral preferences across a polity

⁹ Ahmed (2013) points to the possibility of containment as an alternative to PR, but she does not offer a systematic analysis of containment strategies and how these strategies are linked to electoral system choice.

Table 1.1 District design and electoral geography with plurality voting and single-member districts

District	Panel A: Perfectly dispersed districts		Panel B: Highly concentrated districts	
	Voter composition	Successful candidate	Voter composition	Successful candidate
1	46A, 34B, 20C	Party A	100A	Party A
2	46A, 34B, 20C	Party A	100A	Party A
3	46A, 34B, 20C	Party A	100A	Party A
4	46A, 34B, 20C	Party A	100A	Party A
5	46A, 34B, 20C	Party A	60A, 40B	Party A
6	46A, 34B, 20C	Party A	100B	Party B
7	46A, 34B, 20C	Party A	100B	Party B
8	46A, 34B, 20C	Party A	100B	Party B
9	46A, 34B, 20C	Party A	100C	Party C
10	46A, 34B, 20C	Party A	100C	Party C
Total	460A, 340B, 200C	10 Party A	460A, 340B, 200C	5 Party A, 3 Party B, 2 Party C

(Rodden, 2010). Voters can be distributed across a country's territory in very different ways. Take for example a country with 1,000 voters, 10 single-member districts, and three parties (see Table 1.1). In this country, 460 voters support party A, 340 voters support party B, and 200 voters support party C. If voters were perfectly dispersed across the territory (interdistrict homogeneity in Rodden's terminology), every one of the 10 districts would host exactly 46 party A voters, 34 party B voters, and 20 party C voters (panel A in Table 1.1). In contrast, if voters were highly concentrated, four districts might host only party A voters, three districts only party B voters, two districts only party C voters, and one district would host 60 party A and 40 party B voters (panel B in Table 1.1). Of course, anything between these two extreme distributions, perfectly dispersed and fully concentrated, is possible.

Table 1.1 shows that electoral geography and district design matter greatly for political representation, especially in MR systems. In the case of panel A, assuming plurality voting and single-member districts, party A wins all 10 districts thanks to the perfectly dispersed electoral geography. In each district, the party A candidate is first past the post with 46 votes (compared to 34 votes for the party B candidate and 20 votes for the party C candidate). In contrast, in the case of the fully concentrated electoral geography

(panel B in Table 1.1), party A wins only five seats (four with 100 to zero votes and one with 60 to 40 votes), whereas party B wins three seats and party C wins two seats. Compared to a perfectly proportional electoral system, party A is still slightly over-represented and party B under-represented but disproportionalities are clearly more limited.

The structuring of electoral markets into districts is thus of great importance, as any districted electoral system is potentially subject to partisan bias (Chen & Rodden, 2013; Grofman et al., 1997; Lijphart, 1994; McGann, 2006; Taagepera & Shugart, 1989). Depending on how electoral markets are organized, with the same nation-wide vote share and the same electoral formula (simple plurality and single-member districts), some parties dominate parliamentary representation (panel A in Table 1.1), whereas in other cases, they are forced to share power with other parties (panel B).

Districts are not set in stone either. District design describes the process of (re)drawing the ‘boundaries of geographically based districts for electing representatives to legislative office’ (Handley, 2018, 513). Districting is particularly important in MR systems because the state’s territory must be carved up in a large number of small districts, which have to be regularly adapted to account for population shifts. In this process, districts can be designed in a way that they disperse a party’s voter base across multiple districts or that they concentrate a party’s voter base in a small number of districts. Crucially, district design is not politically neutral. As Table 1.1 shows, district design can advantage some parties and disadvantage others. Parties, if in control of district design, might thus be able to engineer significant political advantages.

The difficulty of designing politically neutral district maps in MR systems is a key reason why partisan districting is a particularly effective containment strategy. Many voters are likely to favour norms of electoral integrity and thus reject overt forms of electoral manipulation (Blais & Shugart, 2008; R. S. Katz, 2005; Norris, 2017; Renwick, 2010). In MR systems, however, voters will often find it surprisingly challenging to detect clear cases of partisan districting. The reason is that while population shifts make regular district reform a necessity in MR systems, the electoral geographies of the parties often make it almost impossible to design politically neutral district maps (Chen & Rodden, 2013, 2015). Moreover, traditional norms of territorial representation—the idea that territorial constituencies form natural ‘communities of interest’ (Golosov, 2016, 119)—further complicate the design of district maps and can serve as justification for seat-vote distortions (Blais, 1991; Golosov, 2016; Urbinati & Warren, 2008). For voters, it can be exceedingly difficult to differentiate between ‘justified’ and ‘intentional’

partisan biases, while parties can point to such difficulties when delaying reapportionment or justifying new district maps, which reduces the risk of an electoral backlash due to partisan districting. In fact, this ability to credibly deny any wrongdoing is what sets partisan districting apart from other forms of electoral manipulation such as suffrage restrictions or plural voting.

At least historically, partisan control over district design was the rule, not the exception because legislatures were typically in charge of district design. This was particularly true for 19th-century Europe and in the self-governing European colonies around the world. As Handley (2018, 516) notes, in these countries, electoral manipulation was common. Over time, these abuses led some countries to adopt reforms designed to remove political influences from the redistricting process, thereby often explicitly excluding representatives of political parties from serving on such boundary commissions—the United States of America (USA) being the most notable exception (Handley, 2018, 517). Hence, in countries using MR systems, in the absence of an independent boundary commission, district design is highly political. Other countries adopted PR systems whose large multi-member districts are rarely redrawn. Rather, shifts in population are accommodated by adjusting the number of seats allocated to each of the multi-member districts. Hence, under PR rules, the potential for partisan districting is more limited (Birch, 2011; Grofman, 2016; Norris, 2018).

1.5 The main argument: Endogenizing Rokkan

We argue that electoral markets are *endogenous* to questions of electoral system choice. Parties that are able to benefit from district design and electoral alliances in MR systems prefer to keep an MR system. Alternatively, if they do not benefit, they prefer to adopt a PR system that neutralizes most of the distorting effects of MR systems. In our account, endogenous electoral markets provide the link that ties Rokkan's two roads to electoral reform together. MR systems provide incumbent parties with the means to create partisan biases and thereby engineer a majority in parliament.¹⁰ Such engineering can be used to contain insurgent parties (Rokkan's first road), e.g. by means of partisan districting. In this way, incumbent parties can influence the extent to which they face an electoral threat. Incumbent parties can do so by creating favourable seat-vote distortions (Rokkan's second road). The presence of strong insurgent parties or seat-vote distortions are

¹⁰ In this book, we use electoral engineering as a synonym for electoral manipulation because electoral rules are engineered to create partisan advantages (Grofman, 2016, 536).

thus not exogenous but can be influenced by other parties through district design and electoral alliances. However, the effectiveness of these engineering strategies depends on the parties' electoral geography, the rules and processes shaping the (non-)adaptation of districts, and the availability of electoral alliances. Consequently, these engineering strategies vary from country to country.

More precisely, we argue that in MR systems, incumbent parties rely on district design and electoral alliances to contain electoral threats by insurgent parties. For instance, in the late 19th century, all Western countries underwent a significant process of industrialization that was accompanied by considerable movements of internal migration. This shift of the geographical distribution of voters to urban and industrial centres could lead to malapportionment, meaning that candidates in rural districts could be elected with fewer votes than candidates in urban districts. Unsurprisingly, the (non-)adaptation of districts proved to be contentious in all countries because redistricting was often in the hands of political parties. With negligible prospects of winning seats in urban areas, rural parties often opposed redistricting because they had no interest in giving additional weight to urban representation. In contrast, urban parties supported redistricting.

Yet, malapportionment is not the only possible source of partisan bias. While regular reapportionment can account for differences in population growth, such redistricting also allows incumbent parties to introduce partisan biases in the design of districts (gerrymandering) to increase their re-election prospects against insurgent candidates. In the context of first-wave democracies, these insurgent candidates were often socialists. For example, district boundaries can be drawn in ways that 'disperse the voting strength of disfavoured groups over multiple districts and/or concentrate their voting strength in a few districts to limit their seat winning abilities' (Sauger & Grofman, 2016, 392). In short, we argue that partisan considerations motivate district design in MR systems. This book offers rich empirical evidence to demonstrate that in MR systems, district design is a highly political matter with important implications for electoral system choice.

Next to district design, established parties can rely on electoral alliances to contain insurgent parties. As part of an electoral alliance, two or more parties coordinate their candidacies across districts or agree to support each other's candidates if they are to make it to the runoff (Cusack et al., 2007; Fiva & Hix, 2021; Penadés & Pavía, 2024; Schröder & Manow, 2020). Electoral alliances are common in MR systems and, like district design, they can significantly influence seat-vote distortions. In Table 1.1 above, party A profits from a beneficial electoral geography in panel A, winning all districts with

46 votes (assuming single-member districts and plurality voting). However, electoral alliances could change this result. For example, if parties B and C were to enter an electoral alliance, they could potentially win each district with 54 votes (party B's 34 votes and party C's 20 votes) against party A's 46 votes. Hence, electoral alliances can be an effective containment strategy in MR systems, although there is no guarantee that electoral alliances do in fact work (Walter, 2021). For instance, although parties B and C might agree to an electoral alliance, party C's voters might simply refuse to support party B's candidate in the districts where party C is not fielding any candidates. Put differently, the effectiveness of electoral alliances must be examined empirically.

Insurgent parties are the key motivation behind established parties resorting to partisan districting and electoral alliances in MR systems. We argue that by relying on district design and electoral alliances, established parties can try to counter and neutralize electoral threats of insurgent parties. However, the effectiveness of these containment strategies is a function of several variables. For instance, the electoral geographies of parties may be such that any attempt to engage in partisan districting is visibly manipulative and thus likely to provoke a backlash from voters who we would expect to favour norms of electoral integrity (Blais & Massicotte, 1997; Norris, 2017; Renwick, 2010). Alternatively, the rules and processes shaping the (non-)adaptation of districts may simply prevent parties from resorting to partisan districting (R. S. Katz, 2005, 69). Hence, we do not claim that in MR systems all electoral threats can be neutralized. Rather, the effectiveness of these containment strategies varies from country to country as well as over time. From this it follows that the attractiveness of alternatives to containment measures in MR systems, most notably the adoption of PR, also varies between countries and over time.

We argue that when an electoral threat emerges in MR systems, incumbent parties can respond in two ways. On the one hand, the parties can try to contain the electoral threat. If incumbent parties are in control of the districting process (e.g., through a majority of seats in parliament) and in the presence of a suitable electoral geography, they can resort to partisan districting. Alternatively, established parties can form electoral alliances. If successful, these strategies contain the electoral threat, but they also lead to growing seat-vote distortions. As discussed, partisan districting and electoral alliances are primarily effective in MR systems. Consequently, established parties trying to contain insurgent parties retain their attachment to MR, whereas parties disadvantaged by the resulting biases favour electoral reform, that is, the adoption of PR.

These seat-vote distortions are the main reason why insurgent parties often favour the adoption of PR because PR systems promise to remove most of these distortions. However, other established parties may also be negatively affected by these distortions and thus support electoral reform. These established parties may not be able to rely on containment measures or may even be the target of the engineering efforts of other established parties. For example, established parties with voter bases in urban areas often also suffer from malapportionment (Rodden, 2009). As a result, there is the potential for a reform coalition consisting of insurgent parties and disadvantaged established parties. However, in the absence of an external event that temporarily weakens the incumbent parties' hold on political power, these disadvantaged parties may not have the means to overcome the incumbent parties' resistance to electoral reform.

On the other hand, if incumbent parties cannot take advantage of district design and electoral alliances prove to be ineffective, they support the adoption of PR. In this response, incumbent parties are unable to contain the insurgent parties. In fact, in case of an unsuitable electoral geography and little to no control over district design, partisan biases may even turn against the incumbent parties. Similarly, insurgent parties themselves may be able to form effective electoral alliances. Consequently, incumbent parties opt for a more inclusive electoral system that allows them to limit their seat losses in the face of a rapidly growing electoral threat. In this scenario, we expect incumbent parties to favour the adoption of PR.

Of course, there are also mixed cases in which incumbent parties first resort to containment measures before they begin to endorse PR—once they believe they have exhausted their options for containment in MR systems. In these situations, there is the potential for consensus among parties on electoral reform. The reason is that insurgent parties may still suffer from seat-vote distortions. Consequently, the adoption of PR would immediately improve their political representation in parliament. Moreover, in the absence of electoral reform, insurgent parties continue to be the target of containment measures. In turn, incumbent parties may begin to support the adoption of PR because they have come to realize that at some point containment measures will no longer be effective in keeping insurgent parties in check. Facing an electoral threat that they cannot contain any longer, PR offers incumbent parties some form of protection. In this situation, there is a temporary window for a broad consensus on electoral reform, as established parties begin to support PR, while the insurgent parties have not (yet) abandoned their support for PR.

More generally, these considerations suggest two ways in which PR is adopted. First, incumbent parties support the adoption of PR when the

political costs of electoral manipulation begin to outweigh the benefits in terms of seat maximization (Mares, 2022). For example, electoral challenges may be such that incumbent parties are increasingly forced to rely on ever more aggressive and visibly manipulative engineering strategies to contain insurgent parties. By clearly and openly violating norms of electoral integrity, incumbent parties may encourage voters to punish them at the ballot box, while other parties may refuse to form electoral alliances or support the incumbent parties in parliament. In the most extreme case, incumbent parties may simply exhaust the potential for containment, as no electoral alliance or district map can be found anymore which would allow them to maintain their strong parliamentary position. Such failures of containment are reflected, for example, in seat-vote distortions that are increasingly biased against incumbent parties.

Second, electoral reform is possible when the incumbent parties' resistance can be overcome. For this to happen, we argue that electoral reform advocates must often rely on external events and extra-parliamentary channels to force change (Grofman & Lijphart, 2002, 8), because in the parliamentary arena, the deck is stacked against reform advocates. For example, external events can open a window for electoral reform by temporarily weakening the incumbent parties' firm grip on power or moving decision making on electoral reform to bodies that are not subject to electoral manipulation by the incumbent parties. Examples of such external events include emergency situations such as military conflicts that force incumbent parties to compromise with the political opposition or even remove some of the established parties altogether. In these cases, external events limit the incumbent parties' potential for containment. We argue that the important role of external events explains the clustering of electoral reforms in the immediate aftermath of the First World War (Colomer, 2005) because these geopolitical developments allowed disadvantaged parties to extract the desired reforms.

In short, we argue that district design and electoral alliances matter greatly for electoral system choice. If district design and electoral alliances are effective containment strategies, incumbent parties defend the MR systems; if they are not, incumbent parties support the adoption of PR. In this book, we offer plenty of empirical evidence on the relationship between containment measures and electoral system choice.

Importantly, our argument does not imply that there is no role for district design in PR systems. It is true that district reforms in PR systems are often incremental, primarily concerned with adapting district magnitude to account for population shifts, whereas district boundaries remain the same. More substantial district reforms are rare (Nunez & Jacobs, 2016;

Pilet & Bol, 2011). The fact that district magnitude can easily be adapted in PR systems implies that once districts are set, their boundaries are hard to manipulate for partisan gain.

However, PR systems offer great potential for partisan districting *at the moment of their adoption*, especially when there is geographic variation in parties' electoral strength (Grofman, 2016). As countries adopt PR, district maps have to be completely redrawn, because the districts of the previous MR systems are too small. This process results in singular changes in district magnitude. Importantly, this initial design of districts is highly resilient, as countries often stick to these initial district maps. Moreover, these district maps are influential because, also in PR systems, district magnitude has a strong effect on the proportionality of electoral outcomes (Boix, 1999; Kedar et al., 2016; Lijphart, 1994; Taagepera & Shugart, 1989). Thus, the design of districts in newly adopted PR systems creates a unique opportunity for parties to gain a decisive long-term advantage in the translation of votes into seats.

We argue that parties designing districts for new PR systems engage in either the making of their own electoral strongholds or the breaking of other parties' strongholds (i.e., parties that are not part of the designing coalition). Building on the electoral geography literature, we expect parties with comparatively concentrated voter bases to create high entry barriers for other parties in these regions. Such parties design districts with low magnitude and oppose mergers with ideologically heterogeneous districts. By sheltering locally dominant parties from competition, these districts inherit some of the distorting features of the previous MR systems because they allow locally dominant parties to sweep the district. In contrast, parties with comparatively dispersed voter bases try to minimize seat-vote distortions. Such parties push for large districts that guarantee the proportional translation of votes into seats, thus allowing them to win seats despite their dispersed voter bases. Consequently, parties that influenced the district design typically benefit from seat-vote distortions in subsequent elections under the new PR system. This book thus demonstrates that partisan interests, electoral geography, and district design also matter in case of PR. However, active partisan districting is typically limited to the moment PR systems are adopted. Nevertheless, the effects of district design often prove to be lasting.

In sum, this book forwards a neo-Rokkanian argument on how district design and electoral alliances determine party preferences for electoral system choice and the specific design of district maps. We examine how electoral geography, the rules shaping the (non-)adaptation of districts, and the potential for electoral alliances influence parties' possibilities to use the electoral

system to engineer parliamentary dominance. We show how established parties try to gain advantages and weaken insurgents, why some parties increasingly support PR, and why newly adopted PR systems are often surprisingly biased. This is not to say that any result can be engineered. As mentioned, there are often geographical, legal, political, and procedural limits to engineering parliamentary majorities. However, without taking district design and electoral alliances seriously, and the reasons they provide for sticking with MR, any explanation of electoral system choice remains incomplete.¹¹

1.6 Case selection

Empirically, this book focuses on the adoption of PR in first-wave democracies in the early 20th century. Democratic waves are ‘a group of transitions from nondemocratic to democratic regimes that occur within a specified period of time and that significantly outnumber transitions in the opposite directions during that period of time’ (Huntington, 1991, 15). The first democratic wave began when the USA extended suffrage to most white males. The coming into power of Mussolini in Italy in 1922 marked the end of the first wave.

We focus on first-wave democracies for three reasons. First, we aim to connect to the broader literature, which has examined these cases due to their substantive importance as the world’s oldest democracies. Several significant contributions to this topic, by Rokkan (1970), Boix (1999), Calvo (2009), and Ahmed (2013), to name but a few, have focused on these cases. Of course, this is not to say that there is no influential research on electoral system choice on other geographical regions and periods (e.g., Blais, 2008; Gallagher & Mitchell, 2005; Lijphart, 1992; Pilon, 2013; Remmer, 2008; Renwick, 2010; Reynolds, 1999). However, the theoretical debate has mostly concentrated on first-wave democracies, and for this reason, we focus on these cases as well. Table 1.2 shows the 17 countries we examine in this book, the years they adopted PR (if applicable), and the first elections using PR (in brackets).

Second, the first democratic wave coincided with massive changes in electoral geography. The rise of electoral socialism and the introduction of universal (male) suffrage led to wide-scale realignments of voters and

¹¹ We should also mention what this book does not offer. While we examine how district design and electoral alliances can be used to contain electoral threats and how such containment measures influence preferences for electoral system change, we do not analyse the origins of these containment measures or why these measures are changed (e.g., the creation of independent boundary commissions). While we suspect that similar political considerations explain these processes (see Mares, 2022), an analysis of these developments is beyond the scope of this book.

Table 1.2 Year of PR adoption (first election using PR systems) in first-wave democracies

Country	PR law	Country	PR law
Australia	No PR	Italy	1919 (1919)
Austria	1918 (1919)	Netherlands	1917 (1918)
Belgium	1899 (1900)	New Zealand	No PR*
Canada	No PR	Norway	1919 (1921)
Denmark	1915 (1918)	Sweden	1907/1909 (1911)
Finland	1906 (1907)	Switzerland	1918 (1919)
France	1919 (1919)	United Kingdom	No PR
Germany	1918 (1919)	United States	No PR
Ireland	1920 (1922)		

Notes: See Chapter 5 for sources. We classify the French electoral system of 1919 as a PR system, which is certainly debatable in light of the distributional consequences of this electoral system (see Chapter 5 for a detailed discussion). We do not cover Japan because of the country's different party system and political context. *New Zealand adopted PR in 1993.

changed electoral geography fundamentally (Przeworski & Sprague, 1988). Given our focus on electoral geography, the first wave of democratization is thus particularly interesting.

Third, we make extensive use of detailed data on electoral outcomes and political processes. While researchers, archives, libraries, and other public institutions in North America, Europe, and Oceania make historical statistics and documents increasingly electronically available at low cost, accessing similar data for multiple countries in other parts of the world is difficult. Nevertheless, the cases display enough variation in the relevant dependent and independent variables. For example, as we show in subsequent chapters, these countries differed considerably in terms of electoral geography, strength of insurgent parties, or the rules shaping the (non-)adaptation of districts.

Our focus on first-wave democracies implies that we are only examining the transition from MR to PR systems, which is in line with most of the literature on the topic.¹² As Table 1.2 shows, in first-wave democracies, electoral system change is primarily about the transition from MR to PR systems. This limitation implies that our arguments do not apply to the cases of countries moving from PR to MR systems. However, this limitation

¹² We therefore do not examine electoral system changes that do not lead to PR systems (such as the adoption of the alternative vote system with single-member districts in Australia in 1918).

Table 1.3 Electoral system transitions, 1899–2020

From \ To	MR	PR	Mixed
MR	-	40	34
PR	7	-	18
Mixed	6	24	-

is not particularly concerning. Table 1.3—based on data from the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) project—documents electoral system change since 1899, the year Belgium was the first country in the world to adopt PR at a national level. The table shows that countries rarely adopt MR if they have used PR before. A second limitation is potentially more concerning. In recent decades, mixed systems, which combine elements of MR and PR systems, have become popular, sometimes even outnumbering transitions to PR. However, we argue that our arguments should also apply to transitions from MR to mixed systems because, like PR systems, mixed systems limit the containment potential of district design and electoral alliances while increasing overall proportionality.

While our primary focus is on first-wave democracies, we argue that the challenges discussed in this book are also common in more recent periods, especially in transitioning democracies across other regions of the world. In later waves of democratization outside of Anglo-Western nations, partisan districting has been consistently used to reinforce incumbent advantage (e.g., Ardanaz & Scartascini, 2013; Boone & Wahman, 2015; Samuels & Snyder, 2001; Snyder & Samuels, 2004). We acknowledge that the historical context in which Europe and the settler colonies democratized differed significantly, particularly regarding the nature of party systems and the absence of colonial legacies, among other factors. However, the issue of institutional design within democracies—especially the manipulation of districts for political gain—remains surprisingly persistent (e.g., Albertus & Menaldo, 2018; Bruhn et al., 2010; Ong et al., 2017; Riera & Lago, 2023). Therefore, we contend that our theoretical framework can be extended to democracies beyond the first wave. We will discuss the generalizability of our argument in more detail in Chapter 9.

Empirically, the book offers new quantitative evidence on electoral geography, district design, electoral alliances, party preferences towards reform, and the adoption of PR. In this way, we echo recent calls to engage in

micro-historical analysis and take seriously the context dependence of electoral reforms (Emmenegger & Petersen, 2017; Mares, 2015; Ziblatt, 2017). Our research is based on primary sources such as parliamentary protocols, roll-call votes, and historical statistics as well as secondary sources. For this book, we have collected material from archives and newspapers to assemble a novel data set that contains information on electoral outcomes at district level, the voting behaviour of legislators on specific bills, the results of popular votes on electoral reforms, district maps, and the political debates throughout this period.

We complement the quantitative analyses with several short case studies as well as two detailed case studies of Belgium and Switzerland. We argue that these two countries, which introduced PR systems in 1899 and 1918, respectively, offer excellent conditions to examine the politics of containment and electoral system choice. First, both countries were largely democratic at the time of reform, which allows us to separate questions of electoral reform from questions of regime transition and democratization. Second, the new electoral laws were not part of reform packages that can make it difficult to identify actors' positions on the issue of electoral system choice specifically. Finally, both countries introduced clear cases of PR that did not mix different elements of MR and PR systems.

As we show in Chapter 8, in both countries, dominant political parties controlled absolute majorities in parliament. Yet, due to differences in electoral geography, the rules shaping redistricting processes, and electoral alliances, these dominant parties adopted different positions on containment measures, electoral system choice, and the design of districts in the newly adopted PR systems. Based on primary and secondary sources, we examine why the dominant Belgian party (the Conservatives) adopted PR proactively, whereas the dominant Swiss party (the Liberals) fought the adoption of PR until the very end.

1.7 Plan of the book

The rest of this book is organized into three theory chapters (Chapters 2, 4, and 6), four empirical chapters (Chapters 3, 5, 7, and 8), and a conclusion (Chapter 9). Following this introduction, Chapter 2 reviews the literature on electoral system choice, in particular Rokkan's two roads to electoral reform. Subsequently, the chapter presents our neo-Rokkanian account, which argues that the use of containment measures provides a bridge that connects Rokkan's two roads to electoral reform. We argue that once an

electoral threat emerges, established parties can respond in two ways. On the one hand, if established parties can successfully resort to partisan districting or electoral alliances, they can contain the electoral threat, but these measures lead to growing seat-vote distortions. Moreover, given that these containment measures are primarily effective in MR systems, established parties retain their attachment to MR, whereas parties disadvantaged by the resulting biases favour the adoption of PR. On the other hand, if established parties cannot resort to partisan districting and electoral alliances, they support the adoption of PR. In this response, seat-vote distortions are not significant enough to contain the insurgent party. In fact, partisan biases might even turn against the established parties. Consequently, the established parties opt for a more inclusive electoral system that allows them to limit their seat losses in the face of a rapidly growing electoral threat.

Chapter 3 offers empirical evidence on how established parties used containment measures to reduce electoral threats by insurgent parties. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, all Western countries underwent a significant process of industrialization that was accompanied by considerable internal migration movements. This shift of the geographical distribution of voters to urban and industrial centres laid the ground for the emergence of socialist parties. However, if districts were not adapted for shifts in the population, these internal migration movements also led to malapportionment. Unsurprisingly, district design proved to be contentious in all countries because redistricting was typically in the hands of political parties, which faced incentives to introduce partisan biases to decrease the election prospects of insurgent (often socialist) candidates. In addition, this chapter explores how established parties resorted to electoral alliances to neutralize electoral threats originating from insurgent parties. In this way, Chapter 3 explains why some parties benefited from seat-vote distortions, whereas other parties were disadvantaged by the translation of votes into seats.

Chapters 4 and 5 turn our attention to the politics of electoral system choice. Building on the relationship between containment measures and preferences for PR, these two chapters examine, first theoretically (Chapter 4) and then empirically (Chapter 5), our argument on how parties' positions on electoral system change and the composition of reform coalitions depend on the type of electoral engineering available to incumbent parties. In this way, we also explain why the politics of PR adoption centred around the urban-rural cleavage in some countries, whereas in others, we observe urban-rural coalitions in favour of PR. In addition, we discuss why so many countries adopted PR after the First World War. We argue that incumbent parties' resistance to reform was often broken by external events, most notably military

conflicts. These external events removed incumbent parties or forced them to compromise with the political opposition. Either way, these external events often limited incumbent parties' ability to rely on electoral engineering to contain insurgent parties, because they were (temporarily) weakened and thus unable to exercise control over the redistricting process, or because opposition parties demanded the removal of such containment strategies in return for political support during crisis periods. Hence, we argue that the clustering of electoral reforms in the immediate postwar years indicates that geopolitical developments have the potential to neutralize incumbent parties' containment strategies and allow disadvantaged parties to extract the desired reforms.

Chapters 6 and 7 examine district design in newly adopted PR systems. Although district design plays a more prominent role in MR systems, it also matters in PR systems. Building on the electoral geography literature and emphasizing differences in district magnitude, we develop in Chapter 6 a theoretical argument on how the composition of reform coalitions influences district design in newly adopted PR. We expect parties with comparatively concentrated voter bases to try to create high entry barriers for other parties in these regions. Such parties design a large number of districts with low magnitude and oppose mergers with ideologically heterogeneous districts. By sheltering locally dominant parties from competition, these districts inherit some of the distorting features of the previous MR systems. In contrast, parties with comparatively dispersed voter bases try to reduce entry barriers. Such parties push for large districts that guarantee the proportional translation of votes into seats, thus allowing them to win seats despite their dispersed voter bases. In Chapter 7, by focusing on parties' influence on district design, we provide empirical evidence to show that geographical variation in partisan support is an important determinant of district magnitude within and across countries. We also demonstrate that parties that influenced the district design continue to benefit from seat-vote distortions in subsequent elections under the new PR system.

Chapter 8 complements the quantitative analyses with detailed case studies of Belgium and Switzerland. In both countries, incumbent parties controlled absolute majorities in parliament, but electoral geography, district design, and electoral alliances differed strongly. Whereas in both countries, districts were adjusted in regular intervals following national censuses, only in Switzerland did the institutional rules allow the incumbent party (the Liberals) to adapt districts for partisan gain, whereas in Belgium, the Conservatives' possibilities for engineering parliamentary dominance were limited. Moreover, whereas in Switzerland, the minority parties struggled to form

effective electoral alliances, the Belgian minority parties formed a successful electoral alliance, which increasingly threatened the Conservatives' political dominance. As a result, concerned about losing the high-magnitude urban districts they needed to protect their majority, the Belgian Conservatives ultimately decided to adopt PR proactively. In contrast, the Swiss Liberals, profiting from population growth in their urban strongholds and resorting to partisan gerrymandering to contain insurgent parties, opposed PR until the very end. PR in Switzerland was eventually introduced by extra-parliamentary means, namely a direct democratic vote that the Liberals could not prevent for constitutional reasons. The two countries also show how partisan interests shaped the district map for the new PR systems. The Belgian Conservatives' proactive adoption of PR allowed them to influence the new map, leading to long-term benefits in vote-to-seat translation. In contrast, the Swiss Liberals had to watch the district design for the new PR system from the sidelines. As a result, they did not benefit from seat-vote distortions under the new PR system.

The concluding chapter summarizes the main findings and discusses the key implications. We argue that existing approaches are insufficient at explaining the process of preference formation towards electoral reform, the introduction of PR, and the specific design of the adopted PR systems. Instead, we maintain that our approach is better suited to account for the cross-national and temporal variation in electoral reforms. Most notably, we argue that the combination of Rokkan's two roads to electoral reform is productive, especially if this combination takes the endogeneity of electoral markets seriously. In addition, we discuss the implications of our theory for current electoral reforms in both established and emerging democracies. At a more theoretical level, we argue that democratization is best thought of as a gradual process that involves a considerable amount of manipulation and conflict. Democracies do not appear all of sudden. Instead, electoral institutions, and democracy more generally, are the historical legacies of political struggles with the winners of these struggles trying to set the rules (Mahoney & Thelen, 2010). Moreover, while electoral rules have very real power implications, they are also the constant target of attempts to rewrite the rules of the game to gain advantage. For this reason, electoral reforms cannot solely be analysed at the moment of reform, because reforms are typically preceded by decades of conflict, which inform subsequent events as well as actors' interests and strategies (Kreuzer, 2023). Put differently, to understand why some countries ultimately adopted PR, we also need to understand why some actors began to demand PR in the first place. In short, electoral reform is a game of manipulation, and this game can last a long time.

2

Containment measures and electoral system choice

In this chapter, we begin our theoretical discussion of the politics of containment and electoral system choice. It is the first of three theoretical chapters. We will continue the theoretical discussion in Chapters 4 and 6. This chapter makes two contributions. First, we review the literature on electoral system choice with a particular focus on Rokkan (1970) and the literature that has followed in his footsteps. Second, we develop our theoretical argument to explain actors' positions on the adoption of proportional representation (PR).

Our starting point is what Calvo (2009) calls Rokkan's two roads to electoral reform. These two explanations have shaped the debate on electoral system choice over the last decades. The next section reviews these two arguments, identifying their main weaknesses and highlighting some surprising commonalities. Subsequently, we introduce our neo-Rokkanian argument on the relationship between containment measures and electoral system choice. While the existing literature treats Rokkan's two roads as separate paths to electoral reform, we argue that the two roads are *necessarily* connected through district design and electoral alliances. Whether a party faces an electoral threat or benefits from seat-vote distortions is not set in stone but subject to the containment measures political actors may use. These containment measures, in turn, are conditioned by the existing electoral system, the rules shaping the (non-)adaptation of districts, the potential the electoral geography offers for partisan districting, and the possible alliance partners in the party system. In short, we argue that electoral markets are endogenous to questions of electoral system choice.

2.1 Stein Rokkan's long shadow

Electoral systems had long been considered prime examples of sticky institutions with institutional change arising only in extraordinary situations. Struggles over electoral system choice attracted researchers' attention only

after the sudden wave of reforms starting in the late 1980s. To account for these reforms, scholarship turned to Rokkan (1970) who had suggested two roads to electoral reform. In the following, we discuss these two roads.

2.1.1 Rokkan's first road: Electoral threats

Rokkan is a towering figure in political science. His influence is hard to overstate. Rokkan's statements on electoral system choice are, however, surprisingly short. He argued that party systems and fundamental constitutional structures became 'frozen' at the beginning of a country's democratic experience (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967). What, then, explains electoral system choice during this critical juncture, i.e. the beginning of a country's democratic experience? Rokkan's (1970, 157) best-known argument, his first road, states that the shift to PR came about...

...through a convergence of pressures from below and from above. The rising working class wanted to lower the thresholds of representation in order to gain access to the legislatures, and the most threatened of the old-established parties demanded PR to protect their position against the new waves of mobilized voters created by universal suffrage.

At the centre of this argument are political parties—a group of important actors who are motivated to participate in elections to win them (Benoit, 2004; Boix, 1999; Grofman & Lijphart, 2002). For this reason, parties try to maximize the number of seats they win in an election (Benoit, 2007, 378). Parties' positions on electoral system change are a function of their expectations about their performance in elections, alternative electoral rules available at the time, and their ability to change the rules (Colomer, 2004, 4). Rokkan focuses on parties because, 'as the primary units of legislative representation in modern democracies, political parties are the groups chiefly affected by the distributive nature of electoral institutions' (Benoit, 2007, 372). In addition, parties and their representatives are typically the main actors in the bodies charged with making decisions on electoral systems, both in regular parliamentary proceedings as well as extra-parliamentary settings.¹

¹ Bawn (1993) argues that parties are also office and policy seeking. Consequently, parties may be willing to give up some seats if this facilitates coalition building and thus access to power. However, coalition building dynamics following electoral reforms are even harder to predict than seat shares. For this reason, seat-maximization arguments are considerably more common in the literature (Benoit, 2007).

Seat-maximization objectives cause conflict among parties. Electoral systems are prime examples of what Tsebelis (1990) calls ‘redistributive’ institutions. Unlike ‘efficient’ institutions that improve the condition of almost all groups, redistributive institutions ‘improve the conditions of one group in society at the expense of another’ (Tsebelis, 1990, 104). As a result, ‘for political parties, redistributive institutions have a zero-sum character in the sense that seat share awarded to one party can only come at the expense of another party’ (Benoit, 2007, 372). From this it follows that ‘politicians choose electoral reforms that improve the likelihood of their future electoral victory’ (Mares, 2022, 15).

Before the transition to PR, most countries used plurality (occasionally majority) rules with multi-member districts (occasionally single-member districts) and open ballots (Colomer, 2007, 265). In the case of multi-party competition, these systems tend to create large distortions in the translation of seat to votes, especially as political candidates increasingly compete as parties, thus inducing bloc voting for a list of candidates and leading to landslide victories for political groups (Colomer, 2004, 2007). For example, consider a multi-member district with three seats and three competing parties. Party A is supported by 40% of the voters, whereas parties B and C are each supported by 30% of the voters. Applying a plurality rule and assuming that voters support only candidates of their preferred political bloc, party A wins all three seats in the district, whereas parties B and C come away empty-handed, despite collectively winning more votes than party A. For this reason, majoritarian representation (MR) systems are argued to follow a ‘winner-takes-all’ logic. In case of multi-member districts and bloc voting, these majoritarian features are further accentuated, resulting in growing seat-vote distortions (Cusack et al., 2007, 387).²

Importantly, these majoritarian biases of MR systems are likely to increase with the number of competing parties because the number of parties enhances the majoritarian properties of electoral systems (Calvo, 2009). In the above example of an electoral district with three seats and three competing parties A, B, and C, the discrepancy between party A’s seat share (100%) and vote share (40%) is 60 percentage points. Now consider the emergence of a new party D, which takes away a five percentage points vote share from each of the other three parties. In this new scenario, again applying a plurality rule and assuming bloc voting, party A wins all seats in the district with a vote

² Bloc voting is not a behaviour induced by institutional rules but a party strategy-induced behaviour (Colomer, 2007, 268). For example, voters always have the option to distribute their votes among candidates with different political orientations, thus creating some form of voluntary proportionality. However, as parties formed, they encouraged their supporters to vote only for their preferred parties’ candidates.

share of 35%, whereas parties B (25%), C (25%), and D (15%) do not gain any representation. For party A, the discrepancy between seat share (100%) and vote share (35%) now amounts to 65 percentage points.

In contrast, PR systems are, at least in theory, supposed to ensure a close relationship between votes cast for each party at an election and the number of seats won in parliament because seats are allocated in proportion to votes. Let us go one more time back to our previous example, but this time assuming a PR system. Using the D'Hondt formula to transform votes into seats, with vote shares of 40% (party A), 30% (party B), and 30% (party C), all three parties win exactly one of the three seats available. In practice, district magnitude is often considerably higher in PR systems, which typically increases proportionality (e.g., Gallagher, 1991; Lijphart, 1994; Taagepera & Shugart, 1989). Let us thus assume a multi-member district with 100 seats and perfect proportionality.³ In this situation, party A wins 40 seats, whereas parties B and C each win 30 seats. For all parties, the discrepancy between seat and vote shares is zero. With the emergence of party D, seat shares change to 35% (party A), 25% (parties B and C), and 15% (party D), but the discrepancy remains zero.

Hence, in comparison to MR systems, PR systems lead to a better correspondence between support in the population and representation in parliament. Moreover, PR systems are more predictable because the emergence of new parties has a smaller impact on the seat shares of established parties. At the same time, PR systems are more inclusive in the sense that more parties are likely to win seats in parliament, which, however, can lead to party system fragmentation and often necessitates coalition governments because no party is able to win a majority of seats in parliament (Lijphart, 2012). For these reasons, in the first decades of the 20th century, advocates of electoral reform emphasized the democratic virtues of PR (Blais et al., 2005; Pilon, 2013), although the collapse of several democracies using PR systems during the interwar period dampened reformers' enthusiasm.

Under what conditions do parties prefer to transition from MR to PR? As mentioned, Rokkan's (1970, 157) most famous argument focuses on electoral threats to established parties.⁴ He argues that if the electoral arena changes, in

³ Importantly, the *effective* proportionality of PR systems is a function of several variables (Bochsler et al., 2024; Cox, 1997; Taagepera & Shugart, 1989; Walter & Emmenegger, 2019) such as the electoral threshold (minimum vote share a party needs to win a seat), district magnitude (the number of seats in a district), and the electoral formula (the formula used to translate votes into seats). We return to this point in Chapter 6. For now, it is sufficient to note that in PR systems, seat shares are more proportional to vote shares than in MR systems.

⁴ Unlike most other contributions, we do not refer to this argument as the socialist electoral threat thesis because there is no necessity for electoral threats to come from socialist parties (Lijphart, 1992). Rokkan's focus on socialist parties is simply the result of his geographical and temporal focus.

general because of the emergence of an insurgent party, the established parties consider altering the electoral system if they believe the insurgent party to threaten their own electoral viability in the future. These endangered established parties support the adoption of PR because the more inclusive features of PR allow established parties to limit their seat losses in the face of a rapidly growing electoral threat.

In two important contributions, Boix (1999, 2010) has developed the logic of the electoral threat thesis in more detail. He argues that seat losses will be particularly severe in cases where the established parties are politically divided. Facing a strong insurgent, vote splitting among established parties can turn the electoral system's majoritarian biases against some of the established parties. Whether established parties favour the adoption of PR is thus a function of, first, the type of electoral market in which the established parties compete and, second, the extent to which the established parties share voters with the insurgent party.⁵ In a (geographically) segmented electoral arena in which the support for each party is highly concentrated in a particular geographic region, the position of each party towards PR is determined by the extent to which the insurgent party threatens the established party's hegemony in its electoral segment. If threatened by the new party, established parties support PR, otherwise they oppose electoral reform. In more competitive electoral arenas, where parties contend for some fraction of the electorate, the positions of established parties are a function of the extent to which they can expect to become the dominant, non-insurgent party. As Boix (2010, 406) argues, if the (established) party can expect to become the focal point around which the voters will eventually coordinate, it does not have an incentive to support PR. If the party, by contrast, cannot expect to become the dominant non-insurgent party, it has strong incentives to support PR.

The logic of the electoral threat thesis is compelling but the empirical evidence is surprisingly mixed (Andrews & Jackman, 2005; Blais et al., 2005; Calvo, 2009; Cusack et al., 2007; Emmenegger & Petersen, 2017; Kreuzer, 2010a; Leemann & Mares, 2014; Pilon, 2013). There are at least two problems with the Rokkan-Boix thesis. First, the thesis focuses on the coordination problem of established parties, as the insurgent party might take advantage of divisions (i.e., coordination failures) between the established parties. However, as recent contributions have shown, coordination problems among established parties can be solved by means of electoral alliances (Cusack et al.,

⁵ In its original version, Rokkan's electoral threat thesis assumes interdistrict homogeneity (Rodden, 2009). The extension developed in Boix (2010) drops this assumption.

2007; Penadés & Pavía, 2024; Schröder & Manow, 2014, 2020; Walter, 2021). In the above example, if parties B and C with vote shares of 30% each entered an electoral alliance, they could beat party A (vote share of 40%) under majoritarian rules (60 to 40% vote share). As we show in Chapter 3, such district-level electoral alliances were widespread in first-wave democracies. Nevertheless, the literature on the electoral threat thesis has often overlooked their potential role in containing insurgent parties.⁶

Second, recent contributions have demonstrated that in some countries, PR was adopted in the absence of a relevant electoral threat, whereas in other countries, the insurgent parties (e.g., socialist parties) themselves were the drivers of reform (Alesina & Glaeser, 2004; Calvo, 2009; Emmenegger & Walter, 2021a; Rodden, 2009). Rodden (2009, 2). argues that ‘as a bulwark against the left, proportional representation can only be viewed as a colossal failure’. Indeed, socialist parties enjoyed marked improvements in seat shares (although not necessarily vote shares) immediately after the adoption of PR. Moreover, the literature has demonstrated that socialist parties are more often in government in countries with PR systems than countries with MR systems (Döring & Manow, 2017; Iversen & Soskice, 2006). Their subsequent electoral success might explain why socialist parties often favoured the adoption of PR (Alesina & Glaeser, 2004; Penadés, 2008; Rodden, 2009). Yet, this raises an apparent puzzle. How is it possible that some established parties thought of PR as a ‘bulwark against the left’, whereas the left sometimes thought of PR as a way to improve their electoral fortunes?

The problems of the electoral threat thesis have led to several reformulations and adaptations of the argument (Bawn, 1993; Benoit, 2004; Grofman & Lijphart, 2002; Kreuzer & Neely, 2025; Leemann & Mares, 2014; Lijphart, 1992; Pilet & Bol, 2011; Pilon, 2013; Remmer, 2008). A particularly interesting one is the so-called ‘existential threat’ thesis, according to which it is not the electoral strength of insurgent parties that matters but rather their ideological radicalization. Following this argument, established parties adopt PR because of the radical political consequences in the event of an insurgent party victory, or because of systemic risks resulting from extra-parliamentary mobilization (Ahmed, 2013; Barzachka, 2014; Gjerløw & Rasmussen, 2022). However, this revision of the electoral threat thesis is unlikely to solve all issues. For example, in Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Switzerland, the insurgent (here socialist) parties were neither an electoral threat in terms of *seat shares* won in the last election before the transition to PR nor

⁶ Electoral alliances are no magic bullet though. The success of electoral coordination between parties cannot be assumed but must be demonstrated (Walter, 2021). In contrast, in PR systems, electoral alliances are often not necessary.

an existential threat in terms of ideological radicalization (Marks et al., 2009, 633). Nevertheless, all four countries adopted PR.⁷

2.1.2 Rokkan's second road: Seat-vote distortions

To account for such deviant cases, Rokkan (1970, 157) suggested a second road to PR. He argued that in the period before the First World War and thus before socialist parties became serious electoral threats, PR was adopted as a form of minority protection in Europe's ethnically most heterogeneous countries to safeguard the (democratic) political system.⁸ PR reduces seat-vote distortions, guarantees minority representation, and thus counteracts political threats to national unity and political stability (Lijphart, 1992, 216).

However, it remains unclear why such minority protection would result in the adoption of PR—a still rather unproven system in the early 20th century. Moreover, in case of geographically concentrated minorities, MR systems with single-member districts might be just as effective in guaranteeing minority representation (Ahmed, 2013). Finally, it seems unlikely that established parties sacrificed substantial seat shares without obtaining clear benefits in return. After all, no party strives for a coalition government if it can rule on its own.

Instead, Calvo (2009, 255) notes that Rokkan's other road to PR 'fits a wide body of empirical research that stresses the importance of uncertainty, seat-vote distortions, and redistricting problems in the elimination of majoritarian electoral rules in the early twentieth century'. In this book, we follow Calvo's (2009) understanding of Rokkan's second road to PR. Put differently, in our terminology, Rokkan's second road to PR refers to seat-vote distortions and their implications for preferences towards electoral system choice.

As mentioned, in the late 19th century, virtually all countries using elections relied on plurality (occasionally majority) rules with multi-member

⁷ However, in all four countries, the socialist parties suffered from substantial seat-vote distortions. We turn to these distortions in the next section. Regarding ideological radicalization, Gjerlow & Rasmussen (2022) find a positive relationship between member of parliament (MP) support for PR and district-level revolutionary threats in roll-call votes in the Norwegian parliament. In contrast, Emmenegger & Walter (2021a) find no such relationship for Switzerland. In general, the extant literature tends to portray socialist parties as political radicals unable to enter a coalition with non-socialist parties (e.g., Ahmed, 2013; Boix, 1999; Calvo, 2009). However, these accounts overlook that electoral alliances between socialist and non-socialist parties were common before the adoption of PR (see Chapter 3), which demonstrates that there was no consensus among established parties that socialist representation had to be minimized under any circumstances.

⁸ Clearly, there are important parallels with the existential threat thesis. However, Rokkan (1970, 157) did not have socialist parties in mind. Instead, he was concerned with systemic threats before the emergence of socialist parties (e.g., ethnic divisions). Once socialist parties had emerged, he believed electoral threats to be the key explanatory variable.

districts (occasionally single-member districts) (Colomer, 2007, 265). This starting point is important because we argue that the wave of electoral reforms in the early 20th century was, to a large extent, a response to the problems created by these electoral systems. These systems have the potential to produce citizens' consensual representation if voters support locally embedded individual candidates (Cusack et al., 2007). However, as Colomer (2007) shows, these systems create incentives for potential leaders to form political groups and induce citizens to vote en bloc (i.e., vote exclusively for candidates from the same political group).⁹ In this way, plurality systems with multi-member districts often result in single-party sweeps despite the party having obtained only a plurality of votes in a given district (Eggers & Fourinaies, 2014; Grofman, 2016). If the same party tends to sweep most districts, these electoral systems result in large parliamentary majorities based on only a plurality of votes.

Such majoritarian biases are the mechanical consequence of electoral systems that encourage a winner-takes-all strategy to competing in elections. Majoritarian biases are thus a constitutive feature of any MR system. They do not necessarily favour one party over another one. Rather, majoritarian biases encourage parties to wait until it is their time to benefit from them. However, as Calvo (2009) shows, majoritarian biases are likely to grow more substantial as the number of competing parties increases. Moreover, any new entrant, which heavily draws votes from one of the established parties, has important effects on the seat shares of the other parties. Thus, new entrants might break a party's previous electoral dominance (based on a plurality of votes) or accentuate it even further by taking away votes from its most important competitor (Calvo & Rodden, 2015). Either way, with a growing number of parties, majoritarian biases make elections increasingly unpredictable (Calvo, 2009; Colomer, 2005).

Next to majoritarian biases, MR systems may also result in partisan biases. Whereas majoritarian biases reward and penalize any party with an equivalent vote share in a similar way, partisan biases 'describe the seat benefits a particular party obtains beyond those expected by any other party with an equivalent vote share' (Calvo, 2009, 257). These partisan biases are primarily the result of electoral geography and district design, and they are particularly large in MR systems.

In MR systems, the state's territory is carved up into numerous small (single-member or multi-member) districts for electing representatives

⁹ Such organization building processes are also related to the nationalization of politics. As the role of the national level in regulatory policy making increases, more homogeneous local networks are replaced with national political factions (Cusack et al., 2007).

to parliament. There are myriad ways that this can be done. Differences between the resulting district maps would not be of much consequence if political preferences were randomly allocated across a state's territory. However, this is clearly not the case. Electoral geography describes this distribution of political preferences across the state's territory (Rodden, 2010).

The specific design of districts matters greatly for political representation because the districts affect the efficiency with which parties can translate votes into seats. For example, a party's geographical distribution of voters might be such that it has significant minorities in districts dominated by other parties. In this case, the party risks wasting a lot of party votes on losing candidates, whereas the other parties can win these districts with comparatively narrow, i.e. efficient, margins. Alternatively, a party might be able to win the districts, but it does so with overwhelming majorities. In this case, the party wastes a comparatively large number of votes on few seats. In both cases, the party suffers from an inefficient translation of votes into seats due to the specific design of districts (Grofman et al., 1997). At a more general level, Calvo & Rodden (2015) show that MR systems harm small parties when their vote share is more dispersed than average (i.e., they struggle to win in any district) and large parties when their vote share is more concentrated than average (i.e., they waste too many votes on few seats). In first-wave democracies, the former was often the fate of non-rural established parties, while the latter was often the fate of socialist parties in their urban strongholds (Rodden, 2009). Given these distributional implications, district design is a highly political process.

Making matters even more political, districts must be regularly adapted to account for shifts in regional population shares, for instance due to rural depopulation. If districts are not regularly adapted, the electoral system suffers from malapportionment, which denotes the discrepancy between the share of legislative seats and the shares of the relevant population held by districts (Grofman et al., 1997; Riera & Lago, 2023; Samuels & Snyder, 2001). If districts are not redrawn in response to population shifts, parties with electoral strongholds in regions affected by depopulation benefit from malapportionment because they can win these districts with a smaller number of votes. In contrast, other parties have to mobilize more voters to win the same number of seats. Hence, in presence of regionally different population growth rates, the non-adaptation of districts creates partisan biases. Parties benefiting from these biases have an incentive to oppose the redesigning of districts, while parties suffering from these biases are likely to demand a new district map.

The situation is different in PR systems because districts can be adapted in response to population shifts by simply adding more seats to a given district, while the boundaries can stay the same. For this reason, malapportionment is typically less of a problem in PR systems because reapportionment cannot be opposed with arguments emphasizing the complexity of redrawing districts or the need to respect local communities (Golosov, 2016; Samuels & Snyder, 2001; Urbinati & Warren, 2008).

Of course, also in MR systems, district magnitude can be adjusted to accommodate regional differences in population growth. In this case, additional seats are simply added to the existing multi-member districts, whereas district boundaries are kept the same. This approach was relatively common in first-wave democracies. However, over time, this approach results in large multi-member districts. For example, in Belgium, where district boundaries were not redrawn, the Brussels district grew to 18 seats over time, which accounted for almost 12% of all parliamentary seats. In the last election (1896) before the adoption of PR (1899), the Conservatives won all 18 seats with a first-round vote share of only 42% in this district (Emmenegger & Walter, 2019, 440–441). The example shows the problems with this approach in MR systems. Increasing district magnitude in MR systems is likely to further increase seat-vote distortions because of the tendency of MR systems to produce single-party sweeps (Colomer, 2004, 2007; Eggers & Fourinaies, 2014; Engstrom, 2013). In light of the massive population growth and large internal migration movements in first-wave democracies, it is thus not surprising that most countries contemplated the introduction of single-member districts in the existing MR systems to reduce the relative weight of single districts on the overall election outcome.¹⁰

The bottom line is that partisan biases are virtually unavoidable in MR systems (Chen & Rodden, 2013, 2015). They are the logical consequence of majoritarian rules in combination with an unequal electoral geography that needs to be structured in small districts and respect ‘natural’ communities. As a result, some parties suffer from partisan biases because their voters are inefficiently distributed across districts, whereas other parties benefit from a more efficient distribution (Calvo & Rodden, 2015). Parties with inefficient vote-to-seat translations in MR systems have incentives to demand the adoption of PR.

Moreover, as Calvo (2009, 264–267) demonstrates, partisan biases are likely to grow as the number of parties increases. New parties typically have

¹⁰ As a rule, disproportionalities increase in MR systems with district magnitude while they decrease with district magnitude in PR systems (Grofman, 2016; Taagepera & Shugart, 1989).

territorially concentrated voter bases. This electoral geography favours new parties because it allows them to win against (established) parties with more dispersed constituencies. The standard example is the emergence of socialist parties with concentrated voter bases in industrial districts in the late 19th century. Whereas the rural-based parties of the right remained unscathed by this socialist challenger, established parties with primarily urban constituencies suddenly faced tough competition in the districts they had previously controlled (Rodden, 2009). As a result, some established parties, with their more dispersed voter base, lost seats to the newcomer (a minority party with a territorially concentrated voter base), whereas rural-based parties of the right often continued to win their districts (Calvo, 2009, 267). By winning their seats primarily at the expense of one of the established parties, insurgent parties often increase partisan bias.¹¹

In short, MR systems are prone to suffer from majoritarian and partisan biases. The resulting seat-vote distortions are likely to grow with the number of parties. Moreover, whereas partisan biases systematically disadvantage some parties more than others, majoritarian biases increase uncertainty over electoral outcomes, as small swings in electoral support can have large implications for parties' seat share. In these situations, MR systems with multi-member districts have the potential to result in what Shugart (2001) calls extreme outcomes (e.g., very large seat-vote distortions) that facilitate broad mobilization against the electoral system (Blais & Shugart, 2008).

In line with Rokkan's second road to electoral reform, there is indeed considerable evidence that growing seat-vote distortions influence party positions on the adoption of PR (Andrews & Jackman, 2005; Blais et al., 2005; Calvo, 2009; Carstairs, 1980; Colomer, 2005; Leemann & Mares, 2014; Rodden, 2009). Most notably, seat-vote distortions can explain why most socialist parties and some established parties favoured the adoption of PR in the early 20th century. Socialists suffered from an inefficient vote-to-seat translation due to the concentration of their voters in a small number of highly industrialized districts, whereas some established parties suddenly faced competition in districts they had previously controlled. In contrast, other established parties benefited from this reorganization of the political landscape and thus typically remained firm in their opposition to the adoption of PR.

But when do these seat-vote distortions lead to electoral reform? Calvo (2009, 256) argues that suffrage expansion and the resulting increase in the number of parties led to 'significant partisan biases that [also] adversely

¹¹ Of course, as socialist parties grew stronger, this electoral geography turned against them because only small parties benefit from concentrated voter bases in MR systems (Calvo & Rodden, 2015).

affected well-established parties'. This argument suggests that when the established parties themselves start to suffer from such partisan biases, they push—often together with socialist parties—for PR. Similarly, Rodden (2009, 5) argues that 'parties with inefficient geographical distributions of support are the most vocal supporters of proportional representation' because they are most likely to suffer from the entry of new parties and subsequent seat-vote distortion. In most countries, Rodden (2009, 6) argues, these were socialist and non-rural established parties, while the 'rural-based party of the right [...] was unscathed by socialist entry and actually benefited from the coordination problem of the left'. In these accounts, PR is adopted when the disadvantaged parties have sufficient leverage to extract the desired reform.¹²

Rokkan's second road to electoral reform, emphasizing seat-vote distortions, adds an important element to the puzzle of why countries adopt PR. However, two crucial problems remain. First, why do the parties benefiting from these biases not resort to electoral engineering to protect their privileged position? While these accounts can convincingly explain parties' positions towards the adoption of PR, they have little to say about how parties try to engineer advantages in seat-vote distortions. Instead, they treat electoral markets as exogenous to preferences for electoral system choice. Yet, as our discussion of district design has shown, the majoritarian and partisan biases of electoral systems are at least to some extent the result of political decisions. Put differently, preferences for electoral system choice are endogenous to established parties' attempts to contain insurgent parties.

Second, it remains unclear how disadvantaged parties are able to overcome the resistance of the advantaged parties. As mentioned, electoral systems are prime examples of redistributive institutions (Tsebelis, 1990). As a result, whoever suffers from seat-vote distortions and wants to see the electoral system changed has to overcome the resistance of political groups that benefit from the very same seat-vote distortions. Why would the beneficiaries of these distortions not take advantage of their strong political position to prevent reforms?

One answer to this puzzle might be uncertainty. Colomer (2005) argues that in situations of high uncertainty, actors prefer electoral rules that reduce the risk of becoming absolute losers. The unpredictability of electoral results

¹² For this reason, Rodden (2009) speaks of coordination problems among left-wing parties. Because rural-based parties have little interest in electoral reform, insurgent socialist parties and electorally squeezed established parties must coordinate their activities to enforce electoral reform. Rodden's coordination problem among left-wing parties contrasts with Boix's (1999) focus on coordination problems among right-wing parties that need to find strategies to prevent vote splitting in the face of an insurgent socialist party.

is higher in MR systems, especially as the number of parties increases. Colomer (2005, 8) therefore argues that ‘the higher the effective number of parties, the weaker the expectation will be for any single party to become the sure winner, and, thus, the more likely will be its preference for an inclusive electoral system’ such as PR (see also Birch et al., 2002; Blais et al., 2005; Remmer, 2008; Renwick, 2010). Clearly, such uncertainty also affects established parties. Next to electoral rules, Andrews and Jackman (2005, 66) identify the geopolitical situation in the early 20th century as one of ‘extreme uncertainty’ and argue that in this situation, ‘the safest choice typically involved some form of proportional representation’. Yet, while all humans, including political actors, may be risk averse, electoral system change in itself is highly risky (Pilet & Bol, 2011), especially in case of PR, a still rather untested electoral system in the early 20th century. Hence, why exactly electoral system change should be seen as the safer option in times of extreme uncertainty is not straightforward. Moreover, as we argue in the next section, established parties did have means to reduce uncertainty and engineer more favourable seat-vote distortions.

2.2 Stacking the deck in their favour

In this section, we develop our own theoretical argument, which focuses on political parties and their motivation to maximize the number of seats they can win in an election. In line with Rokkan’s first road, we expect parties to respond to electoral threats. This response may be the adoption of PR. However, this response may also involve containment measures in the existing MR system (i.e., district design and electoral alliances). In addition, in line with Rokkan’s second road, we expect parties to support PR if they are suffering from lasting majoritarian and partisan biases. However, in contrast to the existing literature, we argue that these seat-vote distortions are not set in stone. Instead, seat-vote distortions can be manipulated to contain electoral threats. In this way, seat-vote distortions influence the extent to which established parties face an electoral threat. Rokkan’s two roads to electoral reform are thus intertwined. There is no way of taking just one road. Whatever parties do, they always travel on both roads.

As mentioned, in MR systems, majoritarian and partisan biases are virtually unavoidable. However, incumbent parties can manipulate these biases, especially through the organization of an unequal electoral geography into districts and the creation of electoral alliances. Such electoral engineering may result in persistent advantages, which allows some parties to control

government for prolonged periods of time. Extreme examples of such persistent advantages include the Danish Liberals, the French Radicals, the German Conservatives, and the Swiss Liberals, which dominated politics in their respective countries and for this reason resisted electoral reform (Emmenegger & Walter, 2024; Mares, 2022). In the following, we discuss these containment measures. We start with partisan districting (malapportionment and gerrymandering) before turning to electoral alliances.

Partisan districting was widespread in first-wave democracies. According to Handley (2018, 516), ‘during the nineteenth century, in Europe and in self-governing European colonies around the world, redistricting was carried out by the legislature. Gerrymandering (drawing districts to intentionally favour one political party at the expense of others) and other electoral abuses were not uncommon.’ Over time, these abuses led some countries to adopt reforms designed to remove political influences from the redistricting process, thereby often explicitly excluding representatives of political parties from serving on such boundary commissions—the USA being the most notable exception (Handley, 2018, 517).

Other countries adopted PR systems whose large multi-member districts are rarely redrawn. Rather, shifts in population are accommodated by adjusting the number of seats allocated to each of the multi-member districts. Hence, in PR systems, the potential for partisan districting is limited (Birch, 2011; Grofman, 2016; Martinez i Coma & Lago, 2018; Norris, 2018). In case of population shifts, district magnitude can be adapted, whereas the boundaries stay the same. However, in countries using MR systems, in the absence of independent boundary commissions, district design is a highly political process.¹³

In MR systems, parties have two main levers to create partisan advantages using the districting process. First, they can apportion seats to districts in a way that benefits them (*malapportionment*). Second, they can influence the specific boundaries of districts (*gerrymandering*). In both cases, these strategies are dependent on having access to, possibly even control over, the body in charge of district design. In the late 19th century, this was typically the parliament. Hence, parties (or coalitions) controlling majorities in parliament were typically in charge of district design (Handley, 2018). As a result, they could use district design to create favourable vote-seat distortions and contain insurgent electoral threats.

¹³ Bickerstaff (2020) argues that independent boundary commissions are often not truly independent. For instance, in some countries, parliaments must approve the district maps. However, Nelson (2023) shows for the US case that independent boundary commissions are associated with more competitive elections, which suggests that they are effective in curtailing partisan districting.

Malapportionment refers to the discrepancy between the number of legislative seats and the size of the relevant population held by districts. Malapportionment can result from different sources. First, the apportionment process can privilege some geographical areas over others for strictly political reasons by apportioning the same number of seats to districts of unequal population size. For example, elites might try to create an over-representation of areas that support the political status quo (Birch, 2011; Boone & Wahman, 2015; Norris, 2018; Schedler, 2002).

Second, districts may be guaranteed a minimum number of seats although they are below the pre-defined threshold for allocating seats to districts. Such rules are still widespread today and are often designed to guarantee some form of minority representation (Nohlen, 2005; Nohlen et al., 2001; Nohlen & Stöver, 2010), although due to general urbanization trends, they primarily benefit rural regions and the parties representing these regions' interests (Johnson & Miller, 2023). An example of malapportionment due to a guaranteed minimum number of seats can be found in the European Parliament. In 2023, all member states have at least six representatives. For the smallest EU member states (in terms of population size), this implies a member of parliament (MP) per roughly 100,000 inhabitants. In contrast, the EU's largest member state, Germany, has more than 800,000 inhabitants per seat in the European Parliament.¹⁴

Finally, malapportionment can result from the, possibly deliberate, non-adaptation of districts in response to population shifts. In this case, districts retain their seat shares despite declines in population shares. Such non-adaptation is often justified by pointing to the need to protect 'historical' or 'natural' territorial communities (Golosov, 2016). As argued by Urbinati and Warren (2008, 389), such a territorial understanding of the 'principal agent relationship, in which the principals—constituencies formed on a territorial basis—elect agents to stand for and act on their interests and opinions' forms the conceptual origin of political representation and thus enjoys substantial democratic legitimacy. However, next to protecting territorially defined communities, the non-adaptation of districts may also have important partisan implications. For example, established parties benefited from malapportionment due to the non-adaptation of districts in pre-war Denmark and Germany (Elklit, 2002; Reibel, 2007). By not adapting districts to rural depopulation movements, parties in both countries needed fewer

¹⁴ The European Parliament also shows that such malapportionment is not limited to the smallest geographical units. The European Parliament relies on a degressively proportional system to allocate seats to member states. In this system, population shares needed for additional legislative seats grow with the member states' population size.

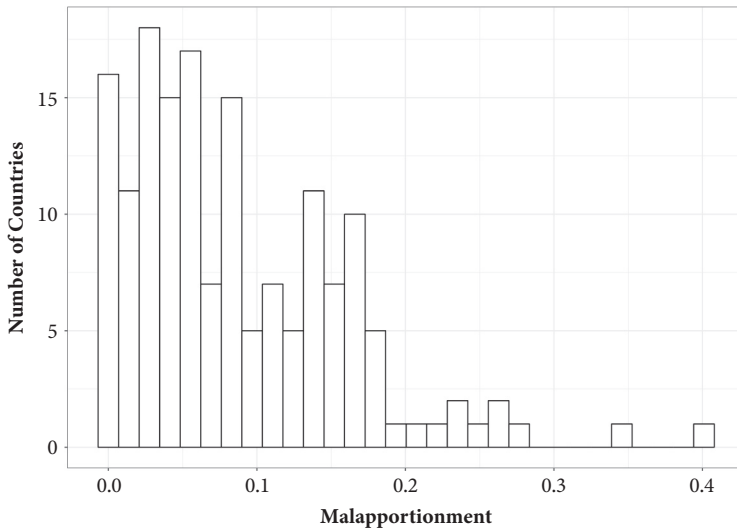


Fig. 2.1 Malapportionment, 1997–2015

votes to win seats in rural districts than were needed in urban districts. In these cases, non-reapportionment benefited parties with rural strongholds (the Liberals in Denmark and the Conservatives in Germany), while it disadvantaged parties that primarily mobilized voters in urban areas.¹⁵

Figure 2.1 shows that malapportionment is still widespread today. The figure is based on Riera and Lago (2023) and uses data from Ong et al. (2017) for 160 countries. Malapportionment is calculated according to the formula proposed by Samuels and Snyder (2001). High scores indicate high levels of malapportionment. For example, a score of 0.1 indicates that 10% of the seats are malapportioned, i.e. these seats would not be allocated to those districts if there was no malapportionment. Figure 2.1 shows that in about 35% of all countries worldwide, more than 10% of the seats are allocated to districts that would not elect those seats in the absence of malapportionment. Importantly, malapportionment is most prevalent in newly democratizing countries and countries that employ MR systems (Ong et al., 2017; Riera & Lago, 2023; Samuels & Snyder, 2001; Sauger & Grofman, 2016). Our focus on first-wave democracies thus taps into this universe of cases.

Next to malapportionment, parties can also benefit from a biased drawing of districts with similar population-seat ratios. The term gerrymandering was coined to describe Governor Elbridge Gerry's attempt to redraw

¹⁵ Another factor influencing the distribution of seats between districts concerns the definition of the relevant population for apportionment (Walter & Emmenegger, 2024).

district boundaries in 1812 to increase his chances of re-election. Because the resulting South Essex district took the shape of a salamander, the term ‘Gerry-mander’ was created (Seabrook, 2022). Over the last decades, a highly sophisticated literature, mostly focusing on the USA, has emerged which examines processes of gerrymandering (Cox & Katz, 2002; Engstrom, 2013; Gelman & King, 1994b; Keena et al., 2021; McGann et al., 2016; McGhee, 2020). Although few researchers deny the role of gerrymandering, it is often difficult to identify clear instances because the process of redistricting is largely hidden from the public. Moreover, small district magnitude can generate natural biases if voters of a party are highly concentrated in few populous municipalities, leaving even impartial boundary commissions only limited options to design maps without partisan biases (Chen & Rodden, 2013, 2015).

In addition, focusing on the US case in the second half of the 20th century, researchers had raised doubts about the effectiveness of gerrymandering. Reviewing this literature, McGhee (2020, 173) observes that ‘the conclusion was quite consistent: Partisan gerrymandering either was a minor factor in American elections or actually had the opposite of its intended result’. Only with the outcome of the 2010 redistricting cycle in the USA, have scholars begun to reconsider this conclusion, although there is still considerable debate (Keena et al., 2021; McGann et al., 2016; Stephanopoulos & Warshaw, 2020). The literature offered a variety of reasons for the alleged ineffectiveness of gerrymandering (Cox & Katz, 2002; Engstrom, 2013; McGann et al., 2016). First, effective gerrymandering pre-supposes control over the districting process and sufficient information on voters’ distribution. Second, disadvantages in one state may be compensated by advantages in another one, cancelling each other out at aggregate level. Third, legal constraints and judicial review may limit possibilities for gerrymandering. Finally, gerrymandering may also be used to protect incumbents (incumbent gerrymandering) rather than to maximize seat shares (partisan gerrymandering).

However, lessons from the US case may not be transferable to other cases. Research on gerrymandering has focused almost exclusively on the US, making it ‘the most neglected topic in electoral and institutional design in terms of comparative research’ (Handley & Grofman, 2008, v). In other countries, gerrymandering might be (even) more effective. Consider the Swiss case, where, before the introduction of PR, districts were drawn by the federal parliament, giving the politically dominant Liberals full control over the districting process. Opposition parties had no possibility to compensate for these disadvantages. Regular subnational elections offered detailed and fine-grained data on voters’ distribution at municipality level. Districts could not

be challenged in court. Still today, Swiss courts have limited jurisdiction in case of federal parliamentary acts. Finally, incumbency protection was no concern because incumbents could run in several districts simultaneously (Emmenegger & Walter, 2024, 190).

This is not to say that gerrymandering was effective in Switzerland, which is an empirical question, but the standard reasons given for its ineffectiveness do not apply to Switzerland. Importantly, Switzerland is no exception. There is considerable historical research pointing to gerrymandering in a variety of first-wave democracies such as Austria, Canada, France, the Netherlands, and the UK (Courtney, 2001; Handley, 2008; Loots, 2004; Marty, 2013; Melik, 1997; Rossiter et al., 1999; Ucar, 1985). In a similar vein, there is a broad consensus on the important role of gerrymandering in the USA before the ‘reapportionment revolution’ in the 1960s (Cox & Katz, 2002; Engstrom, 2013; Seabrook, 2022), and as mentioned, the literature increasingly converges on the effectiveness of gerrymandering in the USA since the 2000s (Keena et al., 2021; McGann et al., 2016; McGhee, 2020). Finally, there is considerable evidence that gerrymandering is still practiced today. Prominent examples include Hong Kong, Hungary, Malaysia, Mexico, Romania, and Singapore (Bickerstaff, 2020; Giugäl et al., 2017; Kovács & Vida, 2015; Magar et al., 2017; Tan, 2013; Tan & Grofman, 2018; Wong, 2017; Ziblatt & Levitsky, 2018).

In a comparative analysis, Martinez i Coma and Lago (2018, 100) find that experts question the impartiality of district boundaries in numerous countries. We use an updated version of their data to show that partisan biases in the design of districts are common. In Figure 2.2, we plot data from expert surveys in 169 countries in the period 2012 to 2022 on the question whether district boundaries discriminate against some parties (Garnett et al., 2023). The indicator ranges from 1 to 5 with scores below 3 suggesting no or low levels of discrimination, while scores above 3 indicate that district boundaries are (strongly) biased against some parties. The distribution in Figure 2.2 shows that in almost 41% of all countries covered in the sample, country experts argue that at least some bias against parties is part of district design.

As mentioned, in the 19th century, district design was a highly political process. Complaints about abuses in the design of districts were common (Handley, 2018, 516). It is precisely because of these partisan abuses that countries using MR systems began introducing independent boundary commissions. Other countries adopted PR systems, which are less susceptible to gerrymandering because population shifts can be accommodated without redrawing district boundaries. Calvo (2009, 267) argues that ‘districting-driven partisan biases’ were a key reason for parties negatively affected by

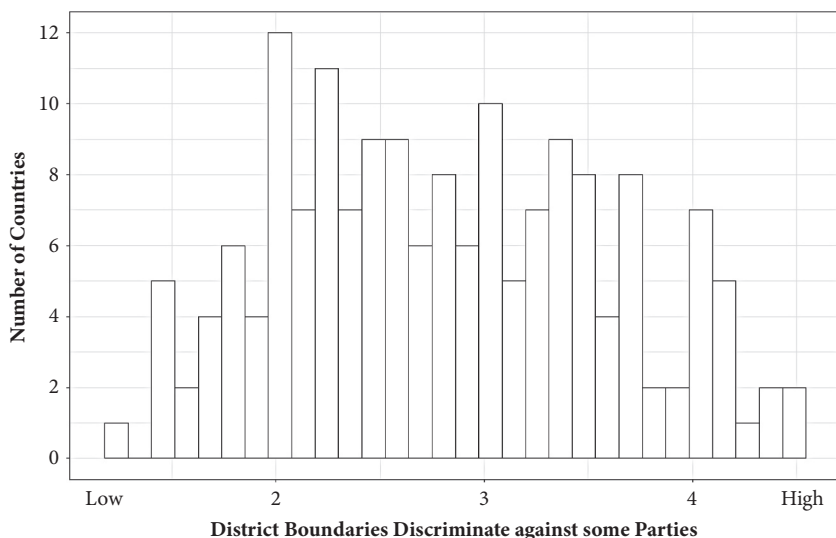


Fig. 2.2 Partisan gerrymandering, 2012–2022

these processes to support the adoption of PR. However, in Calvo's account, districting-driven partisan biases are the unfortunate outcomes of the interaction between an unequal geography and the (necessary) districting process in MR systems, which are accentuated by large shifts in the population and the entry of new parties. Little consideration is given to the possibility that parties might try to influence these partisan biases (see also Boix, 2010).

In contrast, we forward the argument that partisan bias might be, at least to some extent, the deliberate outcome of the districting process. Incumbent parties, if they have control over the districting process and sufficient information about electoral geography, can use the process of adapting (e.g., gerrymandering) or non-adapting (e.g., malapportionment) districts to contain electoral threats. Incumbent parties can use such electoral engineering to create more favourable vote-to-seat translations and reduce uncertainty about future electoral outcomes. This implies that incumbent parties can influence the presence of electorally strong insurgent parties by means of seat-vote distortions. Depending on seat-vote distortions, the same party might constitute a significant electoral threat or remain largely contained. Electoral threats are thus not set in stone. Incumbent parties can shape electoral threats through district design. Together with other containment measures, especially electoral alliances, incumbent parties might have the means to keep insurgent parties in check.

Table 2.1 Partisan districting to contain electoral threats

District	Panel A: Status Quo		Panel B: Gerrymandering		Panel C: Malapportionment	
	Voter composition	Successful candidate	Voter composition	Successful candidate	Voter composition	Successful candidate
1	100A	Party A	90A, 10B	Party A	70A	Party A
2	100A	Party A	80A, 20B	Party A	70A	Party A
3	90A, 10B	Party A	80A, 20B	Party A	80A	Party A
4	80A, 20B	Party A	70A, 30B	Party A	80A	Party A
5	70A, 30B	Party A	70A, 30B	Party A	70A, 10B	Party A
6	60A, 40B	Party A	70A, 30B	Party A	60A, 30B	Party A
7	30A, 70B	Party B	70A, 30B	Party A	60A, 50B	Party A
8	100B	Party B	100B	Party B	20A, 120B	Party B
9	100B	Party B	100B	Party B	20A, 120B	Party B
10	100B	Party B	100B	Party B	140B	Party B
Total	530A, 470B	6A, 4B	530A, 470B	7A, 3B	530A, 470B	7A, 3B

Consider the scenarios presented in Table 2.1. In this example, there are 10 single-member districts, two parties, and 1,000 voters of which 530 support party A (mostly residing in low-numbered districts), while 470 support party B (mostly residing in high-numbered districts). The country relies on an MR system. Panel A of Table 2.1 shows the current situation, in which party A controls the legislature and the government, but party B is getting close in terms of voter support. Threatened by party B's growing electoral appeal, what can party A do?

On the one hand, party A can resort to gerrymandering. Panel B in Table 2.1 shows how a new, gerrymandered district map could look. Party A relies on a 'packing and cracking' strategy to contain party B. Voters of party B are already 'packed' in districts 8 to 10, which implies an inefficient vote-to-seat translation for party B. However, the remaining voters of party B could be distributed differently across the remaining seven districts. Districts 6 and 7 deserve the most attention because party A's margin of victory is rather small in district 6, while party B even won district 7. In their design of the new district map, party A could try to distribute the voters of party B more equally across districts 1 to 7 ('cracking'). A possible result is shown in panel B. For party A, this new district map offers significant advantages. It allows the party to win back district 7 from party B, and the margin of

victory is now at least 40 percentage points in each of the districts party A wins. Hence, the electoral threat is contained.¹⁶

On the other hand, party A could resort to malapportionment to contain party B. Let's assume that there is a general domestic migration movement to high-numbered districts, but there is no reapportionment to compensate for these population shifts. Panel C in Table 2.1 shows a possible scenario. Party B voters are now increasingly concentrated in districts 8 to 10 (380 party B voters compared to 300 party B voters in the status quo scenario). In contrast, party A needs fewer votes to win districts 1 to 6 (430 party A voters compared to 500 party A voters in the status quo scenario). These six districts are now largely safe for party A. Moreover, district 7 is now more competitive with a narrow majority of party A supporters. If the concentration of party B voters continues in districts 8 to 10, non-reapportionment might be sufficient to contain party B. Table 2.1 thus shows how district design can be used to contain insurgent parties.

Alternatively, parties can rely on electoral alliances to neutralize electoral threats (Cusack et al., 2007; Schröder & Manow, 2020). Electoral alliances can be formed in a variety of ways. Moreover, they can differ in terms of the degree of formalization. For example, parties can coordinate candidacies across districts, running only in some districts while leaving the other districts to the other party. Alternatively, in runoff systems, parties can agree to support each other's candidates if they are to make it to the runoff (Blais & Indridason, 2007). In any case, electoral alliances can be an effective containment strategy in MR systems. For example, examining the German case, Walter (2021) shows that non-socialist parties facing strong socialist competitors in the runoff received more endorsements by other non-socialist parties and, as a result, a higher vote share. Importantly, electoral alliances are perfectly compatible with containment by means of partisan districting. Germany is a case in point. Although the Centre Party and the Conservatives greatly benefited from malapportionment in the period 1871 to 1912, they nevertheless constantly relied on electoral alliances to neutralize electoral threats (Rottwilm, 2015; Schröder & Manow, 2014).

However, electoral alliances are not without problems. First, the success of electoral coordination cannot be taken for granted (Walter, 2021). While party elites might agree to an alliance, voters might not follow. Second, in case of electoral alliances in MR systems, there is always a residual risk of defection (Colomer, 2005). Third, as party system fragmentation increases,

¹⁶ Note that in all districts, there are exactly 100 voters. There is thus no malapportionment in panel B in Table 2.1.

electoral alliances might grow increasingly complex and diverse (Rottwilm, 2015; Schröder & Manow, 2014). Finally, insurgent parties may also rely on electoral alliances. As we show in Chapter 3, there are several examples of alliances between socialist and non-socialist parties. Put differently, while electoral alliances can be used as a containment strategy, they might also serve as an instrument to overcome some of the majoritarian and partisan biases of the electoral system. In Chapter 3, we provide empirical evidence on electoral coordination and identify cases where electoral coordination succeeded and where it failed.

In any case, both partisan districting and electoral alliances are considerably more effective in MR than in PR systems (Grofman, 2016; Handley, 2018; Martinez i Coma & Lago, 2018; Samuels & Snyder, 2001). This connection between electoral system choice and containment measures has important implications. Established parties relying on containment measures in MR systems have little incentive to support the adoption of PR. Moving to PR would not only imply that incumbent parties give up their strong parliamentary position, but they would also forfeit powerful instruments to contain insurgent parties, which are primarily effective in MR systems. Instead, if incumbent parties rely on these containment measures, we should expect them to become more attached to MR systems as the insurgent parties' electoral potential grows. If insurgent parties become electorally more relevant, the role of containment by means of district design and electoral alliances—and by implication the MR systems on which the effective use of these containment measures hinges—becomes more important. Hence, we argue that incumbent parties, facing strong insurgent parties, only pin their hopes on the adoption of PR when effective containment measures are not, or no longer, available to them.

Importantly, seat-vote distortions resulting from containment measures connect Rokkan's two roads to electoral reform. Containment measures, if employed successfully, lead to growing seat-vote distortions. In line with Rokkan's second road to electoral reform, parties suffering from such distortions have good reasons to support the adoption of PR, which is an effective strategy to reduce seat-vote distortions. However, incumbent parties relying on these containment measures will try to prevent such a reform. This implies that Rokkan's two roads to electoral reform are not independent. Incumbent parties' attempts to contain electoral threats give rise to the seat-vote distortions that, in turn, fuel other parties' support for electoral reform. Alternatively, incumbent parties' inability to contain electoral threats explains why they start favouring the adoption of PR themselves. In short, electoral markets for voters, due to unequal electoral geographies, their

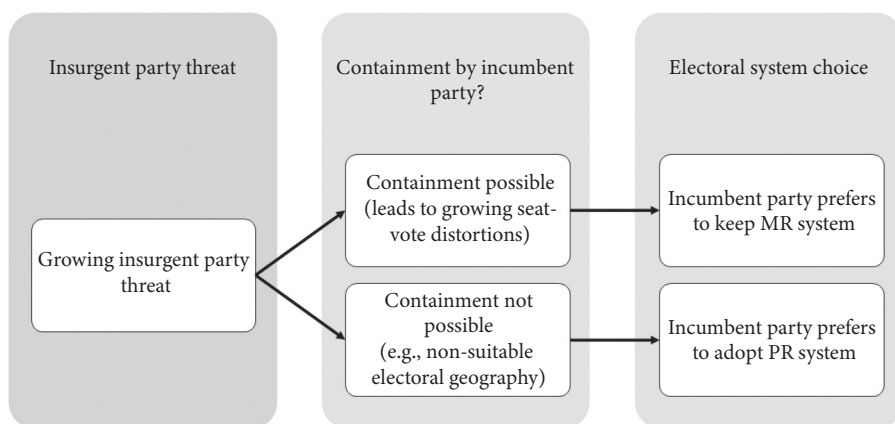


Fig. 2.3 Logic of the argument

Source: Adapted from Emmenegger & Walter (2024).

organization in districts, and the possibilities they offer for electoral alliances, are endogenous to parties' preferences for electoral system choice.

Figure 2.3 summarizes our argument. Once electoral threats emerge, incumbent parties can respond in two ways. On the one hand, incumbent parties can try to contain insurgent parties by means of district design and electoral alliances. However, if successful, this strategy leads to growing seat-vote distortions. Given that district design and electoral alliances are primarily effective under majoritarian rules, incumbent parties retain their attachment to MR systems, whereas parties disadvantaged by the resulting biases demand the adoption of PR. However, in the absence of any external event, disadvantaged parties will struggle to overcome the incumbent parties' resistance to electoral reform. On the other hand, if incumbent parties cannot resort to these containment measures, for example because incumbent parties are not in control of district design or because the electoral geography is not suitable, they support the adoption of PR. In this response, containment measures are not significant enough to deal with the electoral threat. In fact, seat-vote distortions might even turn against the incumbent parties. Consequently, the incumbent parties opt for a more inclusive electoral system that allows them to limit their seat losses in the face of a rapidly growing electoral threat.

The following chapters explore this argument both theoretically (Chapters 4 and 6) and empirically (Chapters 3, 5, 7, and 8). Before doing so, however, we need to briefly address some of the issues that follow from this argument.

2.2.1 What about the other parties?

Our argument focuses on the strategic response of incumbent parties (or coalitions of incumbent parties if they can coordinate their activities) in the face of electorally strong insurgent parties. Of course, there are also other established (i.e., non-insurgent) parties. However, unless they are politically powerful enough to influence the district design and electoral system choice, our previous reflections do not necessarily apply to them. This has important implications.

Most notably, established parties might be divided on the issue of electoral system choice. Some established parties prefer electoral reform because they have inefficient geographic distributions of support, do not benefit from malapportionment and electoral alliances, or are even the target of gerrymandering themselves. As a result, these established parties suffer from seat-vote distortions under the MR systems. According to Rodden (2009, 5–6), in the early 20th century, in particular ‘liberal parties were squeezed in the centrist districts between expanding socialists and opportunistic conservatives [with strongholds on the countryside] in such a way that caused them to “waste” the vast majority of their votes, threatening them with extinction.’ For instance, in Belgium, the Liberals—squeezed between Conservatives (with strongholds in rural Flanders) and Socialists (with strongholds in industrial cities in Wallonia)—saw their seat share reduced to 8.6% in 1898 compared to 39.5% in 1892. For the Belgian Liberals, with their inefficient electoral geography, the adoption of PR promised to be a lifeline, whereas the Belgian Conservatives were certain to lose seats in the case of electoral system change. However, in other countries, it was not the Liberals but the Conservatives that suffered from seat-vote distortions. For instance, in Switzerland, the Conservatives supported the adoption of PR because they were the target of gerrymandering by the politically dominant Liberals and could not benefit from malapportionment despite rural depopulation. In both cases, district design divided the established parties (see Chapter 8 for a detailed discussion of the two cases).

Seat-vote distortions also explain why most insurgent (often socialist) parties favoured the adoption of PR (Alesina & Glaeser, 2004; Penadés, 2008). With their voter bases concentrated in the most industrialized areas of the country, socialist parties typically featured highly inefficient geographic distributions of support (Calvo & Rodden, 2015). With rural depopulation, these socialist strongholds often grew in terms of population size, but if districts were not adapted, as in Germany, the Socialists could not translate these votes into seats. In the 1912 election, the German Social Democrats won

27.7% of all seats with a vote share of 34.8%—an ‘inefficiency penalty’ of 7.1 percentage points (Lindner & Schultze, 2010, 775, 789). In other countries, districts were adapted to population growth, but established parties relied on gerrymandering to contain the Socialists. In Switzerland, in the first election using a PR system, the Socialists could almost double the number of seats in the lower chamber (from 22 in 1917 to 41 seats in 1919) despite a collapse of 7.3 percentage points in their vote share (from 30.8% to 23.5%)—because of the end of gerrymandering (Emmenegger & Walter, 2024, 204). In the words of Rodden (2009, 26), ‘the existing system should have been universally unacceptable to socialists’, which explains why socialist parties were often champions of PR.¹⁷

The joint interest of socialist parties and some of the established parties in electoral reform further suggests that electoral coordination between socialist and non-socialist parties is possible. In fact, liberal-socialist electoral alliances in support of electoral reform, franchise expansion, and parliamentary democracy in the period before the First World War are well documented in the literature (Luebbert, 1991). Examples include the alliances between Socialists and Liberals in Belgium (Emmenegger & Walter, 2019), the coalition between Socialists and Social Liberals in Denmark (Elklit, 2002), and the alliances between the Socialists and the Progressive Liberals in Germany (Reibel, 2007). Other examples of electoral coordination between socialist and non-socialist parties can be observed in the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, and the UK (Penadés, 2008; Rodden, 2009). We return to the issue of reform coalitions involving socialist and non-socialist parties in Chapter 4.

2.2.2 Democratic norms and other forms of electoral manipulation

If incumbent parties rely on containment measures to protect their political position, what stops them from using other forms of electoral manipulation (Ahmed, 2013; Albertus & Menaldo, 2018; Birch, 2011; Mares, 2022; Norris, 2018; Schedler, 2002)? Moreover, containment measures can be combined, and one form of containment can be substituted for another (Kuo & Teorell, 2016). Why do political actors use some forms of manipulation but not others?

¹⁷ Of course, if the Socialists’ electoral support is sufficiently strong, the biases of the old electoral system might at one point start to favour socialist parties. According to Rodden (2009, 48), this is what happened in Great Britain and New Zealand. Once socialist parties had begun to benefit from the MR systems, typically at the expense of liberal parties, they began to oppose electoral reform.

To be clear, we do not argue that political actors refrain from using other forms of electoral manipulation. On the contrary, we expect that political groups rely on various forms of electoral manipulation and that their use follows a logic similar to the one outlined here. However, we believe that the focus on district design and electoral alliances is particularly relevant in the context of electoral system choice for three reasons: District design and electoral alliances are effective containment strategies, they are directly linked to the choice between MR and PR systems, and they are less costly in terms of democratic legitimacy. We have discussed the link between these containment measures and different electoral systems above, and we deal with the question of effectiveness in Chapter 3. We address the question of legitimacy and democratic norms in the following.

Electoral engineering for partisan advantage is an exercise of power. Political parties take advantage of their positions to create electoral rules that favour them. However, as Max Weber famously argued, any exercise of power left unvarnished is vulnerable to criticism (Eagleton-Pierce, 2013, 13). Clearly, there are important norms about electoral integrity (Norris, 2017; Renwick, 2010). The legitimacy of any political system using elections is based upon the consent of the governed (Spencer, 1970, 129). Open and visible forms of electoral manipulation are likely to violate widely held norms, which can trigger an electoral backlash (Mares, 2022; Quintal, 1970; Reuter & Szakonyi, 2021; Shugart, 2005). A rich body of literature—primarily focusing on advanced democracies—demonstrates that public outrage about the electoral system (and its manipulation for partisan advantage) as well as widely held democratic norms are important predictors of electoral reform (e.g., Blais et al., 2005; Blais & Massicotte, 1997; Blais & Shugart, 2008; R. S. Katz, 2005; Rahat, 2011; Renwick, 2010). For this reason, powerful actors seek ways to justify their actions and make the exercise of power appear legitimate. In other words, they try to reduce the political cost of electoral manipulation.

We argue that the important role of such democratic norms explains why incumbent parties rely on district design and electoral alliances—rather than other forms of electoral manipulation—to contain electoral threats. The reason is that district design and electoral alliances are typically easier to justify and defend than other forms of electoral manipulation. While other containment strategies are either highly visible (e.g., plural voting) or risky (e.g., ballot rigging), district design and electoral alliances have the advantage that other parties struggle to prove that they are used in manipulative ways (Chen & Rodden, 2013; Wong, 2017).

In MR systems, districts must be regularly adapted to accommodate population shifts. However, the drawing of fair district boundaries is highly complex. Lacking objective benchmarks, deliberately created partisan biases

are difficult to prove, as the current US debate abundantly demonstrates (Chen & Rodden, 2013; McGann et al., 2016; McGhee, 2020). Similarly, if incumbent parties benefit from the non-adaptation of districts to population shifts, they can use arguments emphasizing the complexity of redrawing districts or the need to respect ‘historical’ or ‘natural’ territorial communities to delay or even halt the reapportionment process (Courtney, 2001; Golosov, 2016). As mentioned, such a territorial understanding of political representation has a long tradition in democratic theory (Dalton, 1985; Rehfeld, 2005; Urbinati & Warren, 2008), which is why seat-vote distortions can be defended by pointing to the need to guarantee the political representation of these natural communities. Finally, electoral alliances are in principle possible for all parties, even though their lopsided use can result in large seat-vote distortions. Of course, the difficulty to prove electoral engineering is not going to stop other parties from making the accusation. However, the credible deniability of electoral manipulation makes district design and electoral alliances less costly containment measures in terms of voter behaviour (Quintal, 1970; Shugart, 2005). In other words, voters are more likely to judge district design and electoral alliances as more ‘acceptable’ reasons for seat-vote distortions than other forms of electoral manipulation (Shugart, 2008).

In short, district design and electoral alliances are difficult to prove as manipulative containment measures and thus hard to mobilize against. Their use is thus less likely to violate widely held democratic norms. Moreover, in the early 20th century, countries had limited experience with alternative electoral systems, while the plurality/majority principle underlying MR systems had a long tradition and a strong normative appeal (Colomer, 2007). While PR was growing increasingly popular and had prominent advocates (Pilon, 2013), MR systems were not necessarily in discredit. There might have been a consensus on the problems of MR systems, however, there was at least some uncertainty about how exactly the available alternatives worked and whether they were really better (Kreuzer & Neely, 2025). As a result, complaints about unfair district maps were often rejected for lacking an objective benchmark, while advocates of MR systems praised the proven and tested virtues of electoral systems relying on the plurality/majority principle.

2.2.3 Limits to containment?

If incumbent parties’ attempts to contain insurgent parties are successful, they will not give up on the MR system voluntarily, while the disadvantaged parties, both established and insurgent, may not have the means to enforce

electoral reform against the incumbent parties' opposition. Does this imply that the adoption of PR is off the table? Not necessarily.

On the one hand, the political costs of containment by means of district design and electoral alliances may be growing, which reduces the attractiveness of the status quo even among advantaged parties (Mares, 2022). As mentioned, we expect many voters to favour norms of electoral integrity and thus reject overt forms of electoral manipulation (Norris, 2017; Renwick, 2010). As argued above, from the point of view of would-be manipulators, the great advantage of district design and electoral alliances is that their manipulative use is often difficult to prove.

However, electoral engineers cannot design districts as they wish. Instead, constitutional rules or changes in electoral geography can limit the options of even the most creative district designers, forcing them to rely on increasingly extreme and visibly manipulated district maps. Just like an impartial bureaucracy cannot prevent all partisan biases because an unequal electoral geography must be organized in a limited number of small districts (Chen & Rodden, 2013, 2015), a partisan district-setting commission must work with the existing electoral geography. At some point, district designers may run out of good options and are forced to rely on openly manipulative district maps to contain electoral threats. In response, voters may start punishing incumbent parties for these illicit strategies, while other parties may refuse to form electoral coalitions. Similarly, there may simply be no more options for electoral alliances or electoral alliances become too broad and too heterogeneous to be effective. When containment becomes too costly, our argument suggests that incumbent parties start supporting the adoption of PR to limit their seat losses.

On the other hand, electoral reform is also possible when the incumbent parties' resistance can be overcome. For this to happen, we argue that supporters of electoral reform often have to rely on external events to enforce change. The reason for this is that it is precisely the incumbent parties' containment efforts that prevent advocates of electoral reform from pursuing their reform goals through regular electoral and parliamentary procedures (Grofman & Lijphart, 2002, 8). Illustrative of such extra-parliamentary processes are direct democratic institutions such as the popular initiative in Switzerland, which allows voters to put policy proposals to popular vote, without consulting or requiring the approval of legislative or executive bodies. If approved at the ballot box, proposals must be implemented. In this way, the resistance of incumbent parties can be overcome (see Chapter 8).

Alternatively, external events can open the window for electoral reform by temporarily weakening the incumbent parties' firm grip on power or

moving decision making on electoral reform to bodies that are not subject to electoral manipulation by incumbent parties. A rather straightforward example of such external events are emergency situations such as military conflicts or popular insurrections, which force incumbent parties to compromise with the political opposition or even remove incumbent parties altogether (Gjerløw & Rasmussen, 2022; Ingesson et al., 2018; Schröder & Manow, 2014). In these cases, external events limit the incumbent parties' containment strategies or force them into agreeing to concessions such as electoral reform. Hence, the clustering of electoral reforms in the immediate post-war years might simply reflect how geopolitical developments, such as the First World War, can neutralize incumbent parties' containment strategies and allow disadvantaged parties to extract the desired reforms. We return to these issues in Chapter 4, where we discuss why some incumbent parties proactively seek reform, whereas other incumbent parties resist electoral system choice until the end.

3

Neutralizing electoral threats in MR systems

The previous chapter argued that incumbent parties may rely on containment measures to neutralize electoral threats. In this chapter, we turn to the empirical evidence. We focus on electoral alliances and district design (malapportionment and gerrymandering). These instruments share a number of common features. They allow incumbent parties to contain electoral threats. However, their effective use is tied to the presence of majoritarian representation (MR) systems. Moreover, they contribute to the partisan bias of electoral systems. As a result, these containment measures strengthen the incumbent parties' attachment to the MR systems, while the resulting seat-vote distortions further strengthen other parties' preference for electoral reform.

We begin our analysis by examining electoral alliances and runoffs. We show that electoral alliances were widely used in first-wave democracies, typically to the detriment of insurgent parties. However, the main part of our analysis focuses on runoffs in MR systems, because runoffs allow us to generate more credible estimates of causal effects for the link between the growth of insurgent parties' electoral strength and the consequent coordination of established parties. More specifically, the comparison of interparty coordination between elections can be confounded by changes in voters' party preferences or the development of parties, to name but a few. In contrast, runoffs are typically held only a few weeks after the first round. In the short period between rounds, structural influences on interparty coordination are essentially held constant (Indridason, 2008). As a result, the decision of parties to forge alliances can be attributed exclusively to electoral outcomes in the first round, such as the strong performance of the insurgent parties. Our analysis of several countries with runoffs shows that the performance of insurgent parties influenced electoral alliances between established parties.

In the second part of the chapter, we turn to the analysis of malapportionment. We begin by providing descriptive evidence on the evolution of subnational population growth rates, malapportionment, and reapportionment for

a broad sample of countries. In the period under investigation, all countries experienced large internal population movements from the countryside to the emerging urban and industrial centres. Rural depopulation thus endangered the parliamentary position of rural parties because reapportionment would have moved seats to the urban districts. However, in several countries, the district map was not adapted to changes in population growth, which sometimes resulted in large biases favouring rural parties. To demonstrate that the process of reapportionment was contentious, we provide evidence from multiple countries on parties' electoral geography and preferences for reapportionment. We show that there is a link between electoral geography and demands for malapportioned districts by either creating districts with a rural over-representation or opposing reapportionment in general. Powerful rural parties often succeeded in delaying or even preventing the adaptation of districts, while urban parties pushed for regular reapportionment to account for shifts in population shares. In this way, we show that parties tried to use the reapportionment process to engineer partisan biases.

In the third part of the chapter, we analyse the gerrymandering of districts. Gerrymandering is difficult to prove. If voters are geographically concentrated in few populous municipalities, partisan biases can emerge naturally (Chen & Rodden, 2013). Studying gerrymandering thus requires detailed electoral and demographic data at levels below the electoral district, which are often unavailable, particularly for historical cases. In this chapter, we use two strategies to demonstrate that incumbent parties successfully used gerrymandering to neutralize electoral threats. First, we review existing accounts of gerrymandering in first-wave democracies, paying particular attention to the two best-documented cases of gerrymandering: Canada and the USA. Second, we examine district design in a country (Switzerland) for which the literature has yet to provide systematic quantitative evidence on gerrymandering. We show that prior to the adoption of proportional representation (PR), the incumbent party relied on gerrymandering to contain the political opposition.

Ultimately, this chapter shows that incumbent parties relied on district design and electoral alliances to contain insurgent parties. Thus, incumbent parties often had the means to neutralize electoral threats. However, all of these means are tied to the presence of MR systems, which is why, contrary to Rokkan's first road to electoral reform, the emergence of insurgent parties may actually strengthen incumbents' support for MR systems. Whether this is indeed the case ultimately depends on the effectiveness of these containment strategies, which is the empirical focus of this chapter. However, effective containment has other consequences as well—side effects, if you will—such as

increasing seat-vote distortions. While some of these distortions are inherent to MR systems, they are also the result of district design and electoral alliances. These distortions in MR systems favour some parties over others, and some of these distortions are surprisingly persistent. Disadvantaged parties may thus have good reasons to be dissatisfied with MR systems. In Chapter 4, we argue that these seat-vote distortions, which are often the result of electoral engineering, gave rise to demands for electoral reform. However, before we turn to the politics of electoral system choice, this chapter first examines how incumbent parties resorted to electoral alliances and district design to contain insurgent parties.

3.1 Electoral alliances and runoffs

Most approaches to electoral system choice assume that a new challenger enters the electoral arena and alters the electoral equilibrium. With the entry of an insurgent (often socialist) party, electoral biases may be turned against established parties. This is because the established parties split the non-socialist vote, while the insurgent socialist party tries to monopolize the working-class vote, which may be growing due to suffrage extension (Rokkan, 1970). For example, Boix (1999) argues that liberal and conservative voters may fail to coordinate, thus handing victory to the insurgents even though the combined vote share of the established parties exceeds the number of socialist votes. In this framework, the inability of non-socialist voters to agree on the strongest non-socialist candidate in a given district is the reason why established parties ultimately choose PR because it allows them to minimize their seat losses in the face of a strong socialist challenger (Rokkan's first road to PR). Similarly, Calvo (2009) argues that established parties might be electorally threatened by the emergence of insurgent parties with geographically concentrated voter bases (such as the socialists in industrial areas). With their inefficiently distributed voter bases, some established parties struggle to translate votes into seats in the MR system (see also Rodden, 2009). Unable to develop electoral alliances to contain the new electoral threat, established parties may fall victim to deeper structural developments such as suffrage expansion and changing electoral geographies (Rokkan's second road to PR).

As these two prominent examples show, much of the existing literature fails to account for potential cooperation between parties. In this way, they overlook the fact that parties often form electoral alliances to mitigate the effects of increasing multi-party competition and the emergence of new electoral challengers. By electoral alliances, we mean that parties either agree on a joint

candidate or at least one of them does not field a candidate and endorses the candidate of the other party instead (Cusack et al., 2007; Penadés & Pavía, 2024; Schröder & Manow, 2014). Such alliances are common among parties that are ideologically close (Blais & Indridason, 2007; Bordignon et al., 2016; Walter, 2021). Well-known examples in first-wave democracies include the repeated collaboration between the Conservatives and the National Liberals in elections in Germany (the so-called ‘Kartellbündnis’) to isolate socialist candidates (Reibel, 2007, 26), the bloc coordination in Norway between Liberals and Labour Democrats, on the one hand, and Progressive Liberals and Conservatives, on the other (Helland & Saglie, 2003), and the broad electoral alliances among liberal groups in Switzerland, which aimed to counter conservative and socialist challengers (Emmenegger & Walter, 2024).

Importantly, in first-wave democracies, electoral alliances were not exclusively forged against the emerging socialist parties. In several countries, socialist insurgents first entered the electoral arena as candidates of the liberals’ left wing. Alternatively, instead of competing with candidates that ran on a working-class platform, liberal parties attempted to coordinate with these socialist parties as part of larger liberal-labour (‘lib-lab’) alliances (Luebbert, 1991). Only when socialist parties started to challenge the liberal dominance within the alliance, such as in the United Kingdom (UK), coordination turned into competition between the parties. In other cases such as Belgium and the Netherlands, however, this cooperation continued to persist despite socialist parties broadening their electoral base (Emmenegger & Walter, 2019; Luebbert, 1991). Moreover, electoral coordination between socialist and non-socialist parties was not limited to classic cases of lib-labism. Penadés (2008, 228–230) lists examples of electoral alliances between socialist and non-socialist parties in Australia, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden, Switzerland, and the UK. This cooperation runs counter to a large body of literature that exclusively conceptualizes the politics of electoral system choice in terms of the class conflict (e.g., Ahmed, 2013; Boix, 1999; Calvo, 2009). This is not to suggest that socialists were the main beneficiaries of electoral alliances. They were not, as we show below, but socialist parties cooperated with non-socialist parties, and sometimes, this cooperation was successful in preventing additional partisan biases.

These coordination efforts were aided in almost half of all first-wave democracies by runoff systems (see Table 3.1). In MR systems with runoffs, candidates need the majority of votes in order to win in the first round. If no candidate is able to get above the 50% vote share threshold, a second round is held, typically a few weeks after the first round. To ensure that a candidate

receives more than 50% of the votes, runoffs are typically restricted to the two front-runners.¹

Runoffs provide opportunities for electoral coordination between parties (Cusack et al., 2007; Schröder & Manow, 2014). Without a winner in the first round, parties can update their beliefs about the performance of their candidate and the strength of their competitors. In the runoff, parties can use this knowledge to forge electoral alliances. Most empirical contributions with contemporary data show that interparty coordination in runoffs is, on average, successful (Blais & Indridason, 2007; Bordignon et al., 2016; Magyar, 2022). However, less is known about the period before the First World War. As Table 3.1 shows, all countries with runoff systems ultimately adopted PR, while four out of eight countries with plurality switched to PR. This cross-national pattern might cast doubt on the assumption that runoffs solved the coordination problem by design. However, the relationship between majority runoffs and the adoption of PR is purely spurious. As we show in the following, the empirical evidence does not suggest that coordination failed on a large scale. Put differently, coordination failure is not the main reason why established parties opted for electoral system change. Instead, countries with majority runoffs typically featured multi-party competition (Blais et al., 2005; Norris, 2004; Raymond, 2016), which is a necessary condition for the adoption of PR. We return to this latter point in Chapter 4.

As mentioned, the existing evidence suggests that electoral coordination between parties is successful in coordinating voters, but this literature suffers from limitations. Most notably, most studies leverage variation between districts and elections (Blais & Indridason, 2007; Magyar, 2022; Schröder & Manow, 2020). Thus, alliances and their effects may be driven by differences in the socio-economic and demographic composition of districts or legislative behaviour of incumbents instead of changes in the electoral support of insurgent parties. Consequently, we are still lacking evidence that convincingly shows that electoral alliances are effective tools for containing electoral threats.

In the following analysis, we avoid this problem by examining the formation of electoral alliances in runoffs (Walter, 2021). Runoffs allow us to provide conclusive empirical evidence that electoral coordination works because the analytical focus is narrowed down to changes in party behaviour between the first round of voting and the subsequent runoff (Indridason, 2008). We collected data on the electoral district level for most countries with

¹ Exceptions were France, Norway, and Switzerland, which allowed the entry of new candidates to the runoffs. However, only a plurality of votes was necessary in the second round to win (until 1899, Switzerland relied on a three-round system with plurality in the third round).

Table 3.1 Pre-PR electoral systems in the first half of the 20th century (PR adoption year in brackets)

Majoritarian system with runoffs	Plurality system without runoffs
Austria (1918)	Australia (-)
Belgium (1899)	Canada (-)
France (1919)	Denmark (1915)
Germany (1918)	Ireland (1920)
Italy (1919)	New Zealand (1993)
Netherlands (1917)	Sweden (1907/1909)
Norway (1919)	United Kingdom (-)
Switzerland (1918)	United States (-)

Source: Mackie & Rose (1982). New Zealand adopted runoffs in 1908 but returned to the plurality system after 1911 (Nohlen et al., 2001, 709). There were no regular elections before the adoption of PR in Finland.

runoffs.² In Table 3.2, we present summary statistics for the party groups by country that were relevant at that time. More specifically, we show the number of runoffs entered by party candidates and the share of victories.³

Table 3.2 shows that socialist parties were disadvantaged in most countries with runoffs. In Austria, Germany, Norway, and Switzerland, the socialist parties won only between 10% and 30% of the runoffs entered. The evidence is in line with the historical literature that argues that socialists were marginalized by conservatives and liberals in elections (e.g., Emmenegger & Walter, 2024; Gjerløw & Rasmussen, 2022; Schröder & Manow, 2014). In contrast, socialist parties performed comparatively well in runoffs in Belgium and the Netherlands, winning the majority of runoffs they entered. In these countries, parties were primarily divided along the clerical/anti-clerical axis (Kalyvas, 1996, 187–195, Luebbert, 1991, 56–57), allowing for the creation of liberal-socialist alliances such as the Belgian cartel that became increasingly institutionalized over time (Emmenegger & Walter, 2019).

How did electoral alliances work in practice? In Figure 3.1, we provide more information on coordination between parties for three countries where detailed data on electoral alliances is available.⁴ It shows the share of candidates in the first round and the runoffs, which were supported by

² We were not able to find data for France and Italy.

³ We have excluded smaller parties that cannot be assigned to one of the groups (e.g., ethnic parties) and had only a negligible number of entries.

⁴ Data on electoral alliances requires the collection of party endorsements on the candidate level for all districts and multiple elections. The existing data sets that we were able to retrieve are based on multi-year projects involving comprehensive archival research and are published as multiple volumes such as

Table 3.2 Runoff statistics by country

Party	Entries	Electoral victories	Share victories
Austria 1907–1911			
Liberals	135	106	0.79
Conservatives	314	171	0.54
Socialists	217	57	0.26
Belgium 1894–1898			
Conservatives	129	79	0.61
Socialists	70	39	0.56
Liberals	56	10	0.18
Germany 1890–1912			
Liberals	854	561	0.66
Minorities	121	71	0.59
Conservatives	724	370	0.51
Socialists	626	161	0.26
Netherlands 1888–1913			
Socialists	56	43	0.77
Liberals	252	179	0.71
Conservatives	265	66	0.25
Norway 1906–1918			
Liberals	310	194	0.63
Conservatives	230	87	0.38
Socialists	267	33	0.12
Switzerland 1890–1917			
Liberals	155	114	0.74
Conservatives	35	23	0.66
Socialists	60	19	0.32

another party. The share in runoffs displays only new alliances without the endorsements from the first round. Put differently, if a candidate received the support of a party already in the first round, this endorsement is not counted in the runoffs in Figure 3.1. In addition, we present the information for socialist (light grey) and non-socialist candidates (dark grey) separately.

The pattern of electoral alliances shown in Figure 3.1 is consistent with the information presented in Table 3.2. In Germany, electoral alliances were common already in the first round. Every third non-socialist candidate was

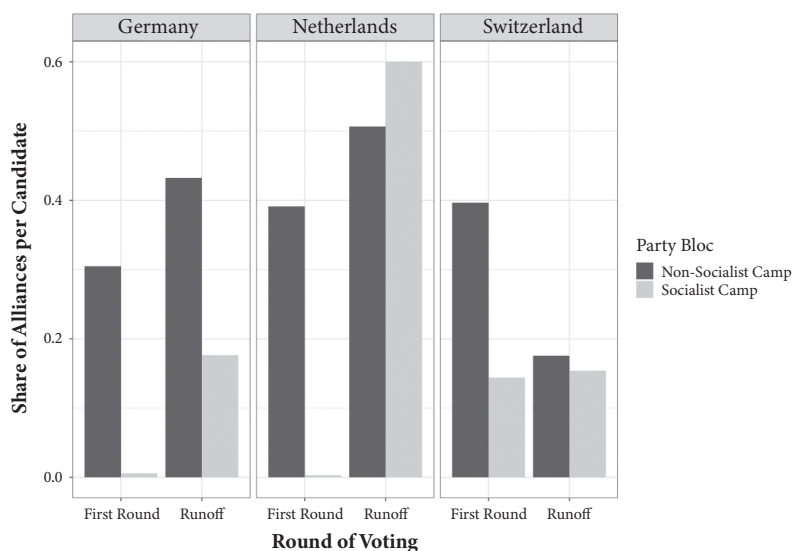


Fig. 3.1 Share of candidates supported by electoral alliances

supported by another party, while socialist candidates typically ran without endorsement. Even though the Socialists were able to catch up in terms of alliances in the runoffs, non-socialist candidates continued to receive more than twice as much support from other parties. Therefore, Germany represents the classical case of established parties cooperating against the insurgent party.

In Switzerland, the picture is similar to Germany. On average, 40% of all non-socialist candidates enjoyed cross-party support in the first round but only 15% of all socialist candidates. In the runoffs, however, the rate of alliance formation between both camps largely converged, which is a reflection of the fact that non-socialist candidates had already been endorsed by other non-socialist parties in the first round. Finally, Dutch socialist candidates ran in the first round mainly without the support of other parties. Once they entered the runoffs, however, they received more endorsements by at least one other party than the average non-socialist candidate. Unsurprisingly, socialist candidates won the majority of runoffs they entered (see Table 3.2). However, as shown in Table 3.2, the Dutch case is rather exceptional. In most countries, socialist candidates were less likely to benefit from electoral alliances than non-socialist ones.

While these patterns are consistent with the historical accounts of the individual countries, they are not sufficient to demonstrate that these results are driven by interparty electoral alliances, i.e. elite coordination, and the

willingness of voters to follow their parties' recommendation, i.e. voter coordination. To provide more fine-grained evidence of how party and voter behaviour affected electoral outcomes in runoffs, we investigate changes in candidate performance between rounds in the following section, using statistical analysis.

We use individual candidates in the runoff as the unit of analysis. The dependent variable is the vote share a candidate receives in the runoff. In addition, we account for the performance of the candidates in the first round to disentangle more general determinants of competition from specific biases in favour or against parties. Thus, we use candidates' vote shares in the first round to capture their electoral performance.⁵ Moreover, we use the difference in vote share between the front-runner and the candidate as a measure of competition. A value of zero means that the candidate is the front-runner, while a positive value indicates how far a candidate is trailing the front-runner. Lastly, we include a measure for district magnitude to account for potential heterogeneity in single-member districts and multi-member districts.

In model 1 in Table 3.3, we estimate the anti-socialist bias while accounting for competition. We employ a linear OLS estimator with standard errors clustered on the level of the district. The dummy variable for socialist candidates suggests that socialists suffer on average from a penalty of five percentage points. Given the information provided in Table 3.2, we suspect that there is substantive cross-country heterogeneity in the coefficient size of the socialist candidate dummy. Thus, we interact the socialist candidate dummy with the country dummies in model 2. While the interaction terms demonstrate that there is significant heterogeneity by country, the estimates provide information on the relative magnitude in relation to the baseline estimate which is Austria. However, we are primarily interested in the absolute substantive and significant importance by country. To obtain this information, we add district fixed effects in model 3 to increase confidence in the robustness of our results and compute the point estimates along with the 95% confidence intervals for the socialist candidate dummy for all countries.

The results displayed in Figure 3.2 are consistent with the descriptive statistics shown in Table 3.2. The figure demonstrates that there is a substantive anti-socialist bias in runoffs in Austria, Germany, and Norway. The bias ranges from four to almost 10 percentage points. In contrast, we do not find a systematic bias in Belgium or Switzerland. While both point estimates are

⁵ As a result, we have to drop some observations in Norway and Switzerland because candidates entered only in the runoff (i.e., they did not run in the first round).

Table 3.3 Runoffs, electoral alliances, and anti-socialist bias

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Vote Share First Round	0.55*** (0.05)	0.47*** (0.04)	0.56*** (0.06)	0.26*** (0.03)	0.30*** (0.04)
Distance to Front-Runner	-0.50*** (0.05)	-0.44*** (0.04)	-0.38*** (0.06)	-0.39*** (0.03)	-0.42*** (0.04)
ln District Magnitude	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.01* (0.01)	-0.04 (0.04)	-0.03 (0.01)	-0.05 (0.03)
Electoral Alliance				0.04*** (0.00)	0.05*** (0.00)
Socialist Candidate	-0.05*** (0.00)	-0.06*** (0.01)	-0.08*** (0.01)	-0.07*** (0.00)	-0.09*** (0.01)
Socialist Candidate * Belgium		0.05* (0.02)	0.06* (0.03)		
Socialist Candidate * Germany		-0.02 (0.01)	-0.02 (0.02)		
Socialist Candidate * Netherlands		0.10*** (0.01)	0.12*** (0.02)	0.10*** (0.01)	0.12*** (0.01)
Socialist Candidate * Norway		0.02 (0.01)	0.04* (0.02)		
Socialist Candidate * Switzerland		0.05* (0.02)	0.07** (0.02)	0.05* (0.02)	0.08*** (0.02)
Country FE	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
District FE	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
R ²	0.45	0.55	0.59	0.31	0.38
Adj. R ²	0.45	0.55	0.52	0.31	0.28
Num. obs.	4804	4804	4804	2850	2850

Notes: Cluster-Robust Standard Errors by District. *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

negative in the 1–2% point range, they do not reach the 5% significance level.⁶ Lastly, the point estimate for the Netherlands suggests that socialist candidates were even advantaged in runoffs by around four percentage points.

In models 4 and 5 in Table 3.3, we focus on the question of whether electoral alliances had a relevant impact on candidate performance. Because of data availability constraints, we restrict our sample to Germany, the

⁶ We are only focusing on runoffs in this analysis, and in both Belgium and Switzerland most electoral alliances had already been forged in the first round. For Switzerland, see Figure 3.1, and for Belgium, see Emmenegger & Walter (2019, 441).

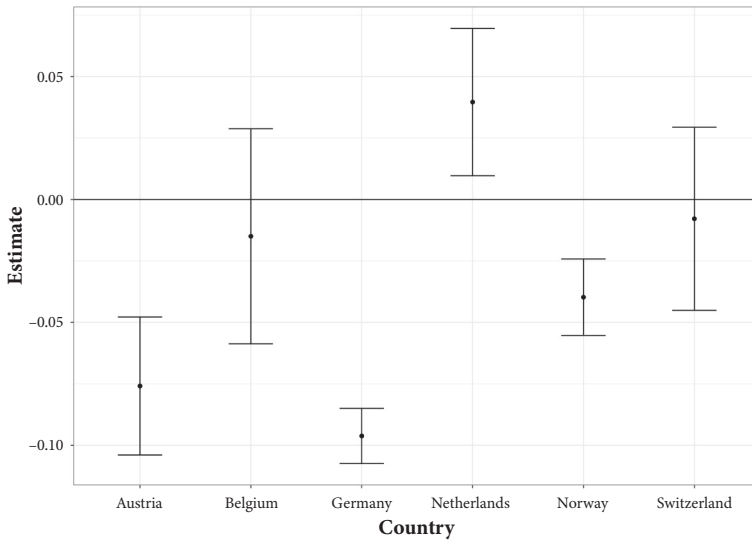


Fig. 3.2 Runoffs, electoral alliances, and anti-socialist bias: Country-specific estimates with 95% confidence intervals

Netherlands, and Switzerland. To estimate the impact of electoral alliances, we use a dummy variable that measures if, in the runoff stage, candidates received the endorsement of parties that had not supported them in the first round. A dummy variable is a rather crude measure because it does not capture the electoral potential a party has in a district.⁷ It is, however, the most parsimonious measure to operationalize alliances.

Models 4 and 5 in Table 3.3 show that electoral alliances are substantively and significantly relevant and improve the performance of candidates in the runoff. The models suggest that they on average increase the vote share of a candidate by four to five percentage points. Thus, the evidence demonstrates that alliances had the desired effect of swaying voters to support candidates of other parties.⁸

⁷ For example, the conservatives might not field a candidate in a district. Instead, they might support a liberal candidate in the first round but shift their support to the left-liberal candidate in the runoff. In this case, the number of conservative voters in the district is unobserved and it is unknown how large the vote share gain from the conservative support could be if all conservative voters were to follow the endorsement. Alternatively, a liberal candidate might be supported by the conservatives in the first round and receive a vote share of 10 percentage points. In the runoff, the candidate then steps down and the candidate's party now endorses the left-liberal candidate. Also in this case, it is unclear how much weight the liberal endorsement would carry.

⁸ The interactions of the socialist candidate variable with the country dummies shows that there is still significant heterogeneity in the coefficient size. Even though electoral alliances might only be imperfectly measured, it suggests that there was some voter coordination apart from electoral alliances. These findings align with Fiva & Hix (2021) who find substantial voter coordination against socialist candidates despite the absence of interparty alliances.

The evidence presented in this section thus suggests that electoral coordination—at the level of voters and at the level of parties—was widespread and effective in first-wave democracies. In Chapter 2, we argued that electoral coordination was an essential part of how established parties tried to defend themselves against insurgent parties. Our analysis of runoffs has demonstrated that parties largely followed the strategic and institutional incentives to coordinate against their opponents. In countries such as Austria, Germany, and Norway, established parties relied on electoral coordination to contain insurgent parties. While runoffs provided an institutionalized solution for fractionalized party systems to coordinate in the electoral arena, there were also other opportunities available. As Figure 3.1 has shown, a substantial share of alliances against insurgent parties was already forged in the first round to influence candidate entry decisions and vote shares (see also Schröder & Manow, 2020).

Importantly, electoral coordination was often but not always directed against the emerging socialists. Moreover, the socialists also sought electoral alliances to challenge incumbent parties. Examples of electoral coordination between socialist and non-socialist parties can be found in several countries (Penadés, 2008). Moreover, our analysis of runoffs has demonstrated that socialist candidates did not always under-perform in runoffs. Most notably, in the Netherlands, socialist candidates performed better in runoffs compared to non-socialist ones. This widespread electoral coordination between socialists and non-socialist parties is not consistent with theories of electoral system choice that emphasize a fundamental conflict of interest between socialist and non-socialist parties. In most countries, the socialists were not politically isolated, but as the insurgent party, they nevertheless made established parties engage in electoral coordination.

In short, electoral coordination was common and effective in first-wave democracies. However, electoral coordination was not the only containment strategy incumbent parties had at their disposal. As we argued in Chapter 2, incumbent parties may also try to engineer the district map via gerrymandering and malapportionment. We turn to these two measures in the following sections.

3.2 Malapportionment

Malapportionment is rooted in the fundamental problem of regional representation (Rehfeld, 2005). Only a few countries across the world do not divide their territory into multiple districts to provide some representation

of regional interests. This is true for both MR and PR systems, although the problem of malapportionment is clearly more pronounced in MR systems. The reason is that in PR systems, reapportionment by adjusting district magnitude is less contentious due to larger district magnitude (Samuels & Snyder, 2001).

District design, however, opens up the possibility to create imbalances between the share of seats and voters. Consider an electoral system with two single-member districts. District A contains 1,000 voters, whereas district B is home to 500 voters. These two single-member districts are malapportioned because individual voters in district B have more influence on the composition of parliament than individuals voters in district A. In fact, the individual voters of district B have twice the weight of the voters of district A. Consequently, the principle that the vote of every citizen should weigh the same is violated. To rebalance the two districts, boundaries should be redrawn so that 250 voters from district A are moved to district B, resulting in two single-member districts with 750 voters each.

The division of administrative regions into multiple districts requires a set of rules in order to reduce malapportionment. Some of these rules might be uncontroversial while others are subject to considerable political conflict. For example, a recurring debate centres around the question of whether seats should be allocated based on the number of voters, citizens, or the population (Walter & Emmenegger, 2024). Other debates concern questions of minimum representation for all regions—independent of size—or whether there are other criteria such as historical community structures that may justify the over-representation of some regions (Courtney, 2001; Golosov, 2016; Rehfeld, 2005; Urbinati & Warren, 2008).

Equally contentious is the question of which political body is in charge of the apportionment process, i.e. the specific design of districts. In first-wave democracies, with the idea of independent boundary commissions still in its infancy, the decision of how to draw district boundaries was mostly in the hands of parliaments and the parties that dominated them (Handley, 2018). Not surprisingly, allegations of rampant malapportionment have been made by the minority parties since the first elections were held (Bickerstaff, 2020; Handley, 2008).

In the light of the large population movements in the 19th and early 20th centuries, another important question for first-wave democracies was not only whether the redistricting process was fair, but also the timing of reapportionment. While the specific set of rules according to which districts had to be designed are important, an equally controversial issue in the politics of redistricting was whether reapportionment should take place in regular time

Table 3.4 Level of urbanization (percentage of total population living in cities of 5,000 or more inhabitants)

	1800	1850	1900
Europe	10.9	16.4	30.4
Austria-Hungary	6.5	9.7	25.6
Belgium	20.5	33.5	52.3
Denmark	15.6	14.6	33.5
Finland	3.5	3.7	10.4
France	12.2	19.5	35.4
Germany	8.9	15.0	42.0
Italy	18.0	23.0	35.5
Netherlands	37.4	35.6	47.8
Norway	7.0	9.0	24.3
Sweden	6.6	6.8	19.3
Switzerland	7.0	11.9	30.6
United Kingdom	19.2	39.6	67.4
Other developed countries	5.5	13.9	35.6
Canada	6.5	9.5	35.9
United States	5.3	5.3	35.9
Total	10.7	16.2	31.3

Source: Bairoch & Goertz (1986, 288). Europe also includes Bulgaria, Greece, Portugal, Romania, Russia, and Serbia. Other developed countries include Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States.

intervals. As we show below, these questions about reapportionment were answered quite differently across first-wave democracies.

All Western countries underwent significant socio-economic changes in the 19th century. The creation of unified national markets by reducing barriers to the exchange of goods and services spurred considerable internal migration movements from rural areas to urban and industrial centres. Across all countries, rural labourers moved in large numbers to areas that were at the forefront of industrialization. For example, in the Western hemisphere in 1800, only Belgium and the Netherlands had more than 20% of their populations living in urban areas with 5,000 or more inhabitants (see Table 3.4). Yet, throughout the 19th century, most countries underwent a rapid process of urbanization. By 1900, population shares living in urban areas had risen to 31% across the Western hemisphere. As a result, within-country differences in population growth rates started to diverge to levels never seen before.

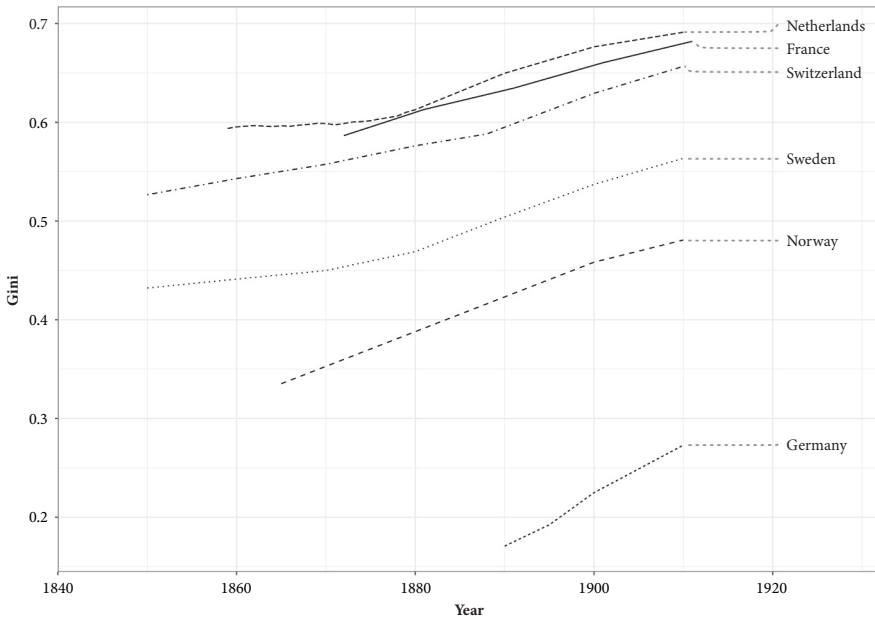


Fig. 3.3 Geographical distribution of the population (Gini index for selected countries)

The next plots give a more detailed picture of socio-economic developments over time. Figure 3.3 provides evidence on the unequal effects of these internal migration movements. The figure shows the Gini index for the geographical distribution of the population, mainly measured on the municipality level, from around the mid-19th century until the beginning of the First World War. Even though most countries started from different levels of geographical distribution, Figure 3.3 shows that the inequality of the population distribution strongly increased across all countries.

Socialist parties were the most likely beneficiaries of these developments. Figure 3.4 shows the development of Vanhanen's (2003) index of occupational diversification, which is a widely used indicator of the mobilization potential of socialist parties (Raymond, 2016). The index is measured as the mean of urbanization and the share of the non-agricultural population. The linear increase in urbanization and industrialization that can be observed in all countries for which data are available suggests fertile ground for the emergence of socialist parties (see also Benedetto et al., 2020).

These unequal population movements are not only substantial, they also have important implications for the apportionment of seats. Consider again an electoral system with two single-member districts. At the beginning, both

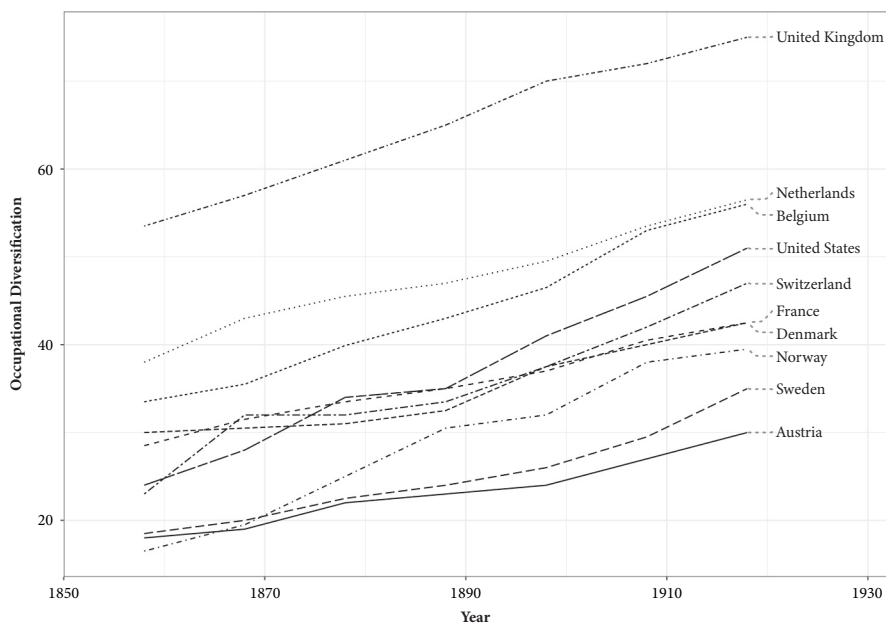


Fig. 3.4 Development of occupational diversification, 1858-1918

districts contain 1,000 voters, but district A is an urban district with a growing industrial base, while district B is a rural district that suffers from depopulation as voters migrate to the urban district in search of employment. Hence, over time, half of the voters of district B migrate to district A. Consequently, district A grows to 1,500 voters, whereas district B is now left with only 500 voters. If the districts are not adapted in response to these population movements, voters in district B benefit from a significant over-representation, because the 500 voters of district B elect the same number of representatives as the 1,500 voters of district A. Votes in district B carry three times the weight of votes in district A.

Clearly, these developments have important political implications. If districts are not adapted to reflect unequal population growth, parties representing districts suffering from depopulation (typically rural districts) need fewer voters to win seats than parties representing districts whose population grows disproportionately (typically urban districts). In terms of number of votes needed to gain representation, this means that rural districts become cheaper, while urban seats become more expensive. In light of the unequal electoral geography, parties representing rural interests benefit from non-apportionment, while parties representing urban interests, including the

insurgent socialist parties, prefer regular reapportionment to account for unequal population growth.

Against the background of large population movements shown in Figure 3.3, legislators had to decide on reapportionment. However, the responses were quite different as the levels of malapportionment displayed in Figure 3.5 show. Following Samuels and Snyder (2001, 655), we calculate overall malapportionment as follows:

$$MAL = \frac{1}{2} \cdot \sum_{i=1}^n (|s_i - v_i|)$$

\sum stands for the summation over all districts i , s_i refers to the share of seats allocated to district i , and v_i is the share of voters residing in district i . High values indicate high levels of malapportionment.

Even though all countries faced similar pressures due to the movement of voters from rural to urban areas, the evolution of malapportionment developed differently across countries. For example, Switzerland and, after its first election and reapportionment, Australia, displayed low levels of malapportionment, numbering between 5% and 6%. However, malapportionment in Australia skyrocketed during the First World War because the next reapportionment took place only in 1922, which was nine years after the 1913 readjustment of district boundaries (Christian, 2004, 13).⁹ These levels are similar in magnitude compared to most democracies today. In contrast, Austria, Denmark, Germany, and Norway had levels of malapportionment above 12% throughout most of the period, which is comparable to the most malapportioned democracies in contemporary Africa and Latin America (Samuels & Snyder, 2001, 660–661).

Which parties benefited from malapportionment? In Figure 3.6, we plot the vote share of each party camp and the level of malapportionment of a district along with a linear regression line and the Pearson's correlation coefficient. In case of runoff systems, we use the results of the first round. We assigned all parties to three groups: conservatives, liberals, and socialists. Please note that the conservative parties also include religious parties.¹⁰ In most countries,

⁹ In fact, the low levels of malapportionment observed in Australia before the First World War might be the exception rather than the rule. Juriansz & Opeskin (2012, 566) argue that 'the first seven decades of the twentieth century were characterised by a high degree of malapportionment' as parties tried to gain more favourable representation.

¹⁰ This is particularly relevant for Continental Europe. The relevance of religious parties in Continental Europe is linked to Catholicism and the resulting state-church cleavage (Kalyvas, 1996). In the primarily protestant Nordic countries, religious parties did not play a significant role at the time.

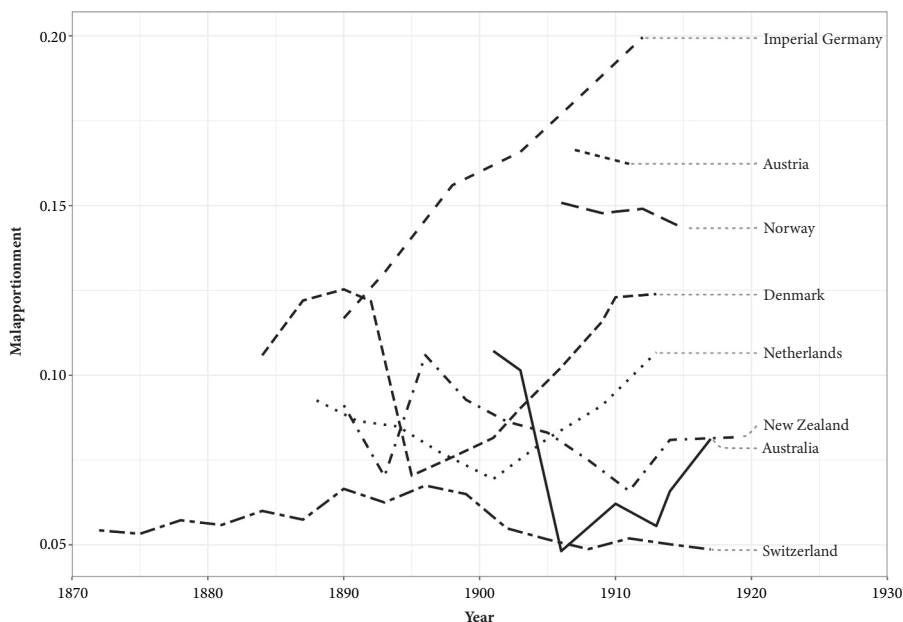


Fig. 3.5 Malapportionment for selected countries

religious parties were the main conservative parties (e.g., Belgium, Netherlands, Switzerland) but in a few cases, religious parties competed with other conservative parties (Austria and Germany). Religious parties include the Christian Democrats in Austria, the Conservative Party in Belgium, the Centre Party in Germany, the Anti-Revolutionary Party, the General League of Roman Catholic Caucuses, and the Christian Historical Party in the Netherlands, and the Catholic and Protestant Conservatives in Switzerland.

We compute malapportionment on the district level using the relative representation index (RRI) (Ansolabehere et al., 2002). Values above zero indicate that districts have higher seat shares in parliament than shares in the electorate, whereas values below zero indicate that districts have lower seat shares in parliament than shares in the electorate.

$$RRI = \log \left(\frac{\frac{\text{District magnitude}}{\text{Number of voters in district}}}{\frac{\text{Assembly size}}{\text{Number of voters in country}}} \right)$$

Figure 3.6 shows that socialist parties were the main victims of malapportionment in all countries except Australia. The relationship between the vote share and malapportionment is negative with Austria, Denmark, and

Germany displaying the strongest negative relationships. Figure 3.6 thus suggests that socialist candidates were most likely to be elected in districts that were under-represented in terms of voter-to-seat ratios. This is not surprising. Socialist parties typically emerged in urban areas and centres of industrialization (Bartolini, 2000; Raymond, 2016). These are precisely the areas that enjoyed the most population growth in the period under investigation (Bairoch & Goertz, 1986). If districts are *not* adapted to shifts in the population, urban areas and centres of industrialization are the most likely candidates to suffer from under-representation due to malapportionment.

In contrast, the link between vote shares and party groups is more heterogeneous for liberals and conservatives. Liberal parties were not strongly disadvantaged in any of the countries displayed in Figure 3.6. In Austria and Denmark, the Liberals were even the main beneficiaries of malapportionment. In contrast, the picture is somewhat more mixed for conservative parties. Conservatives were advantaged in Australia, Germany, and New Zealand but suffered strongly from malapportionment in Denmark. Importantly, the Danish Conservatives, like most Nordic conservative parties, had their electoral strongholds in *urban* areas, not rural ones. In contrast, the Danish Liberals, whose strongholds were in the countryside, benefited from malapportionment (see Figure 3.6), which indicates that *rural* parties were typically the primary beneficiaries of malapportionment.

To what extent are these patterns intentional outcomes of party choices and not just mere byproducts of socio-economic processes? Table 3.5 shows that countries differed regarding the number of times districts were reapportioned. While some countries reapportioned seats on average twice a decade, other countries did not reapportion seats a single time over several decades. The most prominent case of such a non-reapportionment strategy is Germany (Boix, 2010, 406; Rodden, 2009, 39), which did not reapportion seats for more than 40 years (see Table 3.5).

Germany's single-member districts were designed based on the 1864 census. Between the first election in 1871 and the last election in 1912 before the collapse of the empire, all districts remained in place despite considerable population movements. As a result, malapportionment increased to 20% (see Figure 3.5). For example, the 11 largest single-member districts had between 100,000 and 340,000 inhabitants, while there were more than 100 single-member districts with less than 25,000 inhabitants in 1912 (Rauh, 1977, 408). Given that the rural-based Conservative and Centre Parties were the main beneficiaries (see Figure 3.6) and enjoyed, in part with the right-wing National Liberals, comfortable majorities in parliament between 1871 and 1912, it is unsurprising that the district map was never redrawn

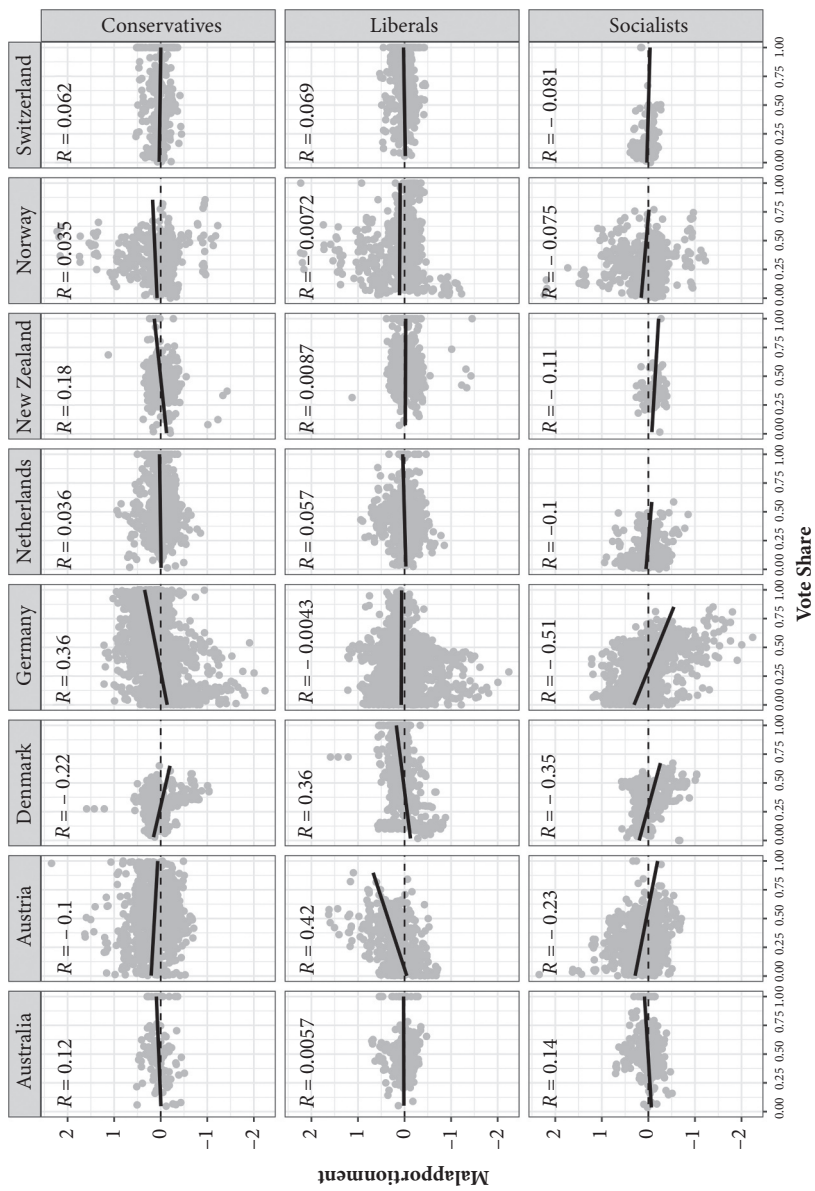


Fig. 3.6 Correlation of party vote shares and malapportionment

Table 3.5 Number and regularity of reapportionment

Country	Period	Reapportionments	Reapp. per decade	Source
Australia	1900–1917	4	2	Christian (2004)
Austria	1907–1911	1	1	Ucakar (1985)
Belgium	1847–1902	8	1.5	Nohlen & Opiela (1969)
Canada	1867–1915	11	2.2	Courtney (2001)
Denmark	1848–1913	1	0.2	Elklit (2002)
France	1870–1914	8	2	Gay (2021)
Germany	1871–1912	0	0	Milatz (1974)
Netherlands	1848–1887	5	1.3	Nohlen (1969c)
Netherlands	1887–1917	0	0	Loots (2004)
New Zealand	1871–1916	11	2.7	McRobie (2008)
Norway	1906–1918	1	1	Fiva & Smith (2017b)
Switzerland	1848–1911	7	1.2	Gruner (1978a)
UK	1860–1920	3	0.5	Rossiter et al. (1999)
USA	1840–1910	8	1	Engstrom (2013)

Notes: Finland and Ireland did not have national elections before the adoption of PR due to limited sovereignty. No data on reapportionment could be found for Italy. In Sweden, each seat had to represent a fixed number of voters, which is why district magnitude was regularly adapted (Kreuzer & Neely, 2025, 41), but the precise years of reapportionment could not be identified.

(Milatz, 1974, 209). Only Germany's defeat in the First World War and the seizure of power by the Socialists led to significant reforms that reduced malapportionment.

Another prominent example of non-reapportionment concerns Denmark. The rural-based Liberals benefited from malapportionment, while the urban-based Conservatives and Socialists were notoriously hurt by the absence of redistricting (see Figure 3.6). The main difference to the German case was that the Liberals, due to a number of party splits at the end of the 19th century, occupied a minority position in parliament, which allowed the urban-based Conservatives and Socialists to extract some concessions. Thus, when the Moderate Liberals broke away in the 1892 election and the remaining Liberals lost over 50% of their parliamentary seats, a short window of opportunity opened up to reform the district structure (Elklit, 1992, 2002). As a result, malapportionment declined from 12.5% to 7% in the mid-1890s (see Figure 3.5). Since the Liberals regained their majority position at the end of the 1890s, there was no other attempt to change the district design until the

introduction of PR during the First World War. By 1913, malapportionment had increased to above 12% again.

The USA is another well-known case of (temporary) non-reapportionment. Regular reapportionment had been a constant feature of US politics for decades. However, following the First World War, Congress could not agree on the distribution of seats. The stalemate in Congress was finally broken in 1929 when the Reapportionment and Census Act dropped the requirement that districts contain the same number of individuals (Jenkins & Napolio, 2023; Roberts, 2022). Following this act, Congressional seats were again reapportioned in 10-year intervals, but now, states were left in charge of district design, resulting in levels of malapportionment that 'grew enormously compared to the 19th century' (Engstrom, 2013, 181). By 1962, '234 congressional districts deviated at least 10% from the average district population in their respective states, with the maximum deviation being 188%' (Cox & Katz, 2002, 13). Importantly, conflict broke out when reapportionment would have shifted the balance of power in favour of urban regions. In line with our argument, representatives of states that were likely to lose seats were the main opponents of reapportionment (Eagles, 1990; Jenkins & Napolio, 2023). It took several interventions from the Supreme Court to deal with this situation. For decades, the Court had held that redistricting was a political question. As a result, district maps were not justiciable (i.e., capable of being decided by a court). In the early 1960s, however, the Court suddenly changed its position. It now ruled that even small differences in the apportionment of seats violated the constitutionally protected principle of 'one person, one vote' (Cox & Katz, 2002). This reapportionment revolution had an immediate impact. 'By the end of the 1960s, malapportionment had essentially been eradicated in both congressional and state legislative districts' (Engstrom, 2013, 197).

In other countries, seats were reapportioned on a regular basis, but constitutional provisions resulted in malapportionment (Aardal, 2002). For example, malapportionment in Norway was rooted in an institutional legacy of the 19th century. The so-called 'peasant clause' advantaged urban members of parliament (MPs) and thus had a strong impact on the level of malapportionment. In particular, it stated that one-third of MPs should be elected from urban areas, whereas two-thirds of MPs should come from rural areas (Fiva & Smith, 2017b, 1375). Given that most of the population in 19th century Norway lived on the countryside, the rule primarily benefited urban areas, although this urban advantage was growing weaker over time because of rural depopulation. According to Fiva & Smith (2017b, 1384), the peasant clause, eventually abolished in 1953, would have begun to favour rural

areas by the 1960s. At the same time, however, Norway's capital, Kristiania (today's Oslo), was deliberately under-represented because of its status as Norway's economic and political centre, whereas Northern regions were deliberately over-represented due to their large distance from the capital (Aardal, 2002, 213–214). Since the peasant clause was enshrined in the constitution, it would have required major reform to abolish this rule. However, only the Socialists had an interest in doing so, because they were disadvantaged by malapportionment (see Figure 3.6). In contrast, the Conservatives and the Liberals benefited slightly from the existing system, although the peasant clause did make the distributional effects of district design hard to predict. It is therefore unsurprising that when the adoption of PR was on the table in 1917, abolishing the peasant clause was rejected by a large majority in parliament (Aardal, 2002, 188).

In Canada, a 1915 constitutional amendment was designed to protect provinces suffering from depopulation. The so-called senatorial floor clause 'stipulates that no province will ever have fewer MPs than it has members of the appointed upper house, the Senate' (Courtney, 2008, 13). However, malapportionment in Canada was not just the result of such constitutional articles. As Table 3.5 shows, seats were regularly reapportioned to account for unequal population growth, especially the strong growth of large urban areas, 'but in typical Canadian fashion, [...] urban seats characteristically have been added without reducing the number of rural seats by commensurate number' (Courtney, 2001, 16), resulting in levels of malapportionment comparable to the US before the 'reapportionment revolution' in the 1960s and primarily benefiting the rural districts at the expense of the major metropolitan areas (Courtney, 2001, 46, 55). Similarly, Emery (2016, 8, 275) argues that deliberate non-reapportionment due to partisan considerations despite differences in population growth was common in Canada.

In addition, multiple countries have constitutional or legal guarantees for minimum representation thresholds. The USA and Switzerland, for instance, adopted constitutions in 1787 and 1848, respectively, that gave each state or canton one seat regardless of their population size. France followed this example in 1885 by legislating a bill that granted each department three seats without taking into account the number of French citizens (Balinski, 2008, 175). Given that minimum representation thresholds are primarily relevant for regions that lose inhabitants, rural areas suffering from depopulation are the main beneficiaries of these guarantees.

Several countries regularly reapportioned seats but did so with partisan advantages in mind, often resulting in reapportionment reforms that maintained or even increased malapportionment. In Austria, district design was

primarily driven by political considerations (Rauchberg, 1907, 229). As a result, malapportionment was introduced at two levels. Within the Austrian Empire, the electoral system deliberately over-represented the German-speaking part of the population (Braunias, 1932, 409–411). For example, the 1896 reform of the class-based franchise system awarded the German-speaking minority the majority of the seats in parliament (52.7%). The 1907 reform that introduced full male franchise and direct elections in single-member districts with runoffs did not alter the system fundamentally. Even though the other linguistic groups received more seats, the German-speaking part of population remained significantly over-represented. More precisely, the German speakers (35.8% of the population) still had 45.1% of the seats in parliament (Braunias 1932, 411; Ucakar 1985, 356).

Moreover, the 1907 reform in Austria benefited urban districts over rural ones because, next to population shares, seat apportionment also took tax revenue into account. Consequently, wealthier areas were significantly over-represented compared to their population shares, which primarily benefited the diverse German Liberal and Conservative parties (Ucakar, 1985, 356–357). In addition, the Christian Democrats exercised a disproportional influence on the design of districts because one of the leading party members, Albert Gessmann, was appointed by the minister of the interior to design the districts. His main strategy was to exclude the socialist-dominated industrial towns from the rural districts and then combine them into groups with urban and market towns in such a way that the purely industrial towns did not predominate in these semi-urban districts (Kielmansegg, 1966, 410–411).

In the Austrian case, it is therefore unsurprising that the Socialists were highly disadvantaged by the district design. Figure 3.7 examines the anti-socialist bias of the Austrian district map. In contrast to Figure 3.6, we focus only on malapportionment in the German-speaking part of Austria.¹¹ The plots show that there is a significant correlation between the socialist vote share and the number of voters per single-member district. Put differently, single-member districts with a strong socialist electoral presence were oversized in terms of resident voters, while single-member districts with a weak socialist presence were comparatively small. As a result, socialist seats were expensive in terms of votes. More precisely, districts in which Socialists won had almost 3,000 voters more than districts in which German Liberals and Conservatives as well as the Christian Democrats won. Therefore, malapportionment was not only directed against non-German linguistic groups but also against the emerging Socialists.

¹¹ The sample covers Lower and Upper Austria, Salzburg, Steiermark, Tirol, Vorarlberg, and Kärnten.

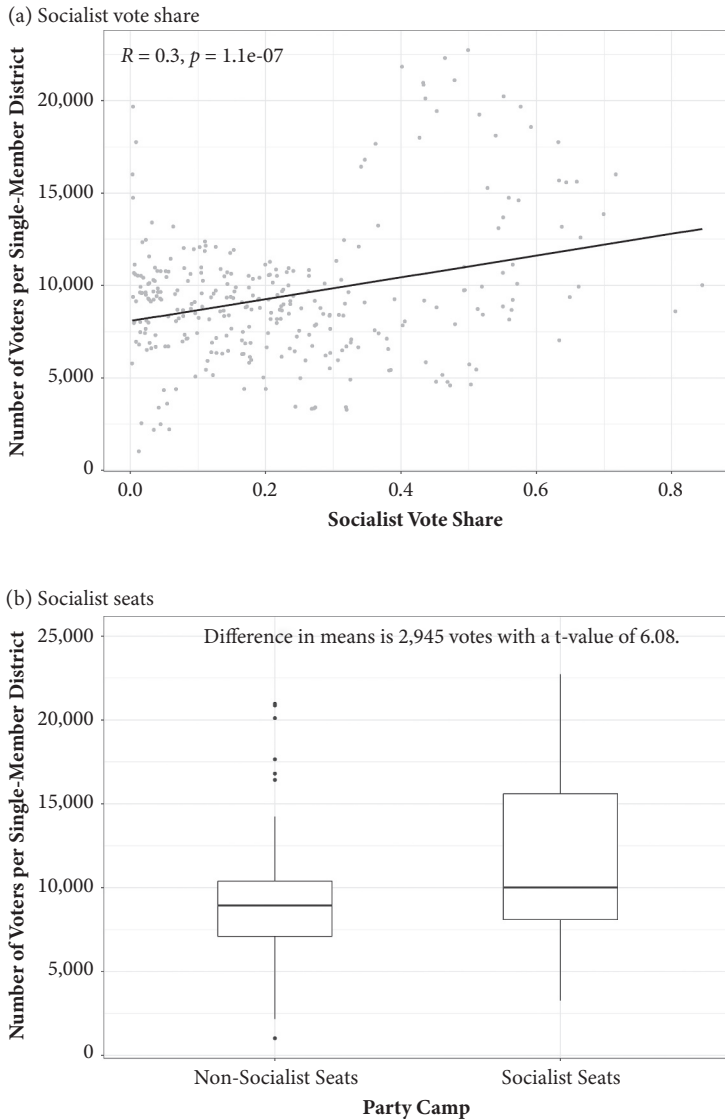


Fig. 3.7 Correlation of socialist vote share, socialist seats, and the number of voters in the German part of Austria (1907–1911)

Another example of malapportionment despite regular reapportionment is France, which is a notorious example of electoral engineering. Criddle (1992, 110) argues that ‘in France, there is every evidence of the politician’s belief in the importance of electoral systems as political weapons’, which led governments to change electoral rules frequently based ‘on the assumption that to do so would be to serve the interests of those political

forces in the ascendant at the time' (see also Alexander, 2004, 209). France changed its electoral system multiple times. For example, during the Third Republic (1870–1940), France introduced and reintroduced single-member districts three times, in 1875, 1889, and 1927 (Ehrhard & Passard, 2020). Malapportionment was also a significant feature of French politics despite the fact that reapportionment took place in five-year intervals. Large differences in size between districts were generally tolerated and sometimes even encouraged (Marty, 2013, 100). For example, in 1885, in combination with a reform of the electoral system, the political right reapportioned seats to increase the weight of small rural areas and dilute the voting strength of the political Left (Balinski, 2008, 175). When France reestablished an MR system with single-member districts in 1927, the population in the single-member districts varied between 22,338 and 137,718 inhabitants. In line with the general ambition of the 1927 electoral reform, the centre-left coalition designed the electoral system in order to contain the Communists, which had become a serious political force after the First World War (Balinski, 2008, 175). Highlighting this anti-communist bias in seat apportionment, Ahmed (2013, 164) reports that 'the ratio of deputies to constituents in rural districts was approximately 1:34,000, whereas in urban areas, including the Red Belt around Paris, the ratio was 1:110,000'.

Similar patterns cannot only be observed in Continental Europe but also the Anglo-Saxon countries. In the UK, Rossiter et al. (1999, 33–35) document several examples of strategic reapportionment and non-reapportionment throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Unsurprisingly, this electoral engineering resulted in high levels of malapportionment. For example, in 1885, the Liverpool borough had one representative per 185,000 people whereas the Calne borough had one per 5,000 people (Rossiter et al., 1999, 37). In general, despite several rounds of reapportionment, urban districts remained significantly under-represented. The Conservatives were particularly reluctant to reapportion seats, and when they did, they worked towards the over-representation of rural districts, because they drew most of their political support from the countryside (Rossiter et al., 1999, 37).

Reapportionment was even more common in Australia, where electorates were redistributed about once every 10 years until 1983. However, as Juriansz & Opekin (2012, 562) note, 'voter equality was not universally embraced in the early years of the federation'. With reapportionment in the hands of the government, reapportionment decisions were informed by the pursuit of political advantage and typically favoured the liberal-conservative coalition (Juriansz & Opekin 2012, 563; Orr & Levy 2009). With the creation of independent boundary commissions throughout the 20th century, Australia and

the UK managed to substantially reduce malapportionment. In this way, they followed the example of New Zealand, which had already installed an independent boundary commission in 1887 and reapportioned seats in five-year intervals (McRobie, 2008, 27).

Of course, regular reapportionment was not always used for partisan advantage. In some countries, the constitution mandated regular reapportionment and also specified the rules that had to be applied. For instance, the Dutch constitution stipulated that one legislator was to be elected for every 45,000 of population (Carstairs, 1980, 61), with adjustments, until 1887, taking place every five years (Andeweg et al., 2010, 1384). Similar rules also existed in Belgium, Sweden, and Switzerland (see Table 3.5). For this reason, the levels of malapportionment remained comparatively low in these countries (for the Netherlands and Switzerland, see Figure 3.6).

Importantly, this did not stop reapportionment from having political implications. For example, in Switzerland, seats were reapportioned after each population census, which was conducted in 10-year intervals. As a result, the country's more urban areas continuously received more seats. This was good news for the Liberals, because reapportionment increased the magnitude of the districts they typically won. In this way, regular reapportionment helped the Swiss Liberals maintain their position as the dominant political party. In contrast, in Belgium, regular reapportionment reduced the relative weight of the rural districts that the Conservatives controlled, while it increased the relative weight of the urban districts, which were more contested between the Conservatives, the Liberals, and the Socialists. When the Liberals and the Socialists started to form electoral alliances in these large urban districts, the Conservatives were forced to reform the electoral system before they could lose the large urban districts and with them their majority in parliament (Emmenegger & Walter, 2019).

In the context of first-wave democracies, population growth and regular reapportionment typically implied that the number of legislators (in the lower chamber) constantly grew, for example in Belgium from 108 in 1847 to 152 in 1898 (the last election before the adoption of PR) and in Switzerland from 111 in 1848 to 189 in 1917 (the last election before the adoption of PR). The situation was similar in the Netherlands. Here, the number of legislators grew from 68 in 1848 to 86 in 1884. To stop this constant growth, the liberal-conservative government decided in 1887 to abandon the link between the population and the number of legislators. Instead, the number of legislators was set at 100 and the boundaries of the single-member districts were fixed. Unsurprisingly, because of unequal population growth in Dutch regions (see Figure 3.3), the 1887 reform resulted in growing malapportionment

(see Figure 3.5). As Loots (2004, 24) reports, in 1909, the ninth district in Amsterdam had 18,434 eligible voters, while the third district in Rotterdam had only 5,628 eligible voters. However, none of the Dutch parties was able to significantly benefit from malapportionment (see Figure 3.6).

In sum, this section has shown that while a certain level of malapportionment might be unavoidable, the misallocation of seats to voters differed considerably between countries. In particular, some first-wave democracies displayed levels of malapportionment that are similar to the most notoriously distorted democracies today. In addition, we have shown that high levels of malapportionment were often politically motivated. While the specific party camp—liberals or conservatives—that benefited differed from country to country, two general tendencies can be observed. First, in case of significant malapportionment, rural-based parties of the right were typically among the beneficiaries, while urban-based parties of the right often demanded reapportionment to reduce the negative effect of unequal population growth on their parliamentary representation. Second, the emerging socialist parties, with their strongholds in industrial and urban centres, were disadvantaged (almost) everywhere. This means that even though the socialists were able to gather significant vote shares, the seats they were able to win were comparatively expensive, because they had to win more votes than other parties to win the same number of seats. In this way, reapportionment (or the lack thereof) was an important instrument that established parties could use to contain insurgent parties.

3.3 Gerrymandering

In this section, we discuss gerrymandering as a third strategy incumbents can use to contain electoral challenges. Like malapportionment, gerrymandering results from the combination of electoral geography and district design. However, unlike malapportionment, the most important lever is not the district-level difference in the ratio of the relevant population share to the numerical representation in the legislative assembly. Instead, gerrymandering aims to increase the number of the insurgent party's votes that do not contribute to the election of one of its candidates.

Importantly, such inefficiencies in the vote-to-seat translation need not be the result of intentional gerrymandering. Rather, biases may simply result from the combination of electoral geography and the need to draw district boundaries (Chen & Rodden, 2013). Even in the absence of intentional gerrymandering, MR systems tend to harm small parties with dispersed voter

bases and large parties with concentrated ones (Calvo & Rodden, 2015). In fact, it is virtually impossible to design district maps in MR systems without any partisan bias. The situation is different for PR systems because district magnitude is larger and in each district, parties are allocated the number of seats that is proportionate to their vote share (Rodden, 2019, 229). Moreover, in PR systems, district magnitude can be adapted more easily in response to population shifts, whereas the district boundaries can stay the same. For this reason, district boundaries in PR systems rarely change, which is why they offer less potential for gerrymandering.¹²

We are primarily interested in *intentional* forms of gerrymandering in MR systems. More specifically, we argue that incumbent parties may resort to gerrymandering in order to create partisan asymmetries that help contain electoral challengers. Gerrymandering can be done in two main ways. On the one hand, a minority of the insurgent party's voters can be moved into a district dominated by the advantaged parties, thereby wasting all of the insurgent party's votes for the losing candidates. On the other hand, geographical boundaries can be adapted to create safe districts, in which insurgent party's candidates win with overwhelming majorities, thus wasting a lot of votes on few seats. In both cases, the goal is the same: Incumbent parties deny the insurgent parties an efficient use of their votes.

Several conditions must be met for gerrymandering to be an effective containment strategy. For starters, the relevant territory must be organized into districts and parties must be in control of the body designing these districts. In first-wave democracies, this was typically the legislature (Handley, 2018; Handley & Grofman, 2008). In addition, the incumbent parties' parliamentary representation must be such that insurgent parties—with the help of gerrymandering—can be relegated to a minority status for longer periods. In addition, intentional gerrymandering requires fine-grained data on electoral geography. Thanks to regular subnational elections, such data often exists. Yet, such information might also be incomplete, misleading, or outdated, which explains why gerrymandering does not always lead to the desired result. Overall, however, the information requirements seem to be rather limited (Engstrom, 2013, 194).

Mapmakers who engage in gerrymandering also need a suitable electoral geography, but this is a weak requirement. Even if voters were randomly distributed throughout the territory, there would be some (random)

¹² Yet, as argued by Grofman et al. (1997, 457), 'any districted system is potentially subject to partisan biases'. As we show in Chapter 6, PR systems indeed differ in terms of proportionality, which can lead to partisan biases. However, the possibilities for creative mapmakers to engineer partisan advantages are clearly more limited in PR systems.

concentration of voters in certain regions, which would give creative map-makers enough material to gerrymander districts. On balance, the electoral geography may offer more or less potential for gerrymandering. Finally, constitutional, legal, and judicial provisions might limit the potential for gerrymandering. District maps can be challenged in court, although in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, courts were rarely involved in district design, typically arguing that district maps were a political, not a judicial, question (Handley, 2018). Electoral laws might mandate that districts must be compact and composed of contingent territory (McGann et al., 2016), whereas constitutions might not allow districts to cut across subnational administrative borders (Emmenegger & Walter, 2024). Such restrictions limit the potential for gerrymandering. Yet, they do not make it impossible.

Overt partisan gerrymandering is often argued to be a uniquely American phenomenon (e.g., Rodden 2019, 5; Seabrook 2022, 8), but this is incorrect. Across much of Europe, even today, partisan gerrymandering is widespread (see Figure 2.2), although it was probably even more common in earlier periods. All first-wave democracies initially used plurality/majority rules with small district magnitude (Colomer, 2007). Thus, the problem of regularly adjusting district boundaries to regional differences in population growth affected all of them. Moreover, with redistricting controlled by partisan majorities in the legislature, it was probably unavoidable that gerrymandering was ‘more often than not a normal element of the delimitation process’ (Handley, 2008, 267).

Regular gerrymandering in the late 19th and early 20th centuries has been documented for first-wave democracies such as Austria, Canada, France, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the UK, and the USA (Courtney, 2001; Emery, 2016; Emmenegger & Walter, 2024; Engstrom, 2013; Gruner, 1978a; Loots, 2004; Marty, 2013; Melik, 1997; Rossiter et al., 1999; Ucakar, 1985). There is, however, only little systematic research on gerrymandering in first-wave democracies other than the USA (Handley & Grofman, 2008, v)—not least because the use of gerrymandering is so difficult to conclusively demonstrate (McGhee, 2020; Wong, 2017).

In the following, we provide evidence on the relevance of gerrymandering as a containment strategy. We do so in two ways. First, we review the secondary literature on Canada and the USA. Gerrymandering is well documented in the US case, including contemporary examples, but there is also considerable literature on Canada prior to the adoption of the independent electoral boundaries commission system in 1964. Both countries provide ample evidence that incumbent parties regularly resorted to partisan gerrymandering to contain other parties. Second, we examine gerrymandering in

one country, Switzerland, for which the literature has yet to provide systematic quantitative evidence. We show that before the adoption of PR, Switzerland's incumbent party relied on gerrymandering to contain insurgent parties. Our analysis of the Swiss case relies on parliamentary records, roll-call votes, and district-level election data.

3.3.1 Gerrymandering in Canada and the USA

Canada has a rich history of partisan gerrymandering. The Constitution Act of 1867 required a reallocation of the House of Commons districts among the ten provinces after each decennial census (called 'redistribution' in Canada). Allocation is based on population shares, although there are also several other criteria such as a minimum number of seats (Courtney, 2008, 13). Once this first step of the allocation process is completed, the actual boundaries of the federal districts (within the provinces) are determined. Historically, the national parliament was responsible for drawing the final district map for national elections, which typically meant that district design was in the hands of the incumbent party (Courtney 2001, 10–11, 2008, 12–13; Emery 2016, 3–4). With few legal limits to redistricting and little involvement of courts, 'gerrymandering became an integral part of Canadian politics' (Carty, 1985, 273).

There is broad agreement on the relevance of gerrymandering in Canada among scholars before the 'electoral boundary revolution' of 1964. Courtney (2001, 237) argues that 'for decades, redistribution had been carefully managed, irregularly timed, and self-interested exercises controlled by the party in office.' Examining federal and provincial redistribution cycles in the period 1872 to 1954, Emery (2016, 275) argues that most cases 'included one or more intentional gerrymanders (outright or thinly disguised)'. Similarly, Ward (1967, 109) argues that redistribution was 'too often dominated by partisan motives', whereas Hoffman (2005, 345) calls them 'blatant gerrymanders'.

Of course, the degree of gerrymandering differed between the redistribution cycles. Observing gerrymandering in 1872, 1882, and 1892, Dawson (1935, 198) argues that the redistribution in 1882 'surpassed the others in scope, in apparent skill and shrewdness, in lack of scruple, and in the volume of denunciation and disapproval which it aroused.' Similarly, Ward (1967, 109) writes that the redistribution cycles of 1872, 1882, and 1892 'were plainly intended to benefit the party in power, the second two particularly so'. He adds that 'the tampering was done with some hesitation and pretence of principle in 1872, with a gay abandon in 1882, and with dignity

and persistence in 1892' (Ward, 1950, 27). In this period, gerrymandering by Conservatives against liberal insurgents came to be known as 'hiving the Grits', because the Conservatives' goal was to pack (hive) liberal voters (Grits) into a limited number of districts (Emery, 2016, 27), although Liberals did not hesitate to resort to gerrymandering themselves when presented with the opportunity to do so (Courtney, 2001; Ward, 1967).

Unsurprisingly, gerrymandering was regularly criticized (Courtney, 1999; Emery, 2016). Highly disproportionate election results often triggered demands for electoral reform, including the adoption of PR. Several provinces experimented with PR for municipal and provincial elections (Pilon, 1999, 2002). At federal level, opposition parties often pledged to end the practice of partisan gerrymandering, but once in office, they could not be convinced to give up their power over district design.

Yet, glaring voter inequities and public dissatisfaction increased pressure on governments to put an end to what the prominent Liberal Chubby Power called 'an unseemly, undignified and utterly confusing scramble for personal [and] political advantage' (cited in Courtney, 2001, 20). Moreover, a string of minority governments in the 1950s and 1960s made it increasingly difficult for incumbent parties to rely on parliamentary majorities to force through their preferred district maps. Beginning in Manitoba in 1955 for provincial elections and at the federal level in 1964, the responsibility for designing districts was transferred from parliament to independent electoral boundary commissions, which explicitly exclude representatives of political parties (Courtney, 2001, 22; 2008, 16). Courtney (2008, 21) argues that 'independent electoral boundary commissions stand as one of the success stories of the last half century of Canadian political institutions' because it ended the decades-long practice of 'thinly disguised gerrymanders.'

Canada's trajectory is not exceptional. In most first-wave democracies, legislatures were responsible for the drawing of district boundaries, which often resulted in partisan considerations dominating the redistricting process. But like in Canada, 'in most consolidated Western democracies, the idea that politicians are best excluded from the [redistricting] process has emerged, and legislators have opted out, handing the process over to independent commissions' (Handley, 2008, 267). Today, most democracies rely on independent election boundary commissions, which has to some extent depoliticized debates on district design, although there are important exceptions, especially among electoral autocracies and semi-democratic countries (Wong, 2017). In contrast, among advanced democracies, 'the United States and France are the only two surveyed countries dependent solely on single-member constituencies for the election of legislators that allow the legislature

a dominant role in the delimitation process' (Handley, 2008, 269). From this point of view, there is (still) something 'uniquely American' about gerrymandering (Seabrook, 2022, 8).

In the USA, the history of gerrymandering is rich and exceptionally well documented. For example, Seabrook (2022) offers a detailed discussion of some of the most famous instances of gerrymandering, from James Madison's 'Henrymander' in 1788 to Elbridge Gerry's salamander-shaped district in Essex County, while Engstrom (2013) examines each case of congressional redistricting from the First Congress in 1789 to the reapportionment revolution of the 1960s.

In the USA, district design is typically in the hand of state legislatures. In some states, governors are also involved, although governors' vetoes can often be overturned by super-majorities in parliament. According to Engstrom (2013, 8), before the reapportionment revolution of the 1960s, 'state legislators had nearly free reign over when and how to redistrict' other than the requirement that all states use geographically contiguous, single-member districts (introduced in 1842). With courts treating district design as a political, not judicial, question (McGann et al., 2016), 'districting became a partisan weapon almost from the very beginning of the republic' (Engstrom, 2013, 16). Whenever a party managed to control the districting process, 'they used districting to systematically stack the electoral deck in their favor' (Engstrom, 2013, 17).¹³

In the 19th century, gerrymandering was an integral part of US politics. In heated public debates, oddly shaped districts and large seat-vote distortions were regularly lamented (Seabrook, 2022). However, despite this criticism, at the federal level, support for the adoption of PR never gained traction, despite several electoral reforms at the subnational level (Barber, 2000; Santucci, 2022). Part of the reason for this lack of reform debate can certainly be found in the stable two-party system, in which both nationally strong parties, the Democrats and the Republicans, relied on gerrymandering to gain partisan advantage. The various third parties in the late 19th or early 20th centuries never managed to seriously challenge this duopoly (Ahmed, 2013).

Another reason is that in the first half of the 20th century, mapmakers increasingly turned their attention to malapportionment. In some way, the potential of gerrymandering had been exhausted. In the 19th century, 'gerrymandering arms races typically happened in competitive, battleground states [...] where the closeness of the statewide vote greatly increased the payoffs to

¹³ This is of course not to suggest that gerrymandering always works (cf. Grofman & Brunell, 2005).

manipulating district boundaries' (Engstrom, 2013, 62). This focus on battleground states explains why there were so many impressive seat swings in the 19th century. By creating numerous gerrymandered districts with narrow margins in favour of the incumbent party, the mapmakers risked the incumbent party losing a large number of districts in the event of a surprise swing to the opposition party (Engstrom, 2013).

However, by the early 20th century, there were few battleground states left (Schattschneider, 1960). The South had become solidly democratic. For example, in Louisiana from 1900 to 1964, the Democrats held *every* seat in the state legislature (Engstrom, 2013, 172). In the South, Republicans had more or less ceased to exist. Yet, many Northern state legislatures were equally out of balance. In Pennsylvania, the Republicans controlled, on average, 83% of the seats in the state assembly between 1910 and 1932 (Engstrom, 2013, 172). When one party dominates a state legislature, the incentive to gerrymander disappears. There is little reason to fiddle with a district map that already produces numerous party victories. For this reason, the frequency of redistricting declined rapidly in the early 20th century, as the old district maps were simply left in place (Engstrom, 2013, 171–175). Similarly, since both parties had several regional strongholds that allowed them to benefit from the MR system's majoritarian bias, adopting PR had little appeal, especially in the absence of a relevant third party.

Instead, the combination of old district maps and rapid urbanization processes in the early 20th century gave rise to malapportionment. As mentioned above, the growth of malapportionment was only stopped by the 'reapportionment revolution' in the 1960s, when the Supreme Court changed its position on the justiciability of district maps. Previously, the Court had argued that districting was a political question. District maps could thus not be challenged in court. However, in the early 1960s, the Court suddenly ruled that even small differences in the apportionment of seats violated the constitutionally protected principle of 'one person, one vote' (Cox & Katz, 2002).

It was less clear though what these Court decisions meant for gerrymandering. On the one hand, the reapportionment decisions dealt with malapportionment, not gerrymandering, although the change in position suggested that the Court now viewed redistricting issues as justiciable. In 1986, the Court reaffirmed this position for partisan gerrymandering cases, but the Court had not yet struck down a district map on these grounds (McGann et al., 2016, 2). On the other hand, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 explicitly addressed instances of racial gerrymandering (i.e., gerrymandering against racial minorities). More specifically, the act requires states with

a history of discrimination against minorities to pre-clear their district maps with the Department of Justice or courts, and it allows the Department of Justice or private parties to challenge district maps where they dilute the voting power of racial minorities (Engstrom, 2013, 13–14). Hence, the Voting Rights Act clearly made cases of racial gerrymandering justiciable. As a result, excessively partisan district maps ran the risk of being successfully challenged in court.

For the decades following the reapportionment revolution, the question of whether gerrymandering was still a significant factor in national politics haunted the scholarly literature. To be clear, there was a broad consensus that incumbent parties still attempted to rely on gerrymandering to engineer parliamentary majorities. However, the available evidence suggests that in this period, partisan gerrymandering was not very effective (McGhee, 2020, 173). The literature has highlighted several reasons for this apparent ineffectiveness (Cox & Katz, 2002; Engstrom, 2013; Gelman & King, 1994a; McGann et al., 2016; McGhee, 2020): First, legal constraints and judicial review limited possibilities for gerrymandering. The prohibition of racial gerrymandering, the one person, one vote doctrine, and the possible judicial review of partisan gerrymanders probably prevented some of the most egregious district maps. Second, with the emergence of career politicians, parties increasingly resorted to incumbent gerrymandering to protect incumbent legislators rather than to maximize seat shares. Third, unanticipated changes in voting patterns could easily undermine seemingly well-crafted district maps. Finally, with district design in the hand of individual state legislatures (rather than Congress), disadvantages in one state were often compensated by advantages in another, cancelling each other out at aggregate level. The latter point is important because in most first-wave democracies, district design was in the hands of *national* legislatures (e.g., Canada), which ensured that mapmakers' efforts were all directed towards the same goal. In the US case, however, Republican gerrymandering in one state could easily be offset by Democratic gerrymandering in another, thereby neutralizing each other at the national level.

In the early 2000s, the history of gerrymandering in the USA took yet another surprising turn. Once again, the Supreme Court played the leading role. Again breaking with its previous position, the Court's decision in *Vieth v. Jubelirer* (2004) now made it virtually impossible to challenge a district map on the grounds of partisan gerrymandering. In the Court's opinion, 'political gerrymandering claims are inherently nonjusticiable because there are no appropriate standards to decide such claims' (McGann et al., 2016, 47). Hence, according to the Court, district maps are a fundamentally political

question, to be determined by legislatures, not a judicial one that could be decided by a court. In a concurring opinion, Justice Kennedy agreed that at the time of writing, there was no workable standard for adjudicating partisan gerrymandering cases. However, he did not want to foreclose the possibility that such a standard could be found (McGann et al., 2016, 49).

The Court's decision strongly influenced the 2010 redistricting cycle. Newly freed from judicial constraints, state legislatures began to district for partisan advantage, especially in states where one party controlled the entire districting process (McGann et al., 2016, 5). McGhee (2020, 176) observes that the majority party 'showed a new willingness to use redistricting to press its advantage', while Keena et al. (2021, 6, 11) argue that after the Court's decision, 'lawmakers were free to gerrymander on a scale that they had previously not done' with some district maps being 'drawn with extreme partisan bias' (see also Engstrom, 2013; Seabrook, 2022; Stephanopoulos & Warshaw, 2020). Tellingly, the upsurge of partisan gerrymandering also renewed interest in the adoption of PR (Donovan, 2018; Mainwaring & Drutman, 2023; Rodden, 2019; Santucci, 2022).

The 2004 Supreme Court decision is also interesting because it points to one of the biggest challenges in dealing with gerrymandering: the absence of a workable standard for adjudicating partisan gerrymandering cases. This is different in case of reapportionment, where a simple comparison of population shares and seat shares is sufficient to identify cases of malapportionment (Cox & Katz, 2002; McGann et al., 2016). In contrast, partisan gerrymandering is difficult to prove because small district magnitude can generate natural biases if voters of a party are concentrated in few populous municipalities, thereby giving even impartial bureaucrats only limited options to design maps without partisan biases (Chen & Rodden, 2013, 2015). Researchers therefore often draw on computational methods to generate a large set of possible district maps to investigate whether the implemented district plan displays an unusually high level of partisan bias, although there are also alternative measures of partisan gerrymandering (DeFord et al., 2023; Gelman & King, 1994b; J. N. Katz et al., 2020; Stephanopoulos & McGhee, 2018).

As a result, in the USA, there are numerous examples of districts whose shape seems to be explainable only in terms of partisan gerrymandering. What else could account for the odd shape of North Carolina's 12th Congressional District in 1991 (cf. Seabrook, 2022, 391)? At the same time, gerrymandering is difficult to prove and sometimes even questioned in some of the most prominent examples (e.g., Hunter, 2011). Thus, the Canadian and

US cases not only demonstrate that partisan gerrymandering can be an effective containment strategy, but they also show that gerrymandering allows parties to credibly deny allegations of electoral engineering.

3.3.2 Gerrymandering in Switzerland

In the following, we offer new evidence on gerrymandering in Switzerland, which adopted PR in 1918. We argue that prior to the adoption of PR in Switzerland, the incumbent party relied on gerrymandering to contain insurgent parties. In this section, we provide quantitative evidence on gerrymandering. Chapter 8 provides additional qualitative evidence.

Before the adoption of PR in 1918, Switzerland relied on a two-round (three-round before 1900) majority runoff system in multi-member districts (with a plurality runoff in the last round) for elections to the lower chamber. Voters could vote for as many candidates as there were seats in a given district. Landslide victories for the most popular party were common (Carstairs 1980, 136–141; Lutz 2004, 280–282). For this reason, the Swiss electoral system constantly featured large seat-vote distortions (see Figure 8.2), of which the Liberals were the main beneficiaries.¹⁴ Not least thanks to these distortions, the Liberals controlled a majority of seats in the lower chamber from 1848, the year the Swiss federal state was created, until 1919, the year the first election under the new PR system took place. Historically, the Conservatives—the losers of the brief Swiss Civil War of 1847—were the main opposition party. With the rise of the labour movement towards the end of the 19th century, the Liberals were also challenged by the Socialists, who competed with the Liberals in their urban strongholds.

Seats were reapportioned among the 25 cantons after each decennial census. The cantons were then divided into a small number of multi-member districts. After 1850, the federal parliament controlled the design of districts for national elections. The process of redistricting was openly discussed in parliament with proponents and opponents of the various plans clearly identifiable. Based on suggestions by cantonal governments but also other interest groups, and relying on detailed results from regular subnational elections, a parliamentary commission prepared a district plan. The commission's proposal was subsequently discussed in parliament, with votes on specific

¹⁴ The liberal camp consisted of Democrats, Liberals, and Radicals. The cooperation between these three liberal groups was such that the Democrats and the Radicals founded a joint party in 1894. Most Liberals also entered the new party, although a few Liberals in the Western part of Switzerland remained independent. In 2008, these last Liberals finally joined the party. In the following, for the sake of simplicity, we refer to these three groups as the Liberals.

districting decisions and a final vote on the overall district plan. The publicly documented process of redistricting allows us to draw on comprehensive quantitative evidence to study gerrymandering. Moreover, in Switzerland, elections were held in multi-member districts. Hence, the geographical scope of a district could be expanded by adding more seats, making electoral geography endogenous to party strategies. Although multi-member districts of three or four seats were defined as the rule, there were plenty of exceptions.

There was, however, a constitutional limit to gerrymandering in Switzerland. Districts were not allowed to cut across cantonal borders, which was an important limitation given the small size of many of the 25 cantons. Due to this restriction, only about 10 cantons offered serious potential for gerrymandering (Zürich, Bern, Luzern, Fribourg, St. Gallen, Graubünden, Aargau, Ticino, Vaud, and Valais). The other 15 cantons were either too small throughout the entire period or had enough seats only after population growth started to pick up in the late 19th century. However, the 10 largest cantons had the most seats in parliament (74.8% in 1848 and 71.4% in 1917, the last election before the adoption of PR).

Our quantitative analysis of gerrymandering in Switzerland covers four different aspects of the redistricting process. First, we employ roll-call vote data from Bolliger and Zürcher (2004) who have retrieved over 100 roll-call votes for the period 1874–1914, including two final votes on the district plans in 1881 and 1890, respectively. We use these votes as descriptive evidence to demonstrate that the districting process was politicized along party lines.

Second, we rely on data from the parliamentary debates on redistricting in 1902 and 1911.¹⁵ In particular, we focus on how legislators positioned themselves *vis-à-vis* specific district proposals in the debate. Our binary dependent variable captures whether the proposal of a given MP was adopted or if in the parliamentary debate, the MP opposed a proposal that was not adopted eventually. In both cases, we assign the score of 1 to our dependent variable because the legislator's preferences for district reform prevailed. In contrast, we assign the score of 0 if an MP proposed a district plan that was rejected or if the MP opposed a proposal that was adopted. As predictors, we include the legislator's party affiliation and whether the proposal was originally made by a legislator or another political actor (cantonal governments or other non-parliamentary actors such as local party chapters).

Third, we draw on electoral data and all district reforms under MR. Our binary-dependent variable captures whether a district was merged with or

¹⁵ The parliamentary debates have been officially recorded only since 1891. There is thus no detailed record of the redistricting cycle in 1890 or the years before.

split from another district or whether its borders were adjusted after a national census. In these cases, we assign the value of 1. In contrast, we assign the value of 0 if districts were not changed. For the estimation, we use changes in electoral strength of the main minority parties (Conservatives and Socialists) in a district to account for partisan biases in the redistricting process. Gruner (1978b) provides estimates of the true but unobserved vote shares of parties from 1848 to 1917 by accounting for strategic candidate entry and electoral alliances between parties (for a detailed discussion of Gruner's data, see Emmenegger and Walter, 2021a, 2024). In addition, we compute whether a canton received additional seats due to population growth ('seat adjustment'), which could trigger redistricting by design. Lastly, we control for district magnitude because redistricting was more difficult in small cantons since districts were not allowed to cut across cantonal borders.

Fourth, we capture whether redistricting increasingly distorted the translation from votes to seats by using Gruner's (1978b) electoral strength data at cantonal level.¹⁶ We use data on electoral strength along with information about the number of seats to compute the seat-vote distortions from which minority parties suffered. More specifically, we use the difference between electoral strength and the seat share of Conservatives and Socialists by canton.

Given that our analysis builds on different data sets with less than 500 observations, we employ a penalized Logit estimator for small samples with binary dependent variables (Firth, 1993; Rainey & McCaskey, 2021) and outlier-robust linear regression for continuous dependent variables.¹⁷ In addition, our observations are nested within cantons, which are constitutional barriers to partisan redistricting. Therefore, we assume that our observations within cantons are not independent and thus employ cluster-robust standard errors at cantonal level for all estimations. Summary statistics are provided in the Appendix (see Table 3.10).

In Switzerland between 1848 and 1917, the district map was adjusted seven times, each time following the national census. Table 3.6 provides an overview. The columns show the distribution of cantons along two dimensions: whether cantons' number of seats changed and whether redistricting took place. The table demonstrates that in a substantial number of cases,

¹⁶ In case of redistricting, the old districts often cease to exist, which makes an analysis at district level impossible. However, in Switzerland, all districts are nested in cantons. We therefore capture seat-vote distortions at the cantonal level.

¹⁷ We also provide linear probability models and logit models for all estimations with binary dependent variables.

Table 3.6 Redistricting in Switzerland, number of cantons, 1848–1917

Year	No redistricting, no seat change	No redistricting but seat change	Redistricting but no seat change	Redistricting and seat change	Total
1851	11	2	7	5	25
1863	17	4	0	4	25
1872	17	3	2	3	25
1881	15	5	2	3	25
1890	18	3	3	1	25
1902	12	7	2	4	25
1911	10	8	0	7	25
Total	57.1%	18.3%	9.1%	15.4%	100%

Table 3.7 Parliamentary votes on redistricting in Switzerland, 1881 and 1890

	Law 1881		Law 1890	
	Nay	Yay	Nay	Yay
Conservatives	35	0	28	0
Liberals	20	61	20	65
Total	55	61	48	65

districts within cantons were adjusted without any change in the number of seats. This is particularly true for the new district map in 1851, which featured several changes that probably reflect the fact that the 1848 election had provided mapmakers with rich data on electoral geography. Such cases of unprompted redistricting are clear signs that changes in district design follow partisan rather than demographic considerations (Engstrom, 2013).

Redistricting was highly contentious in Switzerland. Table 3.7 offers an overview of legislators' voting behaviour along party lines for the final district bills in 1881 and 1890—the only two years for which roll-call data is available. In both cases, the Conservatives unanimously rejected the laws, while a large majority of Liberals supported them. Note that some liberal MPs opposed the new district maps because in some cantons, factions within the liberal camp ran against each other (e.g., Neuchâtel, Vaud, and Bern). Nevertheless, the Liberals had enough supporters to overcome Conservatives' resistance against the new district maps.

Next, we turn to our multivariate analysis. As outlined above, we focus on parliamentary debates and the factors triggering redistricting. Models 1

and 2 in Table 3.8 present our results on the question of which proposals debated in parliament were ultimately incorporated into the final law. Despite controlling whether the proposal came from a cantonal government or an MP, the dummy variable for the Liberals is significant and positive. More specifically, the point estimate suggests that liberal proposals were twice as likely to be adopted.

Models 3 to 6 of Table 3.8 contribute to this picture. They show that the probability of redistricting is higher when the minority parties' electoral strength is growing before the design of the new district map. Importantly, the result holds despite accounting for whether a canton received (or lost) seats due to reapportionment as well as the log-transformed number of seats (district magnitude).

Finally, we turn to the question whether redistricting increased partisan biases. In Table 3.9, we estimate whether changes in district boundaries within cantons increased disproportionate results for minority parties (Conservatives and Socialists). We use a binary measure that captures whether districts have been adjusted prior to an election. In addition, we employ 'disproportionality' at cantonal level (the difference between a party's seat share and electoral strength at cantonal level) as a dependent variable. Negative values indicate a bias against the minority parties. Using a range of specifications with lagged dependent and control variables, canton fixed effects, and non-linear time trends, we find that redistricting increased disproportionalities by about 2.6 to 3.6 percentage points. Put differently, following the adjustment of districts, minority parties lost about three percentage points of seat shares for the same vote share.¹⁸

In sum, the quantitative evidence suggests that in Switzerland, the incumbent Liberals regularly relied on gerrymandering to contain the Conservatives and the Socialists. We have demonstrated that the minority parties' suggestions for changes to the district map were significantly less likely to be accepted by parliament and that minority parties unanimously rejected the final electoral laws containing the new district maps. In addition, we have shown that the probability of redistricting increased with the electoral strength of minority parties (even when the number of seats remained unchanged) and that redistricting increased seat-vote distortions for minority parties. In Chapter 8, we provide additional qualitative evidence to document partisan gerrymandering in Switzerland. Thus, the role of gerrymandering as a containment strategy seems hard to deny in the Swiss case.

¹⁸ In Table 3.11 in the Appendix, we replicate the analysis but exclude cantons with only one seat. The results are not affected by this change.

Table 3.8 Determinants of redistricting in Switzerland, 1848–1917

	Parliamentary Debates		Redistricting		
	Linear	Firth Logit	Linear	Linear	Firth Logit
Liberals	0.44** (0.16)	1.83* (0.76)			
Cantonal Government	0.04 (0.21)	0.18 (0.92)			
MP	-0.03 (0.15)	-0.15 (0.70)			
Growth Minority Party Vote Share			0.22* (0.09)	0.21* (0.09)	1.09** (0.40)
Lag Minority Party Vote Share			0.22 (0.13)	0.21 (0.13)	1.08 (0.61)
Seat Adjustment			0.23* (0.10)	0.24* (0.10)	1.18* (0.52)
In District Magnitude				-0.02 (0.05)	-0.07 (0.24)
Decade FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
R ²	0.20		0.08	0.08	
Adj. R ²	0.17		0.05	0.04	
Num. obs.	110	110	210	210	210
AIC		139.75			251.73
BIC		153.26			278.51
Log Likelihood		-64.88			-117.87
Deviance		129.75			235.73

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

Table 3.9 Effectiveness of redistricting in Switzerland, 1848–1917

	Disproportionality			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Redistricting	-2.66*	-2.84*	-2.67*	-3.60*
	(1.17)	(1.19)	(1.17)	(1.56)
ln District Magnitude			-2.75	-2.54
			(2.91)	(2.11)
Lagged Dependent Variable				0.24***
				(0.06)
Canton FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Quadratic Time Trends	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Num. obs.	552	552	552	527

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

More generally, this section has demonstrated that gerrymandering was a regular feature in first-wave democracies. Unfortunately, outside the Canadian, Swiss, and US cases, there is little systematic evidence on gerrymandering, although instances of gerrymandering have been documented for several other first-wave democracies. With this limitation in mind, the available evidence suggests that gerrymandering was an important instrument incumbent parties used to neutralize electoral threats.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has shown that incumbent parties regularly relied on electoral alliances, malapportionment, and gerrymandering to contain insurgent parties. Importantly, all three strategies are primarily effective in MR systems, which has important implications for the politics of electoral system choice. If incumbent parties rely on such containment measures to neutralize electoral threats, they develop a strong interest in maintaining MR systems. This finding—the systematic relationship between containment strategies and electoral systems—turns Rokkan's first road to electoral reform on its head. In the presence of an insurgent electoral threat, we expect incumbent parties to double down on their support for the MR systems if these containment measures are available and effective. The adoption of PR only becomes a relevant option for incumbent parties when these containment strategies cannot be used effectively.

While containment measures neutralize electoral threats, they also fuel seat-vote distortions. This effect is not surprising. While malapportionment often favours parties with rural strongholds, partisan gerrymandering aims to deny insurgent parties an efficient use of their votes, while electoral alliances try to prevent insurgent candidates from winning seats. All of these measures tend to contribute to the partisan bias of electoral systems, which finds its expression in seat-vote distortions. To be clear, some of these disproportionalities are system inherent, because all MR systems suffer from seat-vote distortions. However, in unbiased MR systems, disproportionalities are symmetrical (with the same vote share, parties win a comparable seat share) and responsive (vote share increases result in seat share increases). For the containment measures discussed in this chapter, this is not the case. Instead, these distortions systematically favour some parties over others, and some of these disadvantages are surprisingly persistent. In short, the containment measures examined in this chapter contribute to partisan biases, because they allow some parties, typically the incumbent ones, to win seats with a smaller share of the vote than is true for other parties (Grofman et al., 1997, 457).

Not surprisingly, seat-vote distortions steadily increased in first-wave democracies after 1875 (see Figure 3.8). There are multiple reasons for this increase such as the nationalization of politics and the emergence of programmatic parties (Bartolini & Mair, 1990; Caramani, 2004; Cusack et al., 2007). But there is little doubt that the entry of new parties also played a role in the growing levels of electoral disproportionality (Calvo, 2009). In first-wave democracies, these new parties were often socialist ones, which were able to challenge established parties in urban districts. In addition, the rise of population growth and internal migration movements would have made redistricting necessary. District maps that were not adjusted often resulted in malapportionment, and district maps that were adjusted created opportunities for partisan gerrymandering. In any case, the distortion of the electoral vote increased rapidly towards the end of the 19th century, and the empirical evidence presented in this chapter suggests that containment measures played a key role in explaining these developments.

Figure 3.8 shows that towards the end of the 19th century, the situation came to a head and the pressure for reform increased. Incumbent parties increasingly relied on containment measures to protect their privileged positions, while the disadvantages suffered by other parties became more extreme. In this context, we argue, disadvantaged parties increasingly called for the adoption of PR, which promised to eliminate the most extreme distortions. As Figure 3.8 shows, seat-vote distortions are significantly lower in countries that adopted PR (starting with Belgium in 1899). At the same time,

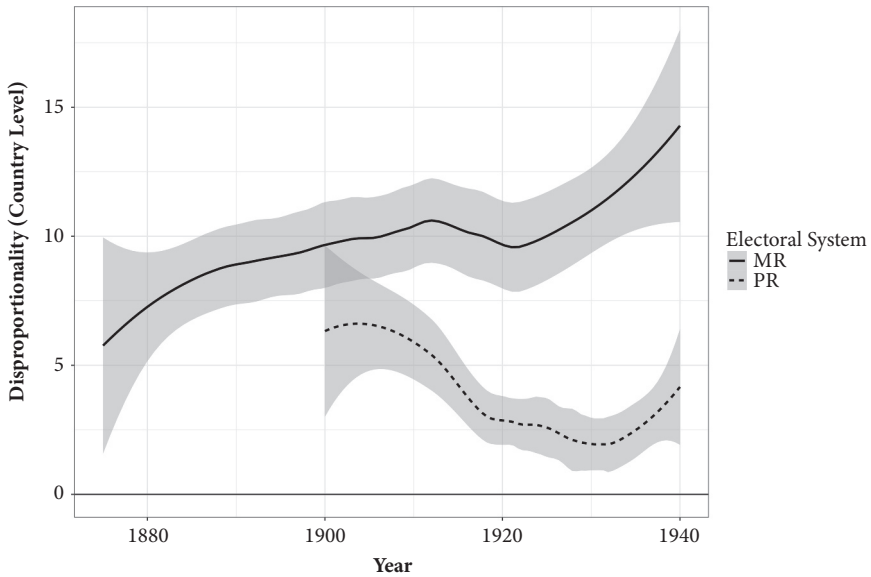


Fig. 3.8 Disproportionality by electoral system, 1875–1940

Notes: The figure is based on Cusack et al. (2007, 387). A local polynomial regression (LOESS) was used to create a smooth curve and the confidence intervals.

the parties that benefited from these distortions had every reason to oppose electoral system reform, especially when these parties relied on MR systems to neutralize electoral threats.

In short, we argue that some parties in first-wave democracies had good reasons to be dissatisfied with the electoral system, which was biased against them and which allowed incumbent parties to engineer majorities in parliament. In the next chapter, we argue that these distortions gave rise to demands for electoral reform and sometimes rather surprising reform alliances. Moreover, in light of the observation that the electoral system was biased in favour of incumbent parties (often deliberately so), we also discuss the question of how incumbent parties' resistance to reform was overcome. This question is related to Rokkan's second road to reform, which suggests that seat-vote distortions inform parties' positions on electoral reform. We add to this perspective in two ways. First, we argue that these distortions are often the result of containment measures, which is why there is a systematic relationship between containment measures and parties' positions on electoral system reform. Second, we argue that disadvantaged parties have to overcome the advantaged parties' resistance to reform, which often requires would-be reformers to rely on channels outside normal politics to institute change (Grofman & Lijphart, 2002, 8).

Appendix

Table 3.10 Summary statistics

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Accepted Proposals	0.53	0.50	0.00	1.00
Member of Parliament	0.62	0.49	0.00	1.00
Cantonal Government	0.11	0.31	0.00	1.00
Liberal Camp	0.57	0.50	0.00	1.00
ln District Magnitude	1.86	0.95	0.00	3.47
Seat Adjustment	0.43	0.50	0.00	1.00
Minority Party Vote Share	0.35	0.37	0.00	1.00
Redistricting	0.30	0.46	0.00	1.00
Disproportionality	-4.51	16.16	-53.40	53.30
ln District Magnitude	1.33	0.93	0.00	3.47
Redistricting	0.07	0.26	0.00	1.00

Table 3.11 Effectiveness of redistricting in Switzerland, 1848–1917: Estimations without single-member district cantons

	Disproportionality			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Redistricting	-2.66*	-2.69*	-2.48*	-3.60*
	(1.17)	(1.16)	(1.11)	(1.62)
ln District Magnitude			-3.88	-2.01
			(3.99)	(2.78)
Lagged Dependent Variable				0.27***
				(0.07)
Canton FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Quadratic Time Trends	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Num. obs.	459	459	459	440

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

4

Distortions, coalitions, and support for PR

In this chapter, we continue our theoretical discussion from Chapter 2, but we shift our focus from the politics of containment to the politics of electoral system choice. Rokkan's (1970) first road to electoral reform, the electoral threat thesis, suggests that established parties adopt proportional representation (PR) when insurgent parties threaten their electoral viability. In contrast, in Chapter 3, we have demonstrated that some established parties have means to contain electoral threats. These means are, however, tied to majoritarian representation (MR) systems. The existence of electorally strong insurgent parties is thus not sufficient for established parties to adopt PR. Instead, as argued in Chapter 2, established parties face a choice: They need to decide whether to contain insurgent parties under MR or, alternatively, to adopt PR to limit seat losses in the face of an uncontained electoral challenge.

In the following, we argue that the ability of parties to manipulate electoral markets is directly linked to electoral geography, resulting in two types of political coalitions that favour PR. First, incumbent parties with rural strongholds may employ malapportionment by either undermining the reapportionment process or by creating malapportioned districts. In these cases, urban parties suffer from disproportionalities and become the main advocates of PR. Second, incumbent parties with urban strongholds may use regular reapportionment and other measures to increase the weight of their constituencies. Moreover, they may engage in gerrymandering to weaken their competitors, not least other parties competing in the same districts. In these cases, rural parties join the marginalized urban parties to demand the adoption of PR as part of rural-urban coalitions.

Importantly, however, we do not argue that these coalitions necessarily lead to electoral system change. This is because reform coalitions often need to overcome the resistance of the parties benefiting from the status quo, which is likely to be difficult in normal political circumstances due to these parties' strong political position. In the third section of this chapter, we therefore argue that although we emphasize parties' role in explaining electoral

reform, external events and extra-parliamentary channels are often necessary to overcome incumbent parties' resistance. One such external event is military conflict, which can delegitimize incumbent parties in case of regime collapse, or force incumbent parties to engage in negotiations with other parties to ensure regime survival. We argue that the key role of military conflict in neutralizing incumbent parties' containment strategies explains the clustering of electoral reforms at the end of the First World War.

In this chapter, we first discuss how the use of containment measures informs parties' positions on electoral system change. Subsequently, we examine the likely reform coalitions. In the last section, we discuss the important role of external events and extra-parliamentary channels in explaining electoral reform. In the next chapter, we will test these arguments empirically.

4.1 Containment, party preferences, and support for PR

Which parties support the adoption of PR? In this section, we derive parties' preferences for PR based on their electoral geography, district design, and electoral alliances. Following the approach of Rodden (2009), we assume that a typical party system consists of three parties: a rural party, a strong urban party, and a weak urban party. The two urban parties compete for voters in the same districts. In the context of electoral reforms in first-wave democracies, we can assume that the insurgent party is one of the two urban parties (see Chapter 3). Whether the insurgent party is the strong or the weak urban party is a function of its electoral potential and the other parties' containment measures. However, the insurgent party's electoral potential is probably growing due to suffrage extension and industrialization. In contrast, the established parties may or may not be able to contain the insurgent party.¹ We argue that this situation characterizes the party systems of most first-wave democracies.

Our argument emphasizes that seat-vote distortions create incentives for parties to support electoral system reform (Andrews & Jackman, 2005). These disproportionalities result from the interplay between unequal electoral geographies and MR systems (Calvo & Rodden, 2015). Moreover, these disproportionalities typically increase with the entry of new insurgent parties

¹ In case of multiple rural parties, their electoral support is typically highly concentrated in different geographic areas. An example is Germany with the Centre Party dominating the rural Catholic South and the Conservatives dominating the rural Protestant East. In case of additional urban parties, these parties typically form effective electoral alliances. An example is Switzerland, where competition between the Democrats, Liberals, and Radicals was limited due to electoral alliances.

(Calvo, 2009). In line with Rokkan's (1970) second road to electoral reform, we therefore hypothesize:

Hypothesis 4.1 *Parties suffering from electoral disproportionalities are likely to support the adoption of PR. In contrast, parties benefiting from electoral disproportionalities are likely to oppose the adoption of PR.*

However, in contrast to the literature on Rokkan's second road to electoral reform, we stress that large parts of these seat-vote distortions are the result of electoral engineering. The resulting partisan biases do not simply occur as a mechanical consequence of the winner-takes-all logic of MR systems. Instead, they are often the result of measures used by incumbent parties to contain insurgent parties. Hence, while we agree that electoral geography can result in disproportionalities that disadvantage some parties over others in MR systems (Rodden, 2009), our argument does not primarily emphasize these majoritarian biases but the partisan biases resulting from electoral engineering. Moreover, we expect parties profiting from containment measures to oppose electoral reform because the MR systems allow them to protect their parliamentary dominance. In contrast, we expect parties that cannot rely on containment measures, and in particular parties that are the target of containment measures, to support the adoption of PR. We therefore hypothesize:

Hypothesis 4.2 *Parties that rely on containment measures to neutralize electoral threats profit from electoral disproportionalities and are thus likely to oppose the adoption of PR. Parties that are the target of these containment measures are likely to support the adoption of PR.*

In the following, we discuss how these expectations map onto the rural party's position on the adoption of PR, before turning to the two urban parties.

4.1.1 Rural parties

Rural parties' electoral support is typically highly concentrated in the countryside. In their rural strongholds, they are often politically dominant (segmented electoral markets in the terminology of Boix, 2010).² Rural parties

² Almost all parties ran candidates in both non-competitive constituencies (segmented electoral markets) and competitive constituencies (competitive electoral markets). However, Boix (2010, 406) argues that one of the two kinds generally prevailed within each party. We adopt a similar approach in our discussion.

are thus often unscathed by the entry of insurgent parties, especially socialist ones, which, as shown in Chapter 3, typically compete with established urban parties (Boix, 2010; Raymond, 2016; Rodden, 2009).

However, in first-wave democracies, all rural parties suffer from rural depopulation, which implies that the relative size of their support basis in the countryside is declining (see Chapter 3). As voters migrate to urban areas, they may continue to support rural parties. However, under majoritarian rules, the number of such diaspora voters is often too small to win seats in urban districts, where multiple parties compete for the vote (competitive electoral markets in the terminology of Boix, 2010).

We argue that rural parties' support for electoral reform is a function of district design and electoral alliances. In the absence of regular reapportionment to correct for shifts in population shares, rural parties are likely to benefit from malapportionment. Electoral alliances with other parties may further increase electoral disproportionalities benefiting rural parties. In this way, district design (or more precisely, the absence of redistricting) and electoral alliances allow rural parties to protect their strong parliamentary position. The diaspora voters in urban areas are not consequential, because the rural constituencies ensure a strong parliamentary representation. In this scenario, rural parties prefer to hold on to MR systems.³

The situation is different in case of regular reapportionment to account for rural depopulation. In this case, reapportionment prevents biases benefiting rural parties. Instead, rural depopulation results in the secular decline of rural parties' seat share unless these parties can turn their diaspora votes into seats, which is difficult under majoritarian rules. Rural parties are thus at risk of losing their strong parliamentary position, although electoral alliances with other parties may be able to offset some of these disadvantages. In fact, rural parties themselves may become the target of partisan districting, as electorally strong urban parties try to manipulate districts in their favour, e.g. by means of gerrymandering, which further reduces rural parties' ability to translate their diaspora votes into parliamentary representation.⁴

In case of regular reapportionment, rural parties thus develop an interest in electoral reform. Yet, we expect within-party conflicts over the

³ In this case, rural parties have little interest in gerrymandering because there are no serious competitors in their segmented electoral markets. Rural parties might benefit from gerrymandering in urban districts due to diaspora votes, but the redesign of urban districts might lead to demands for reapportionment. For this reason, rural parties are likely to stick to the existing district map.

⁴ In contrast, the potential for gerrymandering against rural parties in their rural strongholds is more limited due to segmented electoral markets.

desirability of PR. Whereas rural constituencies continue to benefit from segmented electoral markets and small district magnitude in the countryside, the growing relative weight of urban districts strengthens the position of the diaspora constituencies which would benefit from PR. The diaspora constituencies face competitive electoral markets and are likely to struggle to turn their vote share into parliamentary representation. As these diaspora constituencies become crucial for the rural parties' electoral viability (and considering the irreversible numerical decline of their rural strongholds), rural parties face incentives to support electoral reform. These reform options include the adoption of PR. However, these reform options also include the adoption of single-member districts that increase proportionality under majoritarian rules and allow rural parties to maintain the advantages of small district magnitude in the countryside (Ahmed, 2013; Benoit, 2001). Finally, there is also the middle ground on which the rural parties' different wings might be able to agree. This middle ground is the so-called 'Belgian solution', named after the electoral system Belgium adopted in 1899, which combined PR with small district magnitude in the countryside (see Chapter 8).⁵ We therefore hypothesize:

Hypothesis 4.3 *In the absence of regular reapportionment, rural parties are likely to prefer to maintain the MR system. In contrast, in case of regular reapportionment, rural parties are likely to develop an interest in electoral reform, including the adoption of PR, but they are likely to maintain a preference for small district magnitude in their rural strongholds.*

4.1.2 Urban parties

Urban parties typically face competitive electoral markets in their urban districts. Put differently, these parties compete with other parties for the vote of at least some fraction of the electorate (Boix, 2010). Moreover, among established parties, it is typically the urban ones that suddenly face tough competition from insurgent parties in the urban districts they had previously controlled (Raymond, 2016). Hence, there are likely two urban parties, one established and one insurgent (Rodden, 2009). In the following, we distinguish between a strong and a weak urban party to develop our hypotheses. However, we also discuss the possibility that the two urban parties are of

⁵ We address the question of district design in new PR systems in greater detail in Chapter 6.

comparable strength or that the weaker urban party may be able to overtake the stronger one in the not-so-distant future.

Again, we argue that whether urban parties support electoral reform is a function of district design and electoral alliances. In the absence of regular reapportionment, both urban parties suffer from malapportionment, as districts are not adapted to population movements. Consequently, we expect urban parties to demand regular reapportionment, although rural parties are likely to ignore these calls. In the absence of regular redistricting, gerrymandering is not an option either, because district borders remain largely set. Urban parties may be able to offset some of these disadvantages by means of electoral alliances with other parties, but rural parties have few incentives to join electoral alliances with urban parties (in rural districts). Hence, most electoral alliances are among urban parties themselves, which does little to offset the negative consequences of malapportionment.

In the absence of regular reapportionment, therefore, both urban parties face incentives to push for the adoption of PR. This is particularly the case for the weaker of the two urban parties, because the weak urban party is likely to lose against the strong urban party in competitive electoral districts. Electoral alliances may help reduce this disadvantage, but as the weaker party to the alliance, it is going to be dependent on the other parties for its parliamentary representation (Blais & Indridason, 2007).⁶

Although the strong urban party is more likely to prevail in competitive urban districts and may benefit more from electoral alliances, it too has an interest in electoral reform because it has few means to overcome the disadvantage created by malapportionment. However, for the strong urban party, PR comes with a price tag, because PR redistributes some seats from the strong to the weak urban party. Instead, the strong urban party is likely to prefer regular reapportionment to PR. For the strong urban party, PR is particularly enticing when the weak urban party is close in terms of electoral support or when the strong urban party expects the weak one to overtake it in terms of electoral support in the not-so-distant future. In contrast, if the strong urban party believes its advantage over the weak one will stay or even grow, it is likely to prefer to stick to the MR system and become the main urban party.

What are urban parties' preferences for electoral reform in case of regular reapportionment? In this situation, urban parties are unlikely to suffer

⁶ There are a number of reasons for this dependency (Blais & Indridason, 2007). For example, as the smaller party, the weak urban party is unlikely to win a plurality/majority in any district on its own. Similarly, without an electoral alliance in the first round, the weak urban party is unlikely to advance to the second round.

from malapportionment. Nevertheless, we expect weak urban parties to prefer PR adoption. Even in case of regular reapportionment, the weak urban party would not be powerful enough to shape the districting process on its own. Hence, it cannot resort to gerrymandering to protect its parliamentary position. In fact, if there is gerrymandering, the weak urban party is a likely target, because the strong urban party is competing over the same districts. In any case, its weaker position in urban districts implies that the weak urban party typically loses against the stronger parties except in case of favourable electoral alliances. However, as the weaker party to these alliances, there is no guarantee that it can hold on to these seats on its own. If the weak urban party's electoral potential is rapidly growing, as was often the case for socialist parties in first-wave democracies, there is some hope that it may become the strong urban party. However, in the light of possible containment measures (in particular, gerrymandering and electoral alliances), this is a risky strategy. As a result, we expect the weak urban party, like 'third parties' more generally, to prefer PR adoption even in case of regular reapportionment (Blais et al., 2005; Blais & Shugart, 2008).

The situation is different for the strong urban party in case of regular reapportionment. In this case, urban parties are unlikely to suffer from malapportionment. Instead, thanks to rural depopulation, the relative weight of urban districts is gradually increasing. Moreover, the regular redesign of districts may allow the strong urban party to rely on containment measures itself, most notably gerrymandering. Yet, even in the absence of gerrymandering, the strong urban party is likely to prevail in the competitive electoral markets in urban areas against the weak urban party. Electoral alliances may even increase this advantage. As a result, in this scenario, the strong urban party faces weak incentives to support electoral system change. Instead, we expect the strong urban party to prefer the existing MR system.

Once again, the main caveat concerns expectations about the party's future status as the strong urban party. If the party is optimistic that it will remain the strong urban party, it has few incentives to endorse electoral system change. In the case of an established party, it may be optimistic because of effective containment measures, whereas an insurgent party may be optimistic due to a rapidly growing electoral potential. In contrast, if the strong urban party is concerned about retaining its strong position, it probably prefers to support electoral system change while the party is still able to (co-)determine the specifics of the new electoral system. Reasons for concerns may be small vote margins, the lack of effective containment measures, or the weak urban party's rapidly growing electoral potential. We therefore hypothesize:

Hypothesis 4.4 *Independent of the reapportionment process, the weak urban party is likely to support the adoption of PR.*

Hypothesis 4.5 *In the absence of regular reapportionment, the strong urban party is likely to support the adoption of PR. In contrast, in case of regular reapportionment, the strong urban party is likely to prefer to maintain the MR system.*

4.1.3 Discussion

The previous theoretical framework suggests that parties' support for electoral reform differs as a function of containment measures and electoral geography. Clearly, this is a stylized discussion of parties' preferences for electoral system change. In reality, parties also pursue other goals and might engage in political bargaining. For example, some parties might agree to electoral system change in return for concessions in other areas, for instance suffrage extension. In other cases, constitutional provisions, super-majority requirements, or non-democratic upper chambers give some parties veto power over electoral reform processes (R. S. Katz, 2005). Our discussion of the politics of PR adoption in Chapter 5—in contrast to this discussion of parties' preferences for electoral reform—will take this complexity into account. However, before we turn to the likely reform coalitions (see section 4.2) and the politics of electoral reform (see section 4.3), three comments are in order.

First, the previous discussion has highlighted the important role of relevant 'third parties' (see also Blais et al., 2005; Blais & Shugart, 2008; Colomer, 2005). In all scenarios, it is always the weak urban party that is the strongest advocate of electoral system change. In all first-wave democracies, there were such 'third' parties. Importantly, this was also the case for countries that retained MR systems and later developed two-party systems (Raymond, 2016). However, these weak urban parties were not always able to become electorally relevant for a significant amount of time and in this way challenge the 'duopoly' of the two dominant parties. This is important. In the absence of an electorally *relevant* third party, be it an ascending insurgent party or a declining established party, pressure for electoral system change is likely to remain low. Instead, the 'Duvergian' workings of MR systems will produce a two-party duopoly, with continuous one-party majority governments controlled by one of the two dominant parties (Hagel, 2004, 530). In short, in the absence of a relevant third party, that is, a relevant electoral threat, there

is unlikely to be any serious push for electoral system change (Boix, 1999; Rokkan, 1970).

Second, the notion of weak and strong urban parties needs further clarification. In engineering a dominant position in parliament (and in turn, gaining control over the government), the main currency is seat shares, not vote shares. In first-wave democracies, some parties suffered from large seat-vote distortions. These parties were strong in terms of vote shares, but they struggled to turn these votes into seats. Such parties often suffered from an unfortunate electoral geography (Rodden, 2009), but as shown in Chapter 3, seat-vote distortions were also the result of containment measures by incumbent parties. A case in point is that of the Belgian Liberals in the late 19th century. In terms of electoral support, the Liberals were about as strong as the Socialists before the adoption of PR in 1899 (Trefz, 2010, 294). However, due to their dispersed electoral geography, the Liberals lost the urban districts to the Socialists who were better positioned to translate their votes into seats (Calvo, 2009). Our understanding of weak and strong urban parties takes such differences rooted in electoral geography and containment measures into account. Hence, in the Belgian case, despite similar levels of electoral support, the Socialists were the strong urban party because they were able to turn votes into seats and could reasonably expect to do so also in the future.

Third, our discussion highlights the importance of expectations about future performance. We argue that parties support electoral rules that appeal to their interests. In situations of political stability, parties should be able to form clear expectations, but in periods of change, considerable uncertainty about the effects of electoral reform may prevail (Andrews & Jackman, 2005; Calvo, 2009; Colomer, 2005). Such uncertainty characterizes the relationship between the strong and the weak urban parties in particular. We argued above that the weak urban party favours electoral system change unless it expects to become the strong urban party in the not-so-distant future. In contrast, the strong urban party may not support electoral system change if it still believes itself to be able to retain its status (for example due to effective containment measures). Uncertainty about electoral outcomes makes it possible that, for a period of time, both urban parties believe that it is *not* in their interest to endorse the adoption of PR. As parties gather more information about their electoral position, they update their positions on electoral system change. However, at some point, it may be too late to influence the politics of electoral reform, because these parties may no longer have the political clout necessary to shape the politics of electoral reform (Rodden, 2009). In this situation, because both urban parties believe themselves to be the strong one,

no urban party will support the adoption of PR, even if, with hindsight, it becomes clear that one of the two parties misjudged the situation.⁷

4.2 Two types of coalitions in favour of PR

In the previous section, we examined parties' preferences for electoral reform. In this section, we identify the reform coalitions that result from these preferences. Again, we assume that a typical party system will consist of three main parties: a rural party, a strong urban party, and a weak urban party (cf. Rodden, 2009). The insurgent party will be one of the two urban parties. The two established parties, both the rural and one of the urban ones, may be able to rely on district design and electoral alliances to contain the insurgent party, whereas the insurgent party's electoral potential is expected to grow due to rural depopulation and industrialization.

In case of regular reapportionment to account for shifts in population shares, reform coalitions in support of PR are likely to consist of the rural party and the weak urban party. In this case, the strong urban party benefits from several advantages. Regular reapportionment reduces the risk of malapportionment and possibly offers opportunities for gerrymandering, which the strong urban party may be able to use. Thanks to rural depopulation, the relative weight of urban districts is growing. As the stronger of the two urban parties, it is better positioned to win competitive urban districts and benefit from electoral alliances. Consequently, the strong urban party is likely to enjoy substantial electoral disproportionalities and therefore prefers the existing MR system.

The situation is different for the weak urban party and the rural party. The weak urban party is likely to lose against the strong urban party in competitive urban districts except in case of favourable electoral alliances. However, as the weaker party to these alliances, there is no guarantee that it can hold on to these seats on its own. Moreover, the weak urban party may be the target of the strong urban party's containment measures, in particular gerrymandering, because the two parties are in direct competition with each other. The weak urban party is thus likely to suffer from significant electoral disproportionalities.

⁷ Such miscalculation can affect both established and insurgent parties. For example, insurgent parties may over-estimate their ability to mobilize voters and threaten established parties. Unable to win seats under majoritarian rules, these insurgent parties may simply flicker out after a few elections. In contrast, established parties may over-estimate their ability to neutralize electoral threats. As containment measures prove to be ineffective, the insurgent parties may then become the strong urban party and form a duopoly with the rural party.

The rural party is also open to electoral system change. In case of regular reapportionment, the rural party is in secular decline due to rural depopulation. Although rural depopulation may lead to diaspora constituencies in urban districts, the MR system makes it difficult for rural parties to turn these votes into seats. For this reason, we expect the rural party to join the weak urban party in a reform coalition. We therefore hypothesize:

Hypothesis 4.6 *In case of regular reapportionment to account for shifts in population shares, reform coalitions in favour of PR are likely to consist of the weak urban party and the rural party.*

In the absence of regular reapportionment, we expect reform coalitions to consist of the two urban parties. In this case, the rural party benefits from electoral disproportionalities because the district map has not been updated in light of rural depopulation. The rural party is thus able to win its seats with fewer voters than the urban parties. As the adoption of PR would remove this advantage, the rural party has no interest in electoral system change.

In contrast, in the absence of regular reapportionment, both urban parties are likely to suffer from electoral disproportionalities. For the weak urban party, this is yet another reason to support PR adoption. For the strong urban party, non-reapportionment is likely to neutralize any advantages it draws from the MR system. However, as discussed above, for the strong urban party, PR adoption also implies some costs, because PR may redistribute some seats from the strong to the weak urban party (by removing the majoritarian bonus the strong urban party enjoys in urban districts). Hence, the strong urban party prefers regular reapportionment to PR. Regular reapportionment is also in the interest of the weak urban party (although it would not remove the majoritarian biases from which it suffers). Yet, the rural party has few incentives to agree to such a reform. We argue that an urban-urban reform coalition in support of PR is likely in two situations.

First, we expect the strong urban party to be more open to PR when it expects the weak urban party to overtake it in terms of electoral support in the not-so-distant future. Hence, the strong urban party (in this case the established party) is worried about becoming the weak one, whereas the weak urban party (in this case the insurgent party) cannot be sure to become the strong one due to possible containment measures. In this situation of uncertainty, a reform coalition of the two urban parties is more likely.

Second, if the strong urban party believes its advantage over the weak one to stay or even grow, it is likely to prefer to stick to the MR system. However, the strong urban party might depend on support from the weak urban

party in other areas. For example, the insurgent party might have overtaken the established urban one in terms of electoral support. However, for further democratizing reforms such as the removal of plural voting or suffrage restrictions, a super majority in the lower chamber or a majority in a non-democratic upper chamber might be needed, which gives the established, but weaker, urban party a more advantageous position in negotiations over the adoption of PR.

Hence, while there is no certainty that the two urban parties can create a reform coalition, an urban-urban coalition in support of PR is nevertheless quite likely. We therefore hypothesize:

Hypothesis 4.7 *In the absence of regular reapportionment to account for shifts in population shares, reform coalitions in favour of PR are likely to consist of the two urban parties.*

In sum, we expect to observe two types of reform coalitions, primarily depending on whether regular reapportionment accounts for shifts in population shares. Importantly, both types of coalitions can (but need not) include the insurgent party, which may join a rural-urban coalition as the weak urban party or an urban-urban coalition together with the other urban party. Hence, contra to Rokkan's (1970) first road to electoral reform, the electoral threat thesis, we argue that PR is not primarily adopted by coalitions of established parties facing an electorally strong insurgent party. In our account, this is just one possible scenario, namely an example of a rural-urban coalition that includes an established party as the weak urban party. In contrast, our argument suggests that insurgent parties often support the adoption of PR (Penadés, 2008; Rodden, 2009). Moreover, in line with the literature on the importance of elite splits for democratic reforms (Ansell & Samuels, 2014; Mares, 2022), we argue that the issue of electoral reform often divides established parties, because some of the established parties also suffer from electoral disproportionalities.

4.3 The extra-parliamentary politics of PR

So far, we have explored parties' preferences for electoral system change and the likely reform coalitions. But what makes these coalitions succeed in changing the electoral system? This is a non-trivial question because parties benefiting from seat-vote distortions can be expected to resist any attempt at introducing PR systems. As discussed in Chapter 2, electoral systems are

prime examples of redistributive institutions (Tsebelis, 1990). Parties that won the election under a certain set of rules are unlikely to put their interests or values at risk by changing these very rules (Mares, 2022, 6; Przeworski, 2009, 291). As a result, whoever suffers from seat-vote distortions and wants to see the electoral system changed has to overcome the resistance of political groups that benefit from these distortions. Why would the beneficiaries of the existing electoral system not take advantage of their strong political position to prevent reforms? And what stops these parties from resorting to electoral engineering to protect their privileged position?

Of course, parties disadvantaged by the existing electoral system may simply bide their time. With every election, a new opportunity arises that allows disadvantaged parties to win the parliamentary majority needed to push through the desired electoral system reform. However, given the containment measures of the incumbent parties, waiting for the right moment is not necessarily a promising strategy. Instead, we argue that there are two processes that make a successful reform more likely.

First, for incumbent parties, the political costs of containment by means of district design and electoral alliances may be constantly growing, prompting some of them to reconsider the status quo and endorse electoral system change (cf. Mares, 2022). As argued in Chapter 2, as containment measures, district design and electoral alliances offer several advantages over alternatives such as suffrage restrictions and ballot rigging. Most notably, while potentially highly effective in neutralizing electoral threats (see Chapter 3), voters may find it hard to recognize containment by means of district design and electoral alliances as clearly manipulative, which makes these measures less costly in terms of electoral support. It is likely that voters are critical of electoral manipulation (e.g., Blais & Shugart, 2008; R. S. Katz, 2005; Norris, 2017; Renwick, 2010). Violations of electoral integrity norms can therefore lead to an electoral backlash, but the difficulty of proving that district maps or electoral alliances are manipulative reduces the risk of an electoral backlash in the case of these containment measures (see Chapter 2).

However, these containment measures have to be used against the background of the existing electoral geographies and party systems, and within the rules set by the constitutions. These constraints imply that in reality, the potential for containment by means of district design and electoral alliances is ultimately limited. For example, in the case of rural depopulation, urban parties will find it difficult to benefit from malapportionment, no matter how hard they try. In contrast, rural parties may be able to profit from malapportionment, but seat-vote distortions may reach levels that make it electorally

costly for rural parties to ignore calls for reapportionment, because the manipulative nature of the district maps becomes difficult to deny. Similarly, even the most creative student of gerrymandering must accept the limits imposed by electoral geography. Just as independent boundary commissions struggle to draw politically neutral district maps, would-be manipulators must work with the existing distribution of voters across a polity and within the constitutional rules. Engineering district boundaries in such contexts may result in district maps that are so clearly manipulative that voters start punishing incumbent parties for these illicit strategies, while other parties refuse to enter electoral coalitions or support the incumbent parties' candidates in runoffs. Moreover, elite splits and the fragmentation of the party system may make electoral alliances so large and volatile that incumbent parties can no longer rely on their effectiveness. Mares (2022) has forcefully highlighted the role of such growing political costs in explaining how first-wave democracies ended electoral corruption. We agree with Mares (2022) that such developments help explain why reform coalitions succeed, although we acknowledge that it is difficult to predict at what point the political costs of increasingly visible electoral manipulation begin to outweigh the benefits of neutralizing electoral threats. We therefore hypothesize:

Hypothesis 4.8 *The incumbent party is likely to support the adoption of PR when the political costs of electoral manipulation begin to outweigh the benefits in terms of seat maximization.*

However, as shown in Chapter 3, containment by means of district design and electoral alliances was quite effective in the countries under investigation. There are few indications that their potential had been exhausted in all countries that eventually adopted PR by the time of the First World War. Thus, we believe that such normal electoral and parliamentary politics is only part of the story. In what follows, we argue that there is a second process that makes successful electoral reform more likely. Specifically, we argue that external events are often necessary to overcome the resistance of privileged parties. In the words of Grofman and Lijphart (2002, 8), electoral reform often requires parties 'to go outside normal channels to institute change'. Of course, the reason for resorting to extra-parliamentary channels can be found in the incumbent parties' use of containment measures which prevent the other parties from gaining the strong parliamentary position necessary to pursue electoral change by parliamentary means. As a result, external events—in the sense of external to regular electoral and parliamentary procedures—are needed to overcome the incumbent parties' resistance.

Consider the example of direct democratic institutions in Switzerland. Since 1891, Swiss voters have been able to rely on so-called ‘popular initiatives’ to put policy proposals up for popular vote (subject to signature requirements and collection periods) without consulting or requiring the approval of legislative or executive bodies (Leemann et al., 2025). If approved at the ballot box, the proposals are added to the Swiss constitution and must be implemented. There are only few limits on the content of these policy proposals. Consequently, Swiss voters may demand electoral system reform, and this is precisely what they did in the early 20th century. By relying on direct democracy, a rural-urban coalition (consisting of the Conservatives and Socialists) managed to overcome the resistance of the Liberals, who had relied on gerrymandering and electoral alliances to retain a parliamentary majority that was considerably larger than their vote share (see Chapter 8).

Clearly, direct democratic institutions are rare, but the basic idea travels to different contexts. By means of normal parliamentary politics, it may be hard to overcome the privileged parties’ resistance to electoral reform because these parties’ parliamentary position is inflated due to district design and electoral alliances. However, external events can help disadvantaged parties to better capitalize on their true level of popular support, as these events—possibly temporarily—neutralize the privileged parties’ containment measures. The most likely—but certainly not the only—candidates for such external events are large military conflicts (for a similar argument focusing on suffrage extension, see Acemoglu & Robinson, 2000; Boix, 2003; Ingesson et al., 2018; Levi et al., 1997; Przeworski, 2009). In the case of first-wave democracies, the First World War is the most obvious example. Military conflicts can open the window for electoral reform by temporarily weakening the established parties’ firm grip on power. They can do so in two main ways.

On the one hand, military conflict can directly change the power balance within party systems. For example, the public may blame incumbent parties for the unpopular war effort and thus remove them from power, which necessarily also puts an end to the containment measures that the incumbent parties used to keep other political groups from power. Large-scale wars might even result in the collapse of the existing political order. A rich literature has shown that war outcomes affect the tenure of governing parties (Chiozza & Goemans, 2004; De Mesquita & Siverson, 1995; Debs & Goemans, 2010). In a recent study, Croco and Weeks (2016) show that the likelihood of voters punishing governing parties increases with the government’s culpability for the conflict. Alternatively, military conflicts can force incumbent parties to seek the other parties’ support in the context of national unity governments. Such national unity governments are common in conflict

and post-conflict situations, as the war effort forces governments to develop a war industry and compels citizens to serve in the military. With such deep interventions in people's freedoms and rights, governments face heightened legitimacy requirements, which is hard to accomplish without the support of all major political parties. However, parties' support for the war effort may be conditional on political concessions. In particular, parties that are the target of containment measures may demand the removal of these measures in return for their support for the war-time effort.

On the other hand, military conflicts have the potential to fundamentally transform a society's state and class structures. War is a costly enterprise for citizens, because it often has devastating economic consequences and claims the lives of numerous civilians and soldiers (Croco & Weeks, 2016; Emmenegger & Walter, 2021b; Obinger & Schmitt, 2018). The First World War was certainly no exception in these developments. The combination of growing social needs and declining economic resources can result in explosive social situations. In the case of the First World War, the situation was further aggravated by the Russian Revolution of 1917, which gave rise to an alternative political and economic model that risked spreading across first-wave democracies by means of radicalized socialist groups and the creation of communist parties. Consequently, military conflicts can cause large-scale discontent and trigger new forms of mass mobilization, which, in turn, creates considerable uncertainty about the consequences of these possible societal transformations.

The resulting extra-parliamentary mobilization may be such that incumbent parties are forced to acknowledge the need for electoral system change in order to protect the existing political order (Ahmed, 2013; Barzachka, 2014). For instance, Gjerløw & Rasmussen (2022) show how the growing radicalization and extra-parliamentary mobilization of the Norwegian Socialists during the First World War prompted the established parties to make concessions, including on electoral system choice, to strengthen the reformist wing within the socialist movement and protect the parliamentary system.⁸ Importantly, the Norwegian case also shows that electoral engineering can contribute to the insurgent parties' ideological radicalization because containment measures make it more difficult for insurgent parties to achieve their political goals through parliamentary means (Rasmussen & Knutsen, 2023, 21; see also Ahmed, 2013). In such distorted electoral systems,

⁸ Gjerløw & Rasmussen (2022) develop their argument in the context of the Russian Revolution of 1917 rather than the First World War. However, it is hard to tell the two factors apart because the First World War was a critical factor leading to the Russian Revolution and contributed greatly to the discontent within the socialist movement that made radical political alternatives to parliamentary politics attractive.

reformists face an uphill battle when trying to convince the radicals of the benefits of parliamentary democracy.⁹

Because of such large societal transformations, Andrews and Jackman (2005, 66) identify the geopolitical situation in the early 20th century, especially in the immediate aftermath of the First World War, as one of ‘extreme uncertainty’ and argue that in this situation, ‘the safest choice typically involved some form of proportional representation.’ The reason is that in situations of high uncertainty, actors prefer electoral rules that reduce the risk of becoming absolute losers, which is less likely in case of an inclusive electoral system such as PR (Colomer, 2005). Hence, in chaotic post-war settings, parties might struggle to form accurate expectations about the different parties’ electoral potential and the effectiveness of containment measures. This uncertainty might encourage parties to seek an electoral system that does not produce absolute winners and losers, as MR systems tend to do, but rather one that forces parties to form broad coalitions.

In short, we argue that the clustering of transitions to PR in the immediate postwar years reflects that geopolitical developments such as the First World War can neutralize incumbent parties’ containment strategies and may allow disadvantaged parties to push for the desired reforms. Such reforms include the adoption of PR, but they can also concern attempts to increase the proportionality of the already existing PR systems or remove other remaining non-democratic rules such as suffrage restrictions or non-democratic upper chambers. We therefore hypothesize:

Hypothesis 4.9 *External events are often needed to create the window of opportunity to overcome the incumbent party’s resistance to the adoption of PR.*

In the next chapter, we will test these hypotheses on the politics of electoral system choice using a new dataset on containment measures, political parties’ positions on electoral system change, and the coalitional politics of electoral reform.

⁹ Our account of the party politics of electoral system choice emphasizes containment measures and uncertainty about their effectiveness. In contrast, accounts emphasizing the Socialists’ ideological radicalization to explain the adoption of PR (e.g., Ahmed, 2013; Barzachka, 2014; Gjerløw & Rasmussen, 2022) suffer from a reverse causality problem because the *absence of PR* might have contributed to the Socialists’ radicalization (Senn & Straumann, 2022; Kreuzer, 2023, 90). Moreover, there is no certainty that electoral reform strengthens the reformist wing within the socialist parties (as in Norway). Instead, electoral reform can also result in the strengthening of the parliamentary representation of the radical wings of socialist parties (as in Italy, see Caciagli, 2010, 1032–1033). In Chapter 5, we will show that there is no systematic relationship between socialist radicalization and PR adoption. In contrast, we find a robust relationship between containment measures and parties’ preferences for electoral system change.

The politics of electoral system choice

In this chapter, we return to the empirical analysis of the party politics of electoral system choice. Based on the theoretical arguments developed in Chapter 4, we examine how containment measures relate to parties' positions on the adoption of proportional representation (PR), likely reform coalitions, and, ultimately, the adoption of PR. The hypotheses developed in Chapter 4 are displayed one more time in Table 5.1.

In the first section of the chapter, we discuss the positions of all major parties in 17 countries on the adoption of PR in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In addition, we compare our classification with the ones provided by Boix (1999, 2010), Cusack et al. (2007, 2010a, 2010b), Kreuzer (2010a, 2010b), and Penadés (2008). We argue that this re-examination of party positions is necessary because there is a surprising amount of disagreement in the existing literature. We explain our classification of parties' positions in the Appendix of this chapter. For each country, we also summarize the politics of electoral system choice and document the use of containment measures.

Subsequently, we examine parties' positions on PR adoption. We show that explanations emphasizing socialist electoral threats, economic coordination, or ideological radicalization cannot account for the observed variation. Instead, we find that seat-vote distortions and, more importantly, the use of containment measures are strong predictors of parties' positions on PR adoption. This analysis suggests that established parties respond to electoral threats from insurgent parties. However, their response is moderated by the availability of containment measures. Established parties that can contain insurgent parties in majoritarian representation (MR) systems do not support the adoption of PR, while established parties that cannot contain insurgent parties endorse electoral system change to minimize seat losses in the face of uncontained electoral threats. In a similar vein, insurgent parties that are the target of containment measures become strong supporters of electoral system change, while insurgent parties that cannot be contained remain committed to the MR systems.

In the third section of this chapter, we examine whether the type of containment incumbent parties use gives rise to different coalitions pushing for

electoral system change. In line with our theoretical expectations, we find that where regular reapportionment occurs to account for shifts in population shares, reform coalitions in favour of PR consist of the weak urban party and the rural party. Conversely, in the absence of regular reapportionment, reform coalitions in favour of PR typically consist of the two urban parties. Moreover, in this section, we demonstrate that incumbent parties that have exhausted their potential for containment often become supporters of electoral system change, as they try to influence the specifics of the new electoral system as long as they are still in the position to do so. For these incumbent parties, the political costs of electoral engineering have begun to outweigh the benefits in terms of seat maximization. In contrast, in case of continued reliance on containment measures to neutralize electoral threats, reform coalitions have to push through electoral system change against the opposition of incumbent parties.

In many cases, however, these reform coalitions are not strong enough to bring about change because incumbent parties rely on containment measures to protect their strong positions. As we show in the fourth section of this chapter, in most cases, mobilization outside the normal parliamentary channels was necessary to overcome these parties' resistance to electoral reform. The First World War was particularly important in this context because the war increased the cost of excluding other political groups. It is for this reason, we argue, that electoral reforms cluster in the immediate aftermath of the First World War.

5.1 Party positions on the adoption of PR

In this section, we document the positions of the main political parties on the adoption of PR. We are not the first to do so. As shown in Table 5.2, Boix (1999, 2010), Cusack et al. (2007, 2010a, 2010b), Kreuzer (2010a, 2010b), and Penadés (2008) have recently classified party positions on the adoption of PR in first-wave democracies. However, for two reasons, we believe it to be necessary to revisit these classifications.

First, all four of the existing classifications are incomplete. Boix (1999, 2010) classifies only non-socialist parties, while Penadés (2008) mainly focuses on socialist parties. Cusack et al. (2007, 2010a, 2010b) do not always provide discussions of individual parties. Instead, they refer to a consensus among all the major parties, which we report as the position of the political elites in Table 5.2. Kreuzer (2010a, 2010b) offers the most complete

Table 5.1 Theoretical expectations

Hypothesis 4.1:	<i>Parties suffering from electoral disproportionalities are likely to support the adoption of PR. In contrast, parties benefiting from electoral disproportionalities are likely to oppose the adoption of PR.</i>
Hypothesis 4.2:	<i>Parties that rely on containment measures to neutralize electoral threats profit from electoral disproportionalities and are thus likely to oppose the adoption of PR. Parties that are the target of these containment measures are likely to support the adoption of PR.</i>
Hypothesis 4.3:	<i>In the absence of regular reapportionment, rural parties are likely to prefer to maintain the MR system. In contrast, in case of regular reapportionment, rural parties are likely to develop an interest in electoral reform, including the adoption of PR, but they are likely to maintain a preference for small district magnitude in their rural strongholds.</i>
Hypothesis 4.4:	<i>Independent of the reapportionment process, the weak urban party is likely to support the adoption of PR.</i>
Hypothesis 4.5:	<i>In the absence of regular reapportionment, the strong urban party is likely to support the adoption of PR. In contrast, in case of regular reapportionment, the strong urban party is likely to prefer to maintain the MR system.</i>
Hypothesis 4.6:	<i>In case of regular reapportionment to account for shifts in population shares, reform coalitions in favour of PR are likely to consist of the weak urban party and the rural party.</i>
Hypothesis 4.7:	<i>In the absence of regular reapportionment to account for shifts in population shares, reform coalitions in favour of PR are likely to consist of the two urban parties.</i>
Hypothesis 4.8:	<i>The incumbent party is likely to support the adoption of PR when the political costs of electoral manipulation begin to outweigh the benefits in terms of seat maximization.</i>
Hypothesis 4.9:	<i>External events are often needed to create the window of opportunity to overcome the incumbent party's resistance to the adoption of PR.</i>

classification of party positions. However, also in his case, there are some missing parties (e.g., in the case of Finland, France, or the Netherlands).

Second, there is a—possibly—surprising amount of disagreement between these classifications. To be clear, for some cases, such as Australia, Canada, and the USA, there is no disagreement. However, in other cases, such as Belgium, Denmark, and Sweden, disagreements are rather significant. Of the 17 countries covered in Table 5.2, there is at least some disagreement between the four existing classifications in 11 cases. For example, Boix (1999, 2010) and Penadés (2008) code the Swedish Liberals as opponents of PR, Cusack et al. (2007, 2010a, 2010b) as supporters of PR, while Kreuzer (2010a, 2010b) argues that the Liberals changed their position on PR adoption from opposition to support of it.

For these reasons, we revisit parties' positions on the adoption of PR. The last column of Table 5.2 shows our classification of parties' positions. We discuss our classification for each country in great detail in the Appendix to this chapter. In our case selection, we follow the existing classifications.¹ In line with the existing literature, we consider the Irish single-transferable vote (STV) system an example of a PR system, while the Australian alternative vote (AV) system with single-member districts is an example of an MR system (Bormann & Golder, 2013; Colomer, 2005; Grofman et al., 1999). In addition, we classify the French electoral system of 1919 as a PR system, which is certainly debatable in light of its distributional consequences (see below for a detailed discussion).

Table 5.2 shows that our classification does not radically differ from any of the existing ones. However, there are some significant differences. For example, in our assessment, there is little evidence that the German Centre Party favoured the adoption of PR before 1918. Similarly, in the Belgian case, discussed in detail in Chapter 8, there is strong evidence that the Conservatives remained divided on the desirability of PR until 1899. Moreover, we observe more position changes over time, especially in comparison to Cusack et al. (2007, 2010a, 2010b) who expect parties' positions on PR to be rather stable. In our classification, approximately a third of the parties changed their position on PR in the relevant period (i.e., from the late 19th century until about 1920, depending on the country). In the case of position changes on PR, we indicate the approximate year of change, but we hasten to add that these are often broad indications, because parties often needed some time to consolidate their new positions. Overall, our classification of party positions is closest to Kreuzer's (2010a, 2010b), with identical classifications in approximately 70% of all cases, followed by Boix (1999, 2010) and Penadés (2008) with an overlap of approximately 63% each. Our classification is most different from the one provided by Cusack et al. (2007, 2010a, 2010b), with an overlap of approximately 55%, although one reason for this low score can be found in the numerous position changes, which Cusack et al. (2007, 2010a, 2010b) clearly under-estimate.

Finally, it should be noted that socialist parties did not always have clear positions on PR from the outset, which is reflected in our classification. Socialist parties often prioritized other reform goals, notably the introduction of universal suffrage or the abolition of non-democratic upper chambers (Kreuzer, 2023, 83). In Belgium, Denmark, and Sweden, the Socialists were

¹ However, we limit our focus to first-wave democracies and do not cover Japan because of the country's different party system and political context.

therefore not the main driving forces behind the introduction of PR, as highlighted by Penadés (2008, 125). At the same time, however, once PR had been adopted, the Socialists in these three countries clearly supported the new electoral system, pushing for reforms that further increased the proportionality of the electoral systems, a point that Cusack et al. (2010b, 11–12) stress. In our assessment, this suggests that the Socialists did *not* oppose PR. However, the Socialists' unwillingness to support PR in the absence of other democratizing reforms (e.g., suffrage extension) indicates that they were *not* supporters of PR either. We therefore classify the positions of the Socialists in Belgium, Denmark (until 1915), and Sweden as divided.

In the next section, we turn to an empirical analysis of parties' positions on the desirability of PR. We show that electoral containment efforts are a better predictor of parties' positions on electoral reform than alternative explanations emphasizing parties' vulnerability to insurgent parties, the degree of economic coordination, or the radicalization of socialist parties.

5.2 What explains parties' position on the adoption of PR?

In Chapter 4, we hypothesized that seat-vote distortions and the ability to manipulate electoral markets explain why parties support or oppose the adoption of PR. In this section, we start by providing evidence that a party's ability to manipulate the design of electoral markets via gerrymandering and malapportionment is linked to the degree of disproportionality it benefits from. While disproportionality can have causes unrelated to containment such as electoral geography, we argue that containment measures create new and amplify existing distortions in the vote-to-seat translation. Subsequently, we demonstrate that parties that benefit from disproportionalities and containment measures are more likely to oppose the adoption of PR.

To show that a party's ability to manipulate the design of electoral markets is linked to disproportionality, we use a large sample of elections in 14 Western countries before the adoption of PR or, in the cases where countries did not adopt PR after the First World War, until the end of the 1910s (see Table 5.9 in the Appendix for the sample).² We measure disproportionality as the difference between the seat share and the vote share of a party. Thus, positive values suggest that a party received a higher share of seats than votes.

² We exclude Finland and Ireland because both countries did not feature multi-party elections after independence prior to the adoption of PR. We also exclude Austria because data are only available for two elections prior to the adoption of PR.

Table 5.2 Party positions on the adoption of PR

Country	Boix	Cusack et al.	Kreuzer	Penadés	Our coding
Australia	Antisocialists: No Free Trade: No Liberals: No Protectionists: No Catholics: Yes	Elites: No	Conservatives: No Liberals: No Socialists: No	Socialists: No	Country Party: No Liberals: No Socialists: No
Austria	German Nationals: NA	Catholics: Yes	Christian Democrats: Yes German Nationals: No	Catholics: Yes Socialists: Yes	Christian Democrats: No → Yes (1918) German Nationals: No → Yes (1918)
Belgium	Catholics: No → Yes (1894) Liberals: No → Yes (1894)	Elites: Yes Catholics: Yes	Socialists: Yes Christian Democrats: Divided Liberals: No → Yes	Catholics: Yes Socialists: No	Socialists: Yes Conservatives: No → Divided (1894) Liberals: Divided → Yes (1894)
Canada	Conservatives: No Liberals: No	Socialists: Yes Elites: No	Socialists: Divided Conservatives: No Liberals: No	NA	Socialists: Divided Conservatives: No Liberals: No
Denmark	Moderate Venstre: No Højre: No → Yes (1901) Radikale Venstre: No Venstre: No	Højre: Yes Radikale Venstre: Yes Venstre: No → Yes	Conservatives: Yes Liberals: No Social Liberals: Yes Socialists: No → Yes	Conservatives: Yes Liberals: No Socialists: No	Conservatives: Yes Liberals: No Social Liberals: Yes Socialists: Divided → Yes (1915)

continued

Table 5.2 *continued*

Country	Boix	Cusack et al.	Kreuzer	Penadés	Our coding
Finland	NA	NA	Non-socialists: Yes Socialists: Yes	Socialists: Yes	Old Finns: Yes Young Finns: Yes Swedish People's Party: Yes Socialists: Yes
France	Centre: No Centre Right: Yes	Elites: Probably No	Centre-Right: Divided → No Socialists: Yes → No	Liberals: No Socialists: Yes (until mid-1920s)	Conservatives: Yes Radicals: No Socialists: Yes → No (1927)
Germany	Anticlerical Catholic: Yes Radicals: No Right: Yes Conservatives: No German Empire: No National Liberals: No → Yes (1890) Progressive Liberals: No → Yes (1890) Centre: Yes (after 1913)	Centre: Yes Socialists: Yes Elites: Yes	Conservatives: No → Yes (1914) Liberals: Yes Centre: No → Yes (1914) Socialists: Yes	Centre: No → Yes (1913) Socialists: Yes	Conservatives: No National Liberals: Divided → Yes (1917) Progressive Liberals: Divided → Yes (1917) Centre Party: No → Yes (1918) Socialists: Yes

Ireland	NA	Elites: No	Conservatives: Yes Liberals: No	Socialists: Yes	Sinn Féin: Yes
Italy	Catholics: Yes Liberals: Yes	Catholics: Yes Elites: Probably Yes	Christian Democrats: Yes Liberals: No → Yes (1912) Socialists: Yes	Catholics: Yes Liberals: Yes Socialists: Yes	Christian Democrats: Yes Liberals: No → Yes (1918) Socialists: Yes
Netherlands	Anti-Revolutionary Party: Yes	Catholics: Yes	Christian Democrats: Yes	Catholics: Yes	Anti-Revolutionary Party: Yes → Divided (1909)
	Catholics: Yes Christian Historical Union: Yes	Socialists: No → Yes Elites: Yes	Liberals: Yes Socialists: Divided	Liberals: Yes Socialists: Yes	Catholics: Yes Christian Historical Union: No → Yes (1908) Liberals: No → Yes (1912)
New Zealand	Conservatives: No Liberals: No → Yes (1912)	Elites: No	Conservatives: No Liberals: No Socialists: No	Socialists: No	Socialists: Yes → Divided (1909) Conservatives: No Liberals: No → Yes (1914) Socialists: No
Norway	Conservatives: No Liberals: No → Yes (1900)	Elites: Yes	Conservatives: Yes Liberals: Yes Socialists: Yes	Conservatives: Yes Liberals: No Socialists: Yes	Conservatives: Yes Liberals: No → Divided (1913) Socialists: Yes

continued

Table 5.2 continued

Country	Boix	Cusack et al.	Kreuzer	Penadés	Our coding
Sweden	Conservatives: No → Yes (1900) Liberals: No	Conservatives: Yes Liberals: Yes	Conservatives: Yes Liberals No → Yes	Conservatives: Yes Liberals: No	Conservatives: Yes Liberals: No → Divided (1907)
Switzerland	Catholics: No → Yes (1908) Democrats: No → Yes (1908) Radicals: No	Socialists: No → Yes Conservatives: Yes	Socialists: Divided Christian Democrats: Yes Liberals: No	Socialists: No Catholics: Yes Liberals: No	Socialists: Divided Conservatives: Yes Liberals: No
United Kingdom	Conservatives: No Liberals: No → Yes (1918)	Socialists: Yes Conservatives: No Liberals: No → Yes (1930) Socialists: No	Socialists: Yes Conservatives: No Liberals: No → Yes Socialists: Yes → No	Socialists: Yes Conservatives: No Liberals: No → Yes Socialists: No	Socialists: Yes Conservatives: No Liberals: No → Yes (1922) Socialists: Yes → No (1922)
United States	Democrats: No Republicans: No	Democrats: No Republicans: No	Democrats: No Republicans: No	NA	Democrats: No Republicans: No

Sources: Boix (1999, 2010), Cusack et al. (2007, 2010a, 2010b), Kreuzer (2010a, 2010b), Penadés (2008).

Notes: Boix classifies party families rather than parties in case of France, and offers no coding for the Finnish and Irish cases. Cusack et al. do not offer any information on the Finnish case. Kreuzer's coding of the Swedish Socialists was changed from yes/no (no clear position, changing over time) to 'divided' for the sake of consistency. We include the classification of Penadés for non-socialist parties only if they are explicitly mentioned. Penadés does not offer any information on Canada and the USA. For reasons of data availability, our classification of Austrian parties does not differentiate between German Conservatives and German Liberals. We refer to German Nationals instead. In addition, for Switzerland, we do not distinguish between Democrats, Liberals, and Radicals. These three groups constituted the three wings of the liberal movement. For the sake of simplicity, we refer to these three groups as Liberals (see Chapters 3 and 8 for a detailed discussion of this alliance).

Table 5.3 Incumbent parties that could rely on district design as a containment measure

Country	Incumbent parties relying on district design for containment	Incumbent parties not relying on district design for containment
Australia	Liberals, Country Party	-
Austria	Christian Democrats, German Nationals	-
Belgium	-	Conservatives
Canada	Conservatives, Liberals	-
Denmark	Liberals	-
France	Radicals	-
Germany	Conservatives, Centre Party	National Liberals
Italy	Liberals	-
Netherlands	Liberals	-
New Zealand	-	Liberals, Conservatives
Norway	-	Liberals
Sweden	-	Conservatives
Switzerland	Liberals	-
United Kingdom	Conservatives	Liberals
United States	Democrats, Republicans	-

Our containment measure is a binary variable and captures whether an incumbent party regularly relied on partisan districting (malapportionment or gerrymandering) to contain electoral threats. In the context of this analysis, incumbent parties are defined as the established parties that dominated politics in the period before electoral reform.³ However, as Table 5.3 shows, not all incumbent parties were in fact able to rely on such measures. In some countries, for example, constitutions dictated electoral boundaries, while in others, the electoral geography of the incumbent party was not conducive to partisan districting. In the case studies in the Appendix to this chapter, we document the coding of our containment variable.

In Figure 5.1, we plot the mean level of disproportionality for parties with and without containment measures along with the 95% confidence intervals.

³ In some countries, single parties or coalitions dominated politics for a long period (e.g., Denmark, France, and Switzerland), while in others, the main parties have taken turns to be in power (e.g., Canada and the United States). In the latter cases, we code both main parties as relying on containment measures if they resorted to partisan districting when in power.

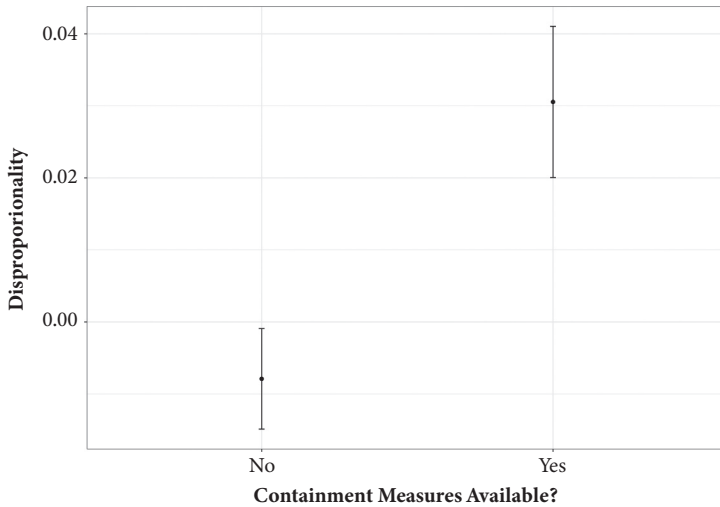


Fig. 5.1 Containment and disproportionality

The plot shows that the average level of disproportionality is significantly different for the two groups. Parties that employ containment measures benefit from disproportionality by three percentage points whereas parties without containment options suffer from disproportionality by one percentage point.

While Figure 5.1 shows that the level of disproportionality differs depending on whether a party can use containment measures, there might be some country-specific or temporal (e.g., the American Civil War) idiosyncrasies that confound the relationship. In addition, our sample covers a different number of elections and parties for each country. For instance, we have 144 election-party observations for Switzerland but only 17 for Australia. Therefore, Table 5.4 examines the relationship in more detail using a number of restrictive specifications (country fixed effects (FE), country-specific non-linear time trends, and inverse probability weights).

Similar to Figure 5.1, model 1 in Table 5.4 shows that containment is associated with an increase in disproportionality by four percentage points. Once we include country FE, the magnitude of the effect increases to six percentage points (see model 2). In model 3, we interact the country dummies with cubic time polynomials. However, the effect size and the significance level of the containment variable does not change. In models 4 to 6, we employ the same specifications but use inverse probability weights to give every country the same weight in the estimations. The significance and magnitude of the point estimates are barely affected. Overall, the empirical evidence lends strong

Table 5.4 The impact of containment on disproportionality

	Without Weights			With Weights		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Containment	0.04*** (0.01)	0.06*** (0.01)	0.06*** (0.01)	0.04** (0.01)	0.07*** (0.02)	0.07*** (0.02)
Country FE	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Country-specific Cubic Time Trends	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
R ²	0.06	0.10	0.11	0.05	0.09	0.10
Adj. R ²	0.06	0.08	0.03	0.05	0.07	0.02
Num. obs.	624	624	624	624	624	624

Notes: Cluster-Robust Standard Errors by Country *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

support to our hypothesis 4.2: Parties that rely on containment measures profit from electoral disproportionalities.

After having established the relationship between containment measures and seat-vote distortions, we proceed to examine how both factors influence party positions on PR adoption in a multivariate setting. We follow Boix (2010) and use the individual party as our unit of observation. The dependent variable is the party's position towards PR on a three-point scale. The value of 0 displays opposition to PR, the value of 1 displays that a party was divided, and the value of 2 indicates that a party supported PR. The coding of the dependent variable is presented in Table 5.2. If a party changed its position over time, it is counted as a separate observation.⁴ Therefore, our sample covers 59 party observations in 15 countries.⁵

Our main interest is in whether disproportionalities and containment measures explain party positions on PR adoption. We use the same disproportionality and containment indicators as above. In addition, we account for several alternative explanations of parties' positions on PR. First, we include binary variables that measure whether a party belongs to the group of socialist, conservative, or liberal parties with the latter group as the reference category.

⁴ We do not include the position change of the non-socialist parties in Austria and Germany after the First World War in our sample. As we describe in detail in the Appendix, in both cases the non-socialist parties were essentially forced to accept the electoral laws written by the socialist parties. Thus, the position change does not reflect a change in preferences towards PR.

⁵ We add Austria to our sample displayed in Table 5.9 because data on party vote and seat shares are available for two elections prior to the adoption of PR, but the data do not lend themselves for the longer term analysis conducted in Table 5.4. The summary statistics for this analysis can be found in Table 5.10 in the Appendix.

Second, we add the economic coordination indices by Cusack et al. (2007) and Kreuzer (2010a), respectively, to capture the degree of labour-capital cooperation in the economy. The theoretical expectation is that parties in countries with higher levels of coordination have a stronger preference for PR.

Third, we employ a binary measure from Ahmed (2013) for the radicalization of socialist parties on the country level. Following Ahmed (2013), non-socialist parties adopt PR if confronted with a radical instead of a reformist socialist party.⁶ Gjerløw and Rasmussen (2022) offer the same theoretical expectation because PR might strengthen the reformist wing within a socialist party, thereby pacifying the labour-capital conflict.

Fourth, we add Boix's (2010) measure of parties' vulnerability to socialist entry. This measure captures whether a party was threatened by an emerging socialist competitor. To alleviate endogeneity concerns between our preferred predictors and parties' vulnerability to socialist entry, we also use an indicator for the electoral potential of socialist parties. Following Raymond (2016), we employ the index of occupational diversification in 1908 from Vanhanen (2003) to capture the electoral potential of socialist parties independent of non-socialist parties' containment activities. The index is the mean of a country's urbanization rate and the share of the non-agricultural population.

Finally, we include a number of control variables that have been used in previous works such as ethnic fractionalization, population size, and trade openness.

The results of our estimations might be sensitive to model specifications due to the small sample size and the large number of predictors. To tackle the issue and to increase the confidence in our results, we employ Bayesian model averaging (BMA). Instead of a coefficient for each predictor based on a single model specification, BMA provides a distribution for each coefficient based on a large number of different models, thus accounting for model uncertainty. This approach is especially helpful if there is no clear guidance about the control variables to include (Montgomery & Nyhan, 2010, 247).⁷ Given that the posterior distributions of all coefficients are symmetric and unimodal, we present the results in conventional frequentist terms to ease interpretation.

⁶ While we use the coding provided by Ahmed (2013, 200–205), we disagree with her classification of the Belgian and Swiss cases as radical. Her coding is also not consistent with the information provided in the source she has used for coding these two cases (Marks et al., 2009). Correcting the classification of Belgium and Switzerland does not affect the results displayed below.

⁷ For more information on how the model space is limited and models are selected and weighted to keep the computation feasible, see Madigan et al. (1999).

In our analysis, we use two different samples (see Table 5.5). The first sample includes all parties. However, we also use a sample where we exclude socialist parties because some approaches make only theoretical predictions about the preferences of non-socialist parties. For example, Ahmed's (2013) argument about the radicalization of socialist parties and Boix's (1999) socialist electoral threat thesis focus only on the institutional preferences of non-socialist parties but develop no expectation for socialist parties. While we include all control variables in all models, interpreting measures on the impact of socialist parties on non-socialist party's preferences towards PR is difficult when a sample with all parties is used.

We present several models for both samples. We start with the sample that includes all parties and focuses on disproportionality. Model 1 in Table 5.5 shows that the coefficient is negatively related to parties' support for PR and significant at the 0.1% level. In substantive terms, a party's propensity to support PR decreases by 20 percentage points if (positive) disproportionality, the seat-to-vote difference, increases by 10 percentage points.⁸ This finding is in line with our theoretical expectations (hypothesis 4.1): Parties benefiting from seat-vote distortions are less likely to support the adoption of PR.

Turning to model 2 in Table 5.5, we find that containment, i.e. a party's ability to influence the design of electoral markets, is negative and significant at the 0.1% level as well.⁹ The effect is substantial. A party that can rely on measures to contain its competitors is 56.5 percentage points less likely to support PR than a party that cannot manipulate electoral markets. Moreover, we use a second containment indicator in model 3 where we have recoded some controversial cases.¹⁰ However, the results do not change. Importantly, the results are similar if we restrict the sample to non-socialist parties (see models 7–9 in Table 5.5). Thus, the cross-country evidence supports our

⁸ The sample mean of disproportionality is 0.5 percentage points with a standard deviation of 9.4 percentage points. A (rounded) move of disproportionality by one standard deviation from 0 to 10 percentage points is thus linked to a -0.4 change of party support or opposition for PR, the dependent variable. Since the dependent variable is measured on a two-point scale, we have to divide the change of -0.4 by 2 to get the change in percentage points.

⁹ Our models with the containment measure include an additional observation, the Italian Christian Democrats, because they did not contest an election before the adoption of PR. Thus, no disproportionality measure exists for them.

¹⁰ In contrast to Table 5.3, we coded the Dutch Liberals as not having the ability to contain insurgent parties, because district boundaries were fixed after 1887 (Loots, 2004, 24). In addition, we coded the British Liberals and the Swedish Conservatives as benefiting from containment. Even though the British Conservatives were the main beneficiaries of malapportionment, the Liberals were sometimes accused of gerrymandering during reapportionment (Rossiter et al., 1999, 34–44). There is comparatively little information available on the districting process in Sweden before 1907, which is why there is some uncertainty about its use for containment, although the available evidence suggests that the Conservatives could not resort to partisan districting (Kreuzer & Neely, 2025, 41; Verney, 1957, 109)

Table 5.5 Results for disproportionality, containment, and party positions towards PR

	All Parties					Non-Socialists Only			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9
Disproportionality	-0.04*** (0.01)			-0.03** (0.01)			-0.04** (0.01)		
Containment		-1.13*** (0.21)			-1.22*** (0.22)			-1.20*** (0.23)	
Containment (Alternative Coding)			-0.99*** (0.23)			-1.07*** (0.24)			-1.06*** (0.25)
Conservative Party Dummy	0.03 (0.11)	0.12 (0.20)	0.14 (0.23)	0.00 (0.07)	0.01 (0.07)	0.02 (0.08)	0.07 (0.18)	0.10 (0.20)	0.10 (0.21)
Socialist Party Dummy	0.05 (0.15)	0.02 (0.10)	0.03 (0.12)	0.18 (0.29)	0.01 (0.06)	0.01 (0.07)			
Party Vulnerable Socialist Entry	0.39*** (0.11)	0.31** (0.11)	0.32** (0.12)				0.29* (0.17)	0.07 (0.13)	0.05 (0.11)
Party Vulnerable Socialist Entry (Recorded)				0.10 (0.16)	0.01 (0.04)	0.01 (0.04)			
Socialist Radicalization	0.11 (0.23)	0.09 (0.20)	0.03 (0.13)	0.20 (0.33)	0.24 (0.31)	0.14 (0.25)	0.12 (0.28)	0.04 (0.14)	0.01 (0.09)

Coordination Index (Cusack et al.)	0.02 (0.05)	0.01 (0.03)	0.00 (0.02)	0.05 (0.07)	0.02 (0.05)	0.02 (0.04)	0.01 (0.05)	0.00 (0.02)	0.00 (0.02)
Coordination Index (Kreuzer)	0.02 (0.05)	-0.00 (0.03)	0.00 (0.02)	0.02 (0.06)	-0.00 (0.03)	0.00 (0.03)	0.01 (0.04)	-0.00 (0.02)	0.00 (0.02)
Ethnic Fractionalization	-0.05 (0.23)	-0.00 (0.13)	-0.03 (0.20)	-0.03 (0.19)	0.00 (0.14)	-0.03 (0.19)	-0.00 (0.20)	0.00 (0.17)	-0.05 (0.26)
In Population Size	-0.02 (0.07)	0.00 (0.03)	0.00 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.06)	0.01 (0.03)	0.00 (0.03)	-0.10 (0.13)	0.00 (0.03)	0.00 (0.03)
In Trade Openness	0.16 (0.26)	0.00 (0.06)	0.00 (0.06)	0.12 (0.25)	-0.00 (0.07)	0.00 (0.07)	0.14 (0.27)	-0.00 (0.07)	-0.00 (0.08)
Occupational Diversification	0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)
Num. obs.	58	59	59	58	59	59	42	43	43

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

hypothesis 4.2, which suggested that the ability to manipulate electoral markets has a substantive impact on support for electoral system change.

In contrast, all other variables do not reach conventional levels of statistical significance except the measure of vulnerability to the entry of socialist parties.¹¹ However, the results for the vulnerability measure must be interpreted with care, because it is somewhat unclear how Boix (2010) coded the measure for socialist parties. According to footnote ‘a’ in table 2 in Boix (2010, 410), it seems that the vulnerability measure captures whether a socialist party was in favour of PR according to Penadés (2008). This coding decision by Boix, however, is problematic because in the case of socialist parties, he uses parties’ positions on PR to explain the very same parties’ position on PR. Put differently, the model specification uses the same variable on both sides of the equation, thereby artificially increasing the variable’s explanatory power. When we provide a more plausible coding of socialist parties not being vulnerable to the entry of socialist parties (i.e., setting the score to zero for all socialist parties), the significant effect of the vulnerability variable vanishes in the models exploring all parties’ positions on PR (see models 4–6 in Table 5.5). In any case, we argue that the most appropriate way to test Boix’s (1999, 2010) socialist electoral threat thesis is to restrict the sample to non-socialist parties. Focusing on the results with the sample of non-socialist parties, we find that the evidence for Boix’s thesis is limited. While the coefficient of the vulnerability measure is significant at the 5% level in model 7 when disproportionality is included, it does not reach statistical significance in models 8 and 9 where we account for containment.

5.3 Reform coalitions and the adoption of PR

In the previous section, we demonstrated that parties’ positions on the adoption of PR co-vary with seat-vote distortions and the extent to which parties

¹¹ A concern might be that the effect of occupational diversification is suppressed in all models including the variable measuring party vulnerability to socialist entry. The reason is that occupational diversification functions as an exogenous variable for socialist electoral potential. However, the results do not change if we exclude the variable ‘party vulnerability to socialist entry’ from the BMA model specifications. The relationship between socialist radicalization and electoral reform is surprisingly weak given its analytical weight in the existing empirical literature. Ahmed (2013) uses the indicators of socialist radicalization provided by Marks et al. (2009) in her empirical analysis. However, the Marks et al. (2009) data clearly show that PR was also adopted in countries with reformist socialist parties (e.g., Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Switzerland). Rasmussen & Knutsen (2023), by contrast, use invitations to Comintern meetings in 1919 and 1920 to capture socialist radicalism. However, of the 17 countries covered in this chapter, socialist parties in 15 countries received invitations to participate in the Comintern meetings, including the Australian and British Labour parties, which are generally not considered examples of socialist radicalism (Marks et al., 2009). Socialist parties did not receive invitations in two countries only—Canada and New Zealand.

are (positively or negatively) affected by partisan districting. But how do parties turn their electoral system choice preferences into policies? In this section, we take a second step in the direction of explaining electoral system choice. For this purpose, we focus on the 12 countries that adopted PR. Put differently, in this section, we disregard the five countries that did not adopt PR (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, UK, and the USA). Empirically, the following discussion draws on the short case studies presented in the Appendix to this chapter. These case studies also document the sources on which our accounts build. We do not repeat these sources in the analysis that follows, but we do want to acknowledge these important contributions, which form the basis of our analysis.

Twelve countries adopted PR in the period from 1899 to 1922. Three countries did so during processes of state formation. In Austria, Finland, and Ireland, all-party constituent assemblies chose PR systems as expressions of national unity, although in the Irish case, the British government openly supported the adoption of PR (as part of the Government of Ireland Act of 1920). Finland did not gain independence from Russia until 1917. However, the Finnish political elites took advantage of several conflicts that had weakened the Russian Czar's position to introduce initial elements of a parliamentary democracy. In both Finland and Ireland, modern party systems only emerged after the introduction of PR and national independence. The situation is different for Austria, where the Conservatives (Christian Democrats) and the Socialists already competed in elections under the MR system during the Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy. However, the First Austrian Republic (1920–1929), which succeeded the Dual Monarchy in most of the German-speaking areas, covered only a small fraction of the Dual Monarchy's territory. For this reason, in Austria, electoral system choice was also linked to questions of state formation, which is why an all-party constituent assembly adopted PR.¹²

Table 5.6 shows that the remaining nine countries differ with regard to the extent to which electoral system change was favoured by coalitions consisting of rural and urban parties (rural-urban) or coalitions consisting only of urban parties (urban-urban). We identify rural and urban parties based on Rodden (2009). The classification of reform coalitions is based on Table 5.2. Coalitions of rural and urban parties supported the adoption of PR in Belgium (rural Conservatives and urban Liberals), France (rural Conservatives and urban Socialists), the Netherlands (rural Conservatives

¹² However, thanks to previous debates about electoral reform, we can infer the Austrian parties' positions on PR based on pre-reform debates.

and urban Liberals), Sweden (rural Liberals and urban Conservatives), and Switzerland (rural Conservatives and urban Socialists). In line with our theoretical expectations (hypothesis 4.6), the weak urban parties always joined these reform coalitions, although in the Dutch and Swedish cases, the established urban parties were primarily concerned that the impending suffrage extension would undermine their position as the strong urban parties. In contrast, in Denmark (urban Conservatives and urban Socialists), Germany (urban Liberals and urban Socialists), and Norway (urban Conservatives and urban Socialists), electoral system change was primarily supported by urban parties. In these three countries, the rural parties benefited from seat-vote distortions, which is why these parties, in line with our hypothesis 4.7, were at best reluctant supporters of electoral system change.

We also add the Italian case to this group of urban-urban reform coalitions, although the situation in Italy is complicated by the fact that the Conservatives (here Christian Democrats) did not exist before 1919. With the introduction of universal male suffrage and the creation of a conservative party (both in 1919), the Liberals faced the prospect of running against two mass parties, the Conservatives and the Socialists, now without support from religious voters. With their mass following, especially in rural areas, and in light of the highly malapportioned Italian districts (Nohlen, 1969b, 718), the Conservatives would have been well positioned to benefit from the MR system. Consequently, the Italian Conservatives would have had reasons to be critical of electoral system change. However, for the newly formed Conservatives, the PR system was a means to become a credible political force from the start (Gambetta & Warner, 2004, 237), which is probably why they supported electoral system change. The Liberals were thus able to adopt PR just before the Conservatives replaced them as the main non-socialist party. In line with this argument, the Conservatives became the strongest non-socialist party already in the first election under the new PR system, but due to the new electoral system, the Conservatives were not able to turn this strong electoral performance (32.3%) into a majority of the seats in parliament (Caciagli, 2010, 1068).

Table 5.6 offers several important insights. First, it shows that reform coalitions vary between countries. In particular, in several countries, rural parties were part of the reform coalitions favouring the adoption of PR (in Belgium, France, Netherlands, Sweden, and Switzerland). This observation is difficult to align with a sole focus on socialist electoral threats (e.g., Boix, 1999; Rokkan, 1970) because socialist parties rarely threatened rural parties due to the concentration of their voters in urban areas (see Chapter 3). In a similar vein, this runs counter to existing electoral geography approaches that

Table 5.6 Geographical coalitions for electoral reform

Rural-urban coalition	Urban-urban coalition
Belgium (Conservatives and Liberals)	Denmark (Conservatives and Socialists)
France (Conservatives and Socialists)	Germany (Liberals and Socialists)
Netherlands (Conservatives and Liberals)	Italy (Liberals and Socialists)
Sweden (Liberals and Conservatives)	Norway (Conservatives and Socialists)
Switzerland (Conservatives and Socialists)	

expect rural parties to oppose PR (e.g., Boix, 2010; Rodden, 2009). Instead, the evidence suggests, in line with hypothesis 4.3, that rural parties supported the adoption of PR in countries where reapportionment was common (see Chapter 3 on reapportionment processes).

Second, Table 5.6 shows that in all countries, the weak urban party favoured the adoption of PR, which supports hypothesis 4.4. This is clearly the case for countries with urban-urban reform coalitions (Denmark, Germany, Italy, and Norway). However, it is also true for countries with rural-urban reform coalitions, although in some cases (the Netherlands and Sweden), it was primarily the expectation of becoming the weak urban party in the event of suffrage extension that prompted the parties to support electoral system change.¹³ In contrast, in several countries, the strong urban party was divided over the benefits of PR (Belgium, Netherlands, and Sweden) or even opposed the adoption of PR (France and Switzerland). With the exception of the Netherlands, these countries reapportioned seats on a regular basis in response to unequal population growth (see Table 3.5).¹⁴ In case of France and Switzerland, the strong urban parties even relied on containment strategies to neutralize electoral threats (see Table 5.3). These patterns are thus in line with our hypothesis 4.5.

Third, reform coalitions often included both socialist and non-socialist parties (in Denmark, France, Germany, Norway, and Switzerland). Austria could also be added to this group, as the adoption of PR had already become part of the Socialists' programme in 1901 (Ucar, 1985, 293–296) and PR was adopted by an all-party constituent assembly. This widespread cooperation between socialist and non-socialist parties committed to the goal of electoral system change is difficult to align with arguments that emphasize the

¹³ In both the Netherlands and Sweden, the Socialists, as the likely future strong urban party, were divided over the merits of electoral reform.

¹⁴ In the Netherlands, no party strongly benefited from malapportionment due to non-reapportionment after 1887 (see Figure 3.6).

Table 5.7 PR with incumbent driving or resisting reform (incumbent parties in parentheses)

Incumbent driven adoption	Adoption despite incumbents' resistance
Belgium (Conservatives)	Austria (German Nationals)
Italy (Liberals)	Denmark (Liberals)
Netherlands (Liberals)	France (Radicals)
Norway (Liberals)	Germany (Conservatives)
Sweden (Conservatives)	Switzerland (Liberals)

fundamental conflicts of interests between socialist and non-socialist parties (e.g., Ahmed, 2013; Boix, 1999; Calvo, 2009).

Instead, Table 5.6 suggests that other factors influence the composition of reform coalitions. One such factor is the incumbent parties' positions on electoral system change. Incumbent parties are the established parties that dominated politics in the period before electoral system change. However, incumbent parties might be prompted to support reform because they believe their dominance to be fading due to structural developments. In the words of Lewin (2004, 269), they realize that they are the 'the losing party', either because they are about to lose power or because the political costs of clinging to power through illicit strategies are rapidly increasing (Mares, 2022). Table 5.7 classifies countries according to whether the incumbent parties proactively adopted PR or whether the other parties managed to adopt PR against the opposition of the incumbent parties. Because PR was adopted in Finland and Ireland under limited sovereignty, Table 5.7 does not cover these two countries.

In Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden, we observe incumbent-led adoptions of PR once the incumbents were at risk of losing their dominant political position. As we show in the case studies in the Appendix to this chapter, in each of these five countries the incumbent parties ran out of viable and effective options to contain electoral threats, leading them to support the adoption of PR. This finding is in line with our hypothesis 4.8. In Italy, the Liberals still had majorities in both chambers and could thus impose PR unilaterally (although both the Conservatives and the Socialists supported electoral system change as well). In contrast, in Belgium, the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden, the incumbent parties needed the support of other parties to adopt PR, which is a clear indication of their waning political dominance. In the Netherlands and Norway, PR was introduced with the help of all-party compromises, although the Dutch Liberals had

to make concessions in other areas to win the support of the other parties (the 1917 Great Pacification agreement). In Sweden, the Conservatives made just enough concessions to get a sufficient number of Liberals to support the reform proposal. Finally, in the Belgian case, the support of the Liberals was needed because the politically dominant Conservatives were divided over the preferred new electoral system.

In contrast, in Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, and Switzerland, we observe that the incumbents remained critical of PR and had to be pressured to agree to electoral reform. In Austria and Germany, electoral system reforms were linked to regime changes as the old political order collapsed. In Switzerland, advocates of PR had to resort to direct democracy, whereas in Denmark and France, pressure for reform was increasing to the point that the incumbent parties (the Danish Liberals and the French Radicals) could no longer delay reform. Consequently, in these five countries, reform coalitions consisting of parties disadvantaged by the MR systems spearheaded reform efforts and imposed PR systems on reluctant incumbent parties.¹⁵

The incumbent parties' position on reform is important. By taking the lead in the reform process, the incumbent parties are able to adopt PR on their terms and influence the specific design of the newly adopted PR system. In all five cases, the incumbent parties tried to do so before they would no longer be in a position to influence electoral reform. In contrast, if the incumbent parties are not part of the reform coalition, the opposition parties are likely to design PR systems that disadvantage the incumbent parties. In Chapters 6 and 7, we will show that influence over the specifics of newly adopted PR systems influences the design of the district map and grants the designing parties long-term advantages under the new electoral rules. Examples include the small districts in the countryside that favoured the Belgian Conservatives or the nationwide district that benefited the Dutch Liberals.¹⁶

In Table 5.8, we combine the information contained in Tables 5.6 and 5.7. The table displays four paths to the adoption of PR that differ with regard to reform coalitions (rural-urban vs. urban-urban) and the position of the incumbent parties on electoral reform. Due to the coincidence of electoral reform and state formation, the following discussion does not cover Austria, Finland, and Ireland.

¹⁵ France is an exception because the Radicals still managed to influence the design of the new PR system due to their strong position in the upper chamber. The Danish Liberals tried to do the same in 1915, but a second reform in 1920 did not depend on the Liberals' support, which is why the Danish electoral system of 1920 did not take the Liberals' preferences into account.

¹⁶ Another example, unrelated to the district map, is the retention of the non-democratic privileges of the upper chamber that favoured the Swedish Conservatives.

The first path to PR concerns countries with rural-urban reform coalitions that include the incumbent parties. This path covers Belgium, the Netherlands, and Sweden (see Table 5.8). In these countries, the incumbent parties (the Belgian Conservatives, the Dutch Liberals, and the Swedish Conservatives) had few means left to contain insurgent parties—especially in case of universal male suffrage. None of these countries had a long history of district design for political gain, with the exception of gerrymandering in Netherlands, whose potential, however, had been exhausted by the time of reform (Loots, 2004). As a result, the urban-based Dutch Liberals and the urban-based Swedish Conservatives were increasingly squeezed between the main rural parties (various religious parties in the Netherlands and the Liberals in Sweden) and a rapidly growing urban challenger (the Socialists). In both cases, the incumbent parties had to make compromises with opposition parties to win parliamentary majorities for electoral system change.

In contrast, the Belgian Conservatives remained the dominant party in the countryside, but the growing electoral alliance between the Liberals and the Socialists threatened to undermine the Conservatives' presence in the large and growing urban districts, while regular reapportionment reduced the weight of the Conservatives' rural strongholds. In this situation, the Belgian Conservatives understood the need to proactively reform the electoral system to maintain some foothold in the urban districts, but the party remained divided over the specifics of the reform. In the end, the Conservatives who favoured the introduction of PR prevailed, thanks to the support of the Liberals (see Chapter 8 for more details).

The second group of countries adopting PR features rural-urban reform coalitions that do not include the incumbent parties. This path covers France and Switzerland (see Table 5.8). In both countries, the incumbent parties (the French Radicals and the Swiss Liberals, both with a strong urban presence) successfully relied on district design to contain the other parties. Moreover, both parties were convinced that the MR systems would help them protect their positions as the strong urban party, which is why they continued to resist electoral system change. However, after the First World War, popular pressure for electoral reform became too strong to resist. In France, the Radicals used their strong parliamentary position to water down the reform proposal to such an extent that it is doubtful whether the 1919 electoral system can be considered a PR system at all (Boix, 2010, 411; Nohlen, 2010, 648). In 1927, the Radicals took advantage of a change of position by the Socialists to reintroduce an MR system with single-member districts (Ehrhard & Passard, 2020). In Switzerland, the Liberals' resistance to reform had to be broken by means of direct democracy, which allows citizens to

Table 5.8 Patterns of PR reform

	Rural-urban coalition	Urban-urban coalition
Proactive incumbents	Belgium Netherlands Sweden	Italy Norway
Reactive incumbents	France Switzerland	Denmark Germany

vote on constitutional changes without giving parliament the possibility to veto these changes. With their third popular initiative demanding electoral system change, in 1918, the coalition of the Conservatives (the rural party) and the Socialists (the weak urban party) finally managed to adopt PR (see Chapter 8 for more details).

The third path to PR concerns countries with urban-urban reform coalitions that include the incumbent parties. This path covers Italy and Norway (see Table 5.8). In Italy, the Liberals had historically been able to benefit from district design, restrictive suffrage, and support from religious voters. However, with the introduction of universal male suffrage, the Socialists were likely to become a serious challenger for the Liberals in urban areas. Moreover, with the creation of a conservative party in 1919, the Liberals were likely to lose most of the religious vote and thus most seats in the countryside. Confronted with the prospect of running against two mass parties, the Liberals' days as the dominant Italian party were numbered. Although both the Conservatives and the Socialists favoured the adoption of PR, the Liberals' parliamentary strength was sufficient to enact the reform unilaterally.¹⁷

The situation is more complicated in Norway. Historically, the primarily rural-based Liberals had benefited from—sometimes large—seat-vote distortions. However, these disproportionalities were not the result of creative district design but due to electoral alliances and a favourable electoral geography (see Chapter 3). The continuous growth of the Socialists endangered some of the Liberals' advantages, which is why they sought electoral reform. For this reason, we code the Norwegian Liberals as proactive incumbents. However, the Liberals did not have to convince the more urban-based Conservatives and the Socialists of the benefits of electoral reform. Both parties were likely to benefit from the adoption of PR, which is why we code the Norwegian case as an urban-urban reform coalition. Ultimately, in Norway, PR

¹⁷ As mentioned, we suspect that the Conservatives' support for PR was primarily the result of their recent creation (in 1919, the same year that PR was adopted).

was adopted based on an all-party compromise, with the Liberals favouring the least proportional solution (see Chapter 7), which suggests that although the Liberals initiated the electoral reform process, they were least convinced of the benefits of PR.

Finally, the fourth group of countries adopting PR features urban-urban reform coalitions that do not include the incumbent parties. This path covers Denmark and Germany (see Table 5.8). In both countries, rural-based incumbent parties benefited from non-reapportionment and thus large seat-vote distortions (the Liberals in Denmark and the Conservatives as well as the Centre Party in Germany). Convinced that the MR systems would help them protect their dominant political positions, the rural parties in both countries resisted electoral system change as long as they could.¹⁸ Ultimately, the Danish Liberals and the German Centre Party agreed to limited electoral reforms in 1915 and July 1918, respectively.¹⁹ In both cases, support for reform was meant to prevent worse (i.e., more proportional) electoral systems. However, these efforts were in vain. In both cases, new electoral reforms significantly increased the proportionality of the Danish and German electoral systems (1920 in Denmark and November 1918 in Germany). These proportionality-enhancing reforms were made possible by the fact that the former incumbent parties were no longer in the position to prevent significant reforms.

Overall, Table 5.8 highlights the important role of containment by means of district design. In most countries, the incumbent parties relied on partisan districting to contain insurgent parties. Where they could not, in Belgium, Norway, and Sweden (see Table 5.3), the incumbent parties sought electoral system change. In Italy and the Netherlands, the incumbent parties' ability to rely on partisan districting to protect their dominant political positions was clearly exhausted. These incumbent parties, too, opted for electoral system change. In each case, the incumbent parties tried to take advantage of their important role in the reform coalitions to manipulate the specifics of the new PR systems in their favour. We return to this point in the next two chapters.

In the other countries, the incumbent parties continued to rely on partisan districting to contain insurgent parties. In most of these cases, external events and extra-parliamentary pressure were necessary to make these incumbent parties agree to reform. In Denmark and France, in the face of such pressure, the incumbent parties reluctantly agreed to reforms that were demanded by the opposition parties. In both cases, the incumbent parties tried to dilute the reforms, although only the French Radicals succeeded with this strategy. In

¹⁸ The Danish Social Liberals are a partial exception because they favoured PR. However, as the weaker of the two rural parties, they did not benefit to the same extent from the MR system as the larger Liberals.

¹⁹ In contrast, the German Conservatives opposed electoral reforms until the very end.

Austria and Germany, the collapse of the old political order made some of the incumbent parties support electoral reform. In both cases, these parties supported electoral reform to avoid worse outcomes. Finally, PR was introduced against the opposition of the Conservatives in Germany and the Liberals in Switzerland. In these two cases, incumbent parties opposed electoral reform until the very end.

Importantly, as Table 5.8 shows, successful containment is not linked to the presence of either rural-urban or urban-urban reform coalitions. Successful containment was clearly possible in both situations, although the form of containment differed. In case of rural-urban reform coalitions, the strong urban parties typically relied on gerrymandering to protect their dominant political positions. A prototypical example is Switzerland. In contrast, in case of urban-urban reform coalitions, the rural parties benefited from non-reapportionment to protect their dominant political positions. A prototypical example is Germany.

This section has discussed how containment gave rise to reform coalitions, but one point has not received sufficient attention yet. Clearly, in several countries, the reform coalitions were not sufficiently strong to change the electoral system through normal parliamentary means. Instead, extra-parliamentary pressure was needed for electoral reform to actually happen. In the next section, we examine the role of extra-parliamentary pressure in greater detail.

5.4 Extra-parliamentary channels to electoral reform

Incumbent parties rely on containment measures to neutralize electoral threats. The analysis above has emphasized the role of district design and electoral alliances because both forms of containment are directly related to the existence of MR systems. There are of course also other forms of containment such as suffrage restrictions, plural voting rules, or non-democratic upper chambers. These containment measures can be used to prevent insurgent parties from accessing power. If they are effective, the incumbent parties' resistance to reform might be hard to overcome. Instead, events outside the normal parliamentary channels—and thus not subject to these containment measures—might be needed to institute change.

In this section, we argue that the First World War played a key role in facilitating electoral reform in first-wave democracies. Figure 5.2 shows the role of the First World War empirically. The figure displays the number of countries using PR systems for parliamentary elections to the lower chamber.

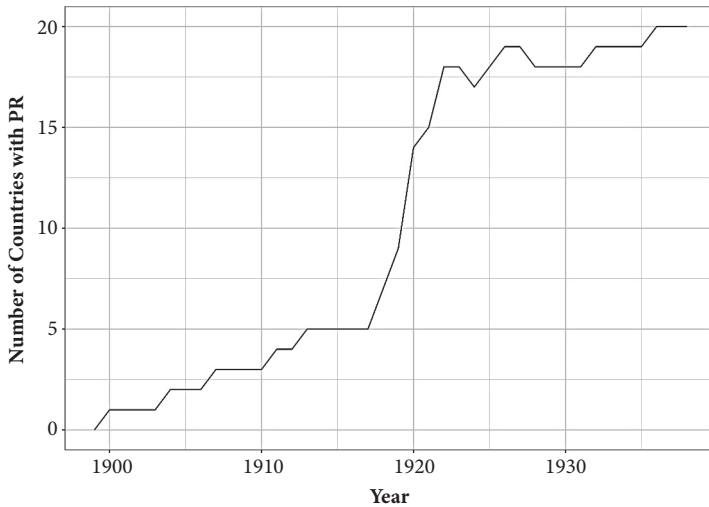


Fig. 5.2 Number of countries using PR systems for parliamentary elections to the lower chamber, 1899–1939

Using data from the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) project for the period from 1899 to 1939, Figure 5.2 shows that the number of countries using PR sharply increased at the end of the First World War (Gjerløw & Rasmussen, 2022).

We are of course not the first to notice the clustering of electoral system reforms in this period, but what explains this sudden breakthrough of PR? In Chapter 4, we hypothesized that the First World War is associated with the adoption of PR because this event, external to regular parliamentary politics, increased the cost of excluding other political groups or even made it impossible (hypothesis 4.9). How does expectation map onto the 17 countries examined in this chapter?

As shown in Table 5.2, there were no large groups pushing for the adoption of PR in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK, and the USA at any time. Clearly, with no large groups advocating the adoption of PR, we cannot expect the First World War to facilitate electoral reform. In two countries, Finland and Ireland, the adoption of PR was linked to questions of national independence. In these two countries, the First World War did not lead to the adoption of PR, but the military conflict was instrumental in securing these two countries' independence. Finland gained independence in 1917 when the Bolsheviks, who had come to power after the Russian Revolution, declared a right to self-determination for all ethnic groups that formed part of the Russian Empire. In the Irish case, growing unrest during the First World

War such as the Easter Rising of 1916, paved the way for home rule in 1920 and ultimately independence in 1922. Both countries adopted PR from the beginning.

In seven of the remaining 10 countries, the effect of the First World War on the adoption of PR is clearly visible. In Austria and Germany, the First World War led to the collapse of the monarchies and the removal of the formerly incumbent parties from power. In both countries, the Socialists, who had previously been the main target of containment measures, became the most powerful political force in the immediate post-war period and had the most influence on the design of the new PR systems immediately adopted at the end of the conflict (Schanbacher, 1982; Ucakar, 1985).

In France and Switzerland, economic and social hardship resulting from the First World War increased popular support for electoral system change and made it increasingly difficult for the incumbent parties to resist reform (Ahmed, 2013; Lutz, 2004). However, in the Swiss case, the two opposition parties, the Conservatives and the Socialists, still had to rely on direct democratic institutions to bring about the adoption of PR (Emmenegger & Walter, 2021a), while in the French case, the Radicals were able to limit the effective degree of proportionality of the 1919 electoral system (Boix, 2010, 411).

In Italy, the Netherlands, and Norway, the First World War increased pressure on the elites to include the political minorities and further democratize the political systems. In Italy and the Netherlands, suffrage extension played a key role in these processes. In both countries, the politically dominant Liberals could no longer resist suffrage extension in the context of the First World War (on the effect of military conflicts on suffrage extension, see Acemoglu & Robinson, 2000; Boix, 2003; Ingesson et al., 2018; Levi et al., 1997; Przeworski, 2009). In response, the Liberals in the Netherlands and Italy adopted PR to minimize seat losses following suffrage extension (Boix, 1999). In Norway, the massive extra-parliamentary mobilization of the Socialists after the Russian Revolution of 1917 contributed to the Liberals' willingness to support electoral reform (Gjerløw & Rasmussen, 2022).

The final three countries had already adopted PR before the First World War (Belgium in 1899, Denmark in 1915, and Sweden in 1907/1909). Clearly, the First World War cannot explain electoral reforms that preceded it. However, in each of these three countries, the First World War was instrumental in further democratizing the political system. In Belgium, a national unity government abolished the system of plural voting for lower chamber elections in 1919, as demanded by the Socialists in return for their support of a national unity government (Carstairs, 1980, 56). In Denmark, the Easter Crisis of 1920, which was the result of a conflict between the king and

the government about the reclamation of land from Germany in Schleswig following the First World War, facilitated the compromise between the Conservatives, the Socialists, and the Social Liberals on electoral reform, which paved the way for the more proportional electoral system adopted in 1920 (Elklit, 1988, 89–93).²⁰ Finally, in Sweden, extra-parliamentary mobilization forced the Conservatives to agree to the removal of some of the remaining suffrage restrictions for lower chamber elections and the abolition of plural voting for upper chamber elections (Kreuzer & Neely, 2025, 46; Särilvik, 2002, 241).²¹

In short, the available evidence suggests that the First World War played a key role in weakening the ability of incumbent parties to resist electoral reform. Instead, we find that the First World War is directly associated with proportionality-increasing electoral reforms or national self-determination in all of the first-wave democracies that adopted PR in this period.

In many countries, the previous targets of containment measures were the main drivers of electoral system change. This is particularly true for countries where the First World War was key to breaking the incumbent parties' monopoly on political power. Socialist parties played important roles in this context. In Austria (1918), Denmark (1920), France (1919), Germany (1918), and Switzerland (1918), they were, often in cooperation with other opposition parties, the main political force pushing for electoral system change. Clearly, such opposition-led reform processes are not in line with the expectations of the electoral threat thesis (Boix, 1999, 2010; Rokkan, 1970) or the existential threat thesis (Ahmed, 2013; Barzachka, 2014), which expect the established parties to pursue electoral system change in order to limit socialist influence. Instead, these developments lend support to our account, which emphasizes containment measures in MR systems.

Of course, there are also several examples of incumbent-led reform processes. However, in each of these cases, incumbents agreed to electoral system change because the First World War increased the cost of excluding the political opposition. Suffrage extension forced the hand of the Dutch Liberals (1917) and the Italian Liberals (1919), while extra-parliamentary mobilization and war-time national unity governments induced the Belgian Conservatives (1919), the Norwegian Liberals (1919), and the Swedish Conservatives (1919) to allow for further democratization by adopting PR

²⁰ The Easter Crisis ultimately led to the Danish king's acceptance of parliamentary primacy, depriving the Conservatives of a key political ally and thus increasing their willingness to compromise with the Socialists and the Social Liberals.

²¹ In Canada (1920), the UK (1918), and the USA (1920), the First World War triggered suffrage reforms, which did not, however, lead to electoral system change, because there was no strong 'third' party demanding the adoption of PR.

systems, increasing the proportionality of the existing PR systems, removing remaining suffrage restrictions, or abolishing plural voting. Hence, although in these countries, incumbent parties were part of the reform coalition, these reforms were often triggered by demands of the opposition parties.

In conclusion, in line with our hypothesis 4.9, the available empirical evidence suggests that external events such as the First World War played a key role in neutralizing the incumbent parties' containment measures and bringing about electoral system change.

5.5 Comparative discussion

This chapter has examined the relationship between containment measures, seat-vote distortions, and electoral system choice. The main findings can be summarized in three points. First, containment measures and seat-vote distortions are better predictors of parties' positions on the desirability of PR than alternative explanations. Second, the 'neo-Rokkanian' account introduced in this book does a better job of predicting reform coalitions and identifying the main advocates of reform. Third, extra-parliamentary pressure, in particular in the context of the First World War, was decisive in overcoming incumbent parties' resistance to the adoption of PR, proportionality-enhancing reforms, and the removal of the remaining containment measures. In short, this chapter lends strong support to our argument that incumbent parties' response to emerging electoral threats is conditional on the availability of effective containment measures.

In the introduction, we argued that our arguments build on Rokkan's (1970) two roads to electoral reform. Like Rokkan and the literature that followed him, we argue that established parties react to emerging electoral threats (Rokkan's first road to electoral reform). However, in contrast to traditional accounts of the electoral threat thesis, we emphasize that MR systems may provide incumbent parties with alternative means to contain these electoral threats. If effective, these incumbent parties have little reason to seek electoral system change. However, the successful containment of insurgent parties increases seat-vote distortions (see Table 5.4). In line with Rokkan's second road to electoral reform, we expect parties suffering from persistent seat-vote distortions to favour the adoption of PR. However, in contrast to traditional electoral geography accounts, we emphasize how incumbent parties *create* seat-vote distortions to protect their dominant political position. Finally, in line with the literature on existential threats and socialist radicalization (Ahmed, 2013; Barzachka, 2014; Gjerløw & Rasmussen, 2022),

we observe a relationship between external events and extra-parliamentary mobilization, on the one hand, and electoral system change on the other. However, we do not emphasize ideological radicalization but rather stress how events external to regular parliamentary procedures, most notably the First World War, increased the cost of continuing to exclude other groups from political power.

This chapter has explored the adoption of PR. In doing so, we have treated the adoption of PR as a binary outcome. Either a country has adopted PR, or it has not. However, PR systems come in different forms and shapes. Most notably, they differ with regard to their effective degree of proportionality (Bochsler et al., 2024; Boix, 1999; Walter & Emmenegger, 2019). Moreover, as this chapter has shown, PR systems were adopted by different reform coalitions, which in about half of the cases also involved the incumbent parties. If PR systems have distributional effects, and there is reason to believe that they have, then the specific design of newly adopted PR systems is likely to be subject to political conflict. Using the example of district maps, the next two chapters examine how some parties were able to influence the specifics of the newly adopted PR systems and in this way secured long-term advantages in the seat-to-vote translation under the new electoral rules.

Appendix

This section provides information on the sample for our estimations in Table 5.4, the summary statistics of the data for our estimations in Table 5.5, and discusses the coding of parties' positions on PR (see Table 5.2). In addition, we examine which parties were able to rely on containment measures to neutralize electoral threats (see Table 5.3). This classification also draws on evidence provided in Chapter 3. The brief case studies are organized in four groups: proactive incumbents, pressured incumbents, cases of limited sovereignty, and non-adopters. Chapter 8 covers Belgium and Switzerland in detail, which is why we do not discuss them here.

Proactive incumbents

Italy

There is little disagreement in the literature on Italian parties' positions on PR. At the time of reform, in 1919, all three major parties, the Liberals, the Conservatives (Christian Democrats), and the Socialists, supported electoral

Table 5.9 Country sample
disproportionality estimation

Country	Period
Australia	1901–1917
Belgium	1848–1898
Canada	1878–1917
Switzerland	1848–1917
Denmark	1887–1913
France	1885–1914
Germany	1871–1912
Italy	1895–1913
Netherlands	1888–1913
Norway	1882–1918
New Zealand	1890–1919
Sweden	1887–1908
United Kingdom	1885–1918
United States	1856–1918

system change. In the following, we review the process that led to the 1919 reform.

Before the adoption of PR, Italy relied on a two-round MR system in single-member districts (Carstairs, 1980, 150). This system benefited the Liberals who controlled absolute majorities in both houses until the adoption of PR (Boix, 2010, 408; Nohlen, 1969b, 742). The Liberals primarily represented Italy's economic and political elite, but in elections, the Liberals relied on the support of religious voters to win majorities. No Christian Democratic Party had been formed at this point. However, due to the Liberals' anti-clericalism, the support of religious voters was uncertain. For example, in 1874, the pope called on Catholics not to participate in elections, although this policy of non-participation was relaxed after 1904, as the Liberals under Giovanni Giolitti adopted a more conciliatory position on the state-church relationship (Carstairs, 1980, 152–153).

The Liberals faced regular demands for suffrage reform. In 1912, suffrage was extended to 23.2% of the population (from 8.3%) and again in 1919 to 30.9% of the population (Nohlen, 1969b, 741). The Liberals understood that suffrage extension was likely to benefit the Socialists (and the Christian Democrats if they were to organize as a party). The Liberals relied on two main containment strategies to neutralize this socialist electoral threat. First, although suffrage was significantly extended in 1912, the Liberals did not change the district map, which resulted in high levels of

Table 5.10 Summary statistics: Results for disproportionality, containment, and party positions towards PR

Country	Number of observations	Mean	Median	SD	Min	Max
Disproportionality	58	0.50	-1.25	9.44	-20.20	30.20
Containment	59	0.27	0.00	0.45	0.00	1.00
Containment (alternative coding)	59	0.29	0.00	0.46	0.00	1.00
Conservative Party Dummy	59	0.39	0.00	0.49	0.00	1.00
Socialist Party Dummy	59	0.27	0.00	0.45	0.00	1.00
Party Vulnerable Socialist Entry	59	0.75	0.00	0.94	0.00	2.00
Party Vulnerable Socialist Entry (Recoded)	59	0.51	0.00	0.84	0.00	2.00
Socialist Radicalization	59	0.76	1.00	0.43	0.00	1.00
Coordination Index (Cusack et al.)	59	3.27	5.00	2.27	0.00	5.00
Coordination Index (Kreuzer)	59	2.76	3.00	1.84	0.00	5.00
Ethnic Fractionalization	59	0.25	0.28	0.17	0.06	0.71
ln Population Size	59	2.72	2.57	1.13	1.09	5.35
ln Trade Openness	59	3.93	4.03	0.43	2.76	4.61
Occupational Diversification	59	45.46	45.00	11.45	27.00	72.00

malapportionment that primarily benefited the wealthier districts that supported the Liberals (Nohlen, 1969b, 718). Second, the Liberals strengthened their electoral alliance with the religious voters. The Liberal leader, Giolitti, negotiated an agreement with Count Ottorino Gentiloni (Pact Gentiloni), which promised electoral support by religious voters for Liberal candidates if the latter promised to defend the Catholic Church's interest (Carstairs, 1980, 153). In contrast, the Liberals rejected the adoption of PR in 1912, which had been suggested by representatives of the Associazione Proporzionalista, because they did not consider an electoral system change necessary to contain the electoral threat (Braunias, 1932, 295; Kreuzer, 2010a, 377).

During the First World War, popular pressure to extend suffrage increased, ultimately resulting in the 1919 introduction of universal male suffrage (Caciagli 2010, 1032; Nohlen, 1969b, 741). But even more problematically for the Liberals, the religious voters were about to form their own party.

In 1919, the Catholic priest, Luigi Sturzo, created, with the backing of Pope Benedict XV, the Italian People's Party. This new conservative party promised to rally most religious voters. Consequently, the Liberals faced the prospect of running against two mass parties, one on their left and one on their right, without support from religious voters. In this situation, the Liberals suggested combining suffrage extension with the adoption of PR. This proposal had already been made by the Liberal Prime Minister Vittorio Orlando in 1918 and was ultimately adopted under the new Liberal Prime Minister Francesco Nitti in 1919 (Carstairs, 1980, 154–155). Thanks to their majorities in both chambers, the Liberals did not need the support of the other parties. However, both the Socialists and the Christian Democrats supported the reform. For the newly formed Christian Democrats, the PR system was a means to become a credible political force (Gambetta & Warner, 2004, 237), whereas for the Socialists, the electoral reform promised to remove the seat-vote distortions from which they had suffered in the MR system (Nohlen, 1969b, 720). Ultimately, PR was introduced 'with little opposition' (Carstairs, 1980, 155).

Caciagli (2010) argues that the Liberals had one more reason to adopt PR in 1919. The First World War had radicalized the Socialists. Some Socialists began to reject parliamentary democracy and demand immediate revolution. According to Caciagli (2010, 1032), the Liberals hoped that electoral reform would strengthen the remaining reformist Socialists by improving their parliamentary representation and removing seat-vote distortions. Rasmussen and co-authors have identified a similar reform motivation for Norway (Gjerløw & Rasmussen, 2022; Rasmussen & Knutsen, 2023). However, in contrast to the Norwegian case, the Italian Liberals' hopes were disappointed. Although the Socialists won 30% of the seats in the 1919 election (Nohlen, 1969b, 742), the radical wing within the party prevailed. For the 1921 election, the reformist Socialists ran on a separate list but won only a few seats, whereas the official Socialists, representing the Socialists' radical wing, won 23% of the seats and the newly formed Communist won 3% of the seats (Caciagli, 2010, 1033; Nohlen, 1969b, 742). Soon after the 1921 election, the Italian democracy collapsed. In October 1922, Benito Mussolini was named the new prime minister of Italy.

The Netherlands

There is mostly agreement on parties' positions on electoral reform in the Netherlands, although there is some disagreement on the specifics. The Dutch case is complicated by the fact that PR was introduced as part of a package deal, the 1917 Great Pacification Agreement, which also introduced

universal male suffrage and state financing for confessional schools. All major parties supported the Great Pacification Agreement (Andeweg, 2005; Andeweg et al., 2010; Carstairs, 1980; Loots, 2004; Nohlen, 1969c; Rottwilm, 2015), but it is less clear whether the parties did so because of, or in spite of, PR.

Historically, Dutch politics was dominated by the state-church conflict (Nohlen, 1969c, 866). The Liberals were politically dominant and relied on gerrymandering to contain the religious parties (Loots, 2004, 45–46, 56; Rottwilm, 2015, 159, 183). The three major religious parties, the General League of Roman Catholic Caucuses, the Protestant Anti-Revolutionary Party, and the Protestant Christian Historical Union relied on electoral alliances to challenge the Liberals (Boix, 2010, 412). With the emergence of the Socialists in the late 1890s, the situation became more precarious for the Liberals, which were increasingly forced to form unstable minority governments (Nohlen, 1969c, 867). The Liberals had initially opposed PR, but as their political dominance gradually evaporated (and they were running out of containment options), with challengers on the left and the right, they began to advocate electoral system change (Rottwilm, 2015, 185–187).

The advent of universal male suffrage was key to the Liberals' change of heart. Some of the other parties, especially the Socialists, had been demanding universal male suffrage for a while. The Liberals understood that universal male suffrage would lead to the disappearance of the Liberals if not for the introduction of PR (Andeweg, 2005, 493; Andeweg et al., 2010, 1384; Nohlen, 1969c, 867). The Liberals had resisted suffrage extension, but when suffrage reform was increasingly considered unavoidable, around 1912, the Liberals decided to pair suffrage reform with the introduction of PR, although they tried to delay the reform as long as they could (Loots, 2004, 101–103; Rottwilm, 2015, 187–188). In 1917, the Liberal Cort van der Linden cabinet finally orchestrated the 1917 Great Pacification Agreement.

The 1917 agreement not only introduced PR and universal male suffrage, but it also introduced a constitutional right for equal funding for religious schools, which the religious parties had been demanding for decades (Andeweg, 2005, 492–493; Kalyvas, 1996, 192–195). In this way, the Great Pacification Agreement resolved a second long-standing conflict in Dutch politics. However, this concession was also necessary to win the religious parties' support for the other reforms. For starters, the religious parties were divided on suffrage extension because they worried that it would primarily benefit the Socialists (de Rooy, 2023; Loots, 2004, 80–81). However, the religious parties were also divided over the adoption of PR. The Catholics began endorsing PR as a safeguard against increasingly popular Socialists

(Carstairs, 1980, 64). Moreover, they hoped that PR would allow them to win seats in the predominantly Protestant North of the Netherlands. In the MR system with single-member districts, the Catholics struggled to win seats outside their Southern strongholds due to the Liberals' gerrymandering and the need to support Protestant candidates as part of their electoral alliances with the two Protestant parties (Loots, 2004, 94–95). Among the religious parties, the Catholics were the clearest supporters of PR. However, the Catholics were keenly aware that their concentrated voter base in the South gave them a distinct advantage in the translation of votes into seats in the MR system, which is why they demanded the adoption of PR with small districts on the countryside, the so-called 'Belgian solution' (Loots, 2004, 97; Rottwilm, 2015, 183).

The Protestant Christian Historical Union was initially opposed to the adoption of PR. As the more conservative of the two Protestant parties, it was particularly sceptical of universal male suffrage, but it accepted the need to adopt PR as an institutional safeguard against the Socialists in the advent of universal male suffrage (Loots, 2004, 80–81; Rottwilm, 2015, 184). The Anti-Revolutionary Party was more divided on PR. The party had long struggled to turn votes into seats. For this reason, the party initially favoured electoral system change. However, as the party began to win elections, its leader Abraham Kuyper even led a minority cabinet from 1901 to 1905, the party increasingly turned against PR (Loots, 2004, 87), although it continued to acknowledge the role PR could play as a safeguard against a socialist electoral threat under universal male suffrage (Rottwilm, 2015, 184).

The Dutch Socialists underwent a similar change of heart. In the early years, they had suffered from liberal gerrymandering and electoral alliances between non-socialist parties (Rottwilm, 2015, 173–183). However, with growing electoral strength, more favourable electoral alliances, and the prospect of universal male suffrage, the Socialists began to warm to the MR system they had once so loathed (Loots, 2004, 87–88). Rottwilm (2015, 184–185) argues that the Socialists 'were not distinctly against or in favour of' PR, their 'main focus was on universal suffrage'. For these reasons, we code both the Anti-Revolutionary Party and the Socialists as 'divided' on PR adoption in 1917.

Norway

The case of Norway has been subject to considerable disagreements in the literature. After independence from Sweden in 1905, Norway replaced its old system of indirect elections in single- and multi-member districts with a two-round majority runoff system in single-member districts (Aardal, 2002).

This electoral system was beneficial for the two largest political coalitions at the time, the Liberals and the Labour Democrats, on the one hand, and the Conservatives and the (conservative) Free-minded Liberals, on the other. Fiva and Smith (2017a) show that thanks to the runoff system, coordination within these two coalitions was effective. For the sake of simplicity, we refer to these two coalitions simply as Liberals and Conservatives.

The Socialists were the third main party in the early 20th century. As the weakest of the three blocs and without any coalition partners, the 1905 electoral system disadvantaged the Socialists who suffered from seat-vote distortions in all elections to the unicameral parliament. The 1915 and 1918 elections were particularly striking. In 1915, the Socialists had increased their vote share by 5.8 percentage points but nevertheless lost four seats in parliament. In 1918, the Socialists emerged as the electorally strongest party in terms of vote share, but with a seat share of 14.3%, they nevertheless trailed the Liberals and Conservatives, who gained seat shares of 42.9% and 39.7%, respectively (Larsen Cadoret, 2010, 1448–1458).

District design played little role in causing these distortions. As shown in Chapter 3, despite the peasant clause, none of the parties clearly benefited from malapportionment. Neither did the 1905 electoral system, as enshrined in the constitution, leave much room for gerrymandering. Next to defining the number of single-member districts and maintaining the distinction between urban and rural districts, Article 59 of the 1905 constitution also stated that single-member districts had to be created within the old multi-member districts. In the case of urban districts, this rule implied that the 28 old multi-member districts had to be turned into 41 single-member districts. However, only six out of the 28 old urban districts had more than one seat. Put differently, 22 old urban districts had to be identical to the new single-member districts, whereas only six districts had to be divided to create new single-member districts, albeit within the confines of the old urban districts (Hagen, 1971, 16).

Instead, the seat-vote distortions were the result of electoral alliances and electoral geography. As shown in Chapter 3, the Socialists were disadvantaged in runoffs, whereas the Liberals were the main beneficiaries (see also Aardal, 2002; Fiva & Hix, 2021; Helland & Saglie, 2003). Unsurprisingly, the Socialists made two attempts to remove the runoff part of the system. In both cases, in 1913 and 1917, the Conservatives supported the Socialists' proposals, but the two parties could not overcome the Liberals' resistance (Rasmussen & Knutsen, 2023, 46).

Electoral geography was another reason for the Socialists' seat-vote distortions. Plurality systems such as the Norwegian one disadvantage small

parties with dispersed voter bases but benefit large parties with dispersed voter bases (Calvo & Rodden, 2015). For a long time, this was a problem for the Socialists, because their support ‘was relatively evenly spread out across the country’ (Fiva & Smith, 2017a, 133). However, the Socialists were rapidly growing in strength, becoming the electorally strongest party in 1918. Moreover, the Socialists were not the only party featuring a dispersed electoral geography. This was also true for the Conservatives and the Liberals (Boix, 2010, 407). Put differently, the established parties risked that the electoral system’s majoritarian biases would soon favour the Socialists (Aardal, 2010, 80).

Universal suffrage was introduced in 1913. Suffrage reform mostly enfranchised working-class urban voters, assumed to benefit the Socialists (Aardal, 2002, 176). With universal suffrage, ‘the system properties which were advantageous for the established parties in one setting could prove disastrous under new circumstances’ (Aardal, 2002, 186), which is why the Conservatives and the Liberals were clearly concerned about their own decline with further socialist advances across the majority threshold (Rokkan, 1970, 158).

The non-socialist parties’ sense of rapid decline might have been further accentuated by another feature of the Norwegian electoral system. The two-round majority system with its complex district structure often resulted in large shifts in parliamentary representation, especially for the Conservatives and the Liberals. In the 1906 election, the Liberals won 27 additional seats, whereas the Conservatives lost 27 (out of a total of 123 seats). In 1909, it was the Liberals’ turn to lose (29 seats), but they recovered in 1912 (winning 28 seats). The 1915 election was uncharacteristically calm, but the Liberals lost again in the 1918 election (26 seats). Put differently, both parties suffered from high levels of volatility in their parliamentary representation (Larsen Cadoret, 2010, 1457–1458).

Finally, seat-vote distortions also contributed to the Socialists’ radicalization because they led to disagreements about the benefits of parliamentary democracy (Rokkan, 1970, 158). The reformist wing, to which all members of parliament belonged, favoured the adoption of PR to improve the party’s parliamentary representation, whereas the more radical wing promoted extra-parliamentary action as the most effective strategy for achieving policy ends. Reducing the Socialists’ under-representation by means of electoral reform was seen by Conservatives, Liberals, and Socialists alike as a way to strengthen the Socialists’ reformist wing and reduce the potential for extra-parliamentary action (Gjerløw & Rasmussen, 2022). In this situation, Conservatives and Liberals (more reluctantly) acknowledged the need for electoral reform. The window for the adoption of PR was open.

In the 1910s, electoral reform was constantly on the political agenda. The Conservatives were the most consistent supporters of PR. As the weaker of the two established parties, the Conservatives had already expressed support for PR in the late 19th century (Aardal, 2002, 181–182). Their more urban voter base (compared to the Liberals) and the recent suffrage extension only further solidified their support for PR. In contrast, the Liberals had originally opposed PR, benefiting greatly from the 1905 electoral system (Aardal, 2002, 186). However, over time, the Liberals recognized the need for electoral reform. In 1911, Johan Castberg had already proposed to adopt a PR system (Gjerløw & Rasmussen, 2022, 601).²² Similarly, the Liberals' 1918 party manifesto acknowledged the need for a more just electoral system (Cox et al., 2019, 110–111).

In 1917, the liberal majority government appointed an electoral reform commission (Cox et al., 2019, 128). In April 1919, the commission reported on reform possibilities. In the meantime, the liberal majority government had taken a hard hit in the 1918 parliamentary election, losing 26 of its 80 seats and now ruling as a minority government. The commission majority (two Liberals, one Conservative, one Socialist) conceded that 'the transition to some kind of proportional elections has become a political necessity' (Kristvik & Rokkan, 1966, 12) and recommended adopting PR with multi-member districts. The commission minority, consisting of three Liberals, recommended retaining the MR system with single-member districts but adding 24 adjustment seats to reduce seat-vote distortions, similar to the 1915 electoral reform in neighbouring Denmark (Cox et al., 2019, 113, 128).

There was thus a broad consensus among members of parliament on the need for electoral reform. After lengthy debates in parliament, several proposals were ultimately tabled for votes in parliament (see section 7.2.3 for a more detailed discussion of these different proposals). The Socialists favoured the proposals that promised to achieve the highest level of proportionality. However, for both the Conservatives and the Liberals, this was not an enticing option. The Conservatives preferred the proposal that would have introduced PR in all regions of the country except in their strongholds, the small cities, which would have remained single-member districts. The Liberals, finally, preferred the status quo, albeit with newly added adjustment seats to calm tensions (Cox et al., 2019, 113–115).

Electoral reform required a constitutional amendment, which in turn needed the support of two-thirds of the parliament. Given that all of these proposals were clearly tailored to the interests of specific parties, none gained

²² Johan Castberg was the leader of the Labour Democrats, the Liberals' allies.

enough support to pass in parliament. Hence, only a mixture of these proposals received enough support from all parties. The eventually successful proposal combined PR with rather small districts and comparatively little variation in district magnitude, thus ensuring that the established parties would continue to perform well (Cox et al., 2019, 118). The resulting electoral system had all the hallmarks of a big compromise in the sense that none of the parties was particularly advantaged.

In sum, unlike the Conservatives, the Liberals were at best reluctant supporters of PR. Compared to their Danish peers, the Norwegian Liberals were more proactive in seeking electoral reform. However, like the Danish Liberals, they tried to keep proportionality at a minimum. We therefore code them as ‘divided.’ The Socialists’ parliamentary wing clearly favoured PR, although the same cannot necessarily be said about the Socialists’ rank and file. As in all other Scandinavian countries, the loss of their electoral privileges turned the Conservatives into supporters of PR.

Sweden

Like the Dutch Great Pacification Agreement of 1917, the 1907/1909 introduction of PR in Sweden was a package deal, which makes it difficult to evaluate to what extent parties supported the introduction of PR specifically. However, the available evidence clearly suggests that the Conservatives favoured electoral reform, whereas the Liberals and the Socialists were more divided on PR.

Historically, Sweden relied on a plurality system with single-member districts for elections to the lower chamber. Suffrage was severely restricted with only 8% of the population being entitled to vote in 1905 (Carstairs, 1980, 99). Next to the lower chamber, there was an equally powerful upper chamber, whose composition, thanks to plural voting and restrictive census suffrage, strongly favoured the Conservatives, which controlled majorities in the upper chamber until 1921 (Franke, 1969, 1085, 1105). Hence, the Conservatives’ political dominance was not the result of manipulative district design, for which there is no evidence in the Swedish case (Kreuzer & Neely, 2025; Särilvik, 2002; Verney, 1957) but rested on suffrage restrictions, plural voting, and a non-democratic upper chamber.²³ Both the Liberals and the Socialists demanded universal male suffrage and a shift of power to the lower chamber, which the Conservatives rejected. However, thanks to economic growth,

²³ Kreuzer & Neely (2025, 41) report that Swedish electoral law required each seat to represent a fixed number of voters, which made regular reapportionment necessary. However, electoral law did not foresee the possibility of changing district boundaries, which prevented the Conservatives from relying on gerrymandering. Instead, seats were simply added to the growing urban districts (see also Verney, 1957, 109).

the share of the population meeting the income and wealth requirements for participation in lower chamber elections was gradually increasing (Lewin, 2004, 269; Särilvik 2002, 232). Put differently, the Conservatives' political dominance was increasingly threatened.

In 1905, for the first time, the Liberals, with socialist support, managed to form a government based on a majority in the lower chamber. The new prime minister, the Liberal Karl Albert Staaff, immediately suggested introducing universal male suffrage in combination with a two-round majority runoff system in single-member districts. Thanks to support from the Socialists, the proposal found a majority in the lower chamber. The Liberals believed that, as the centrist party, they would be most likely to benefit from the runoff system, whereas the Socialists believed that with universal male suffrage, they would soon become the electorally strongest party. However, the upper chamber, dominated by the Conservatives, rejected the reform. In response, Staaff demanded the dissolution of parliament and a new general election, which the king refused to grant on the grounds that the Swedish constitution granted both chambers equal status. Staaff subsequently stepped down and was replaced by the Conservative Arvid Lindman (Carstairs, 1980, 101–103; Rottwilm, 2015, 145–148; Rustow, 1955, 66–69; Särilvik, 2002, 235–236).

Hence, in 1907, the Conservatives were back in power, but the episode had clearly demonstrated that their control over the lower chamber was fading (Kreuzer & Neely, 2025, 48). According to Lewin (2004, 269–270), the Conservatives understood that 'universal suffrage was unavoidable' and that they would be 'the losing party' no matter what, because of gradual suffrage extension due to economic growth, one district after another would switch 'from a Conservative representative to a member of parliament for the left'. For this reason, the new Prime Minister Lindman immediately proposed a new electoral law that combined universal male suffrage with the adoption of PR for both chambers. However, the Conservatives tried to protect some of their advantages, which is why the proposal suggested maintaining equal status between the two chambers and retaining plural voting for the upper chamber (Carstairs, 1980, 103; Kreuzer & Neely, 2024, 45–46; Lewin, 2004, 271; Särilvik, 2002, 236).

At first, the Conservatives' proposal, similar to comparable proposals in the past, was not acceptable to the Liberals and the Socialists, who, together, still held a majority of the seats in the lower chamber. The Liberals, instead, proposed to introduce universal male suffrage without changing the electoral system (Lewin, 2004, 272). A few votes short of a majority in the lower chamber, Lindman offered looser election requirements for the upper chamber. This concession was enough to get a sufficient number of Liberals to support

the Conservatives' proposal, although most Liberals and Socialists continued to vote against the bill (Lewin 2004, 273; Rottwilm 2015, 150–155; Rustow, 1955, 70; Verney 1957, 169).²⁴ The revised Lindman proposal was ultimately adopted with 128 'yes' and 98 'no' votes, which suggests that approximately a fifth of the Liberal delegation supported the Lindman proposal (Franke 1969, 1092; Verney 1957, 169).²⁵

Importantly, Liberals and Socialists did not oppose PR in principle. Both groups acknowledged the 'inherent justice' of PR, but they 'insisted that proportionalism would be acceptable only if applied to *both* chambers or if the existing powers of the senate [i.e., the upper chamber] were substantially curtailed' (Rustow, 1955, 62–63; emphasis in the original). At the same time, however, the Liberals and the urban Socialists understood that with universal suffrage, they would fare better in the MR system (Rustow, 1955, 63; Verney 1957, 167). In any case, for both the Liberals and the Socialists, other elements of the 1907 reform were more decisive, in particular suffrage extension and the relationship between the two chambers. The Liberals supported the retention of plural voting for elections to the upper chamber and the loosened election requirements for the upper chamber were sufficient for a substantial minority of Liberals to support the 1907 reform (Carstairs 1980, 103; Rustow, 1955, 69–72). In contrast, the Socialists remained united in opposition to the 1907 reform, but the retention of plural voting for upper chamber elections, not the adoption of PR, was the main reason why they continued to oppose the reform (Carstairs 1980, 103; Kreuzer 2010b, 20; Verney 1957, 167, 171). For these reasons, we code both the Liberals and the Socialists as 'divided' on the question of PR adoption.

Pressured incumbents

Austria

The Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy was a multi-national constitutional monarchy between 1867 and 1918. It controlled large areas in what is today Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, and the Ukraine. In the

²⁴ These Liberals, primarily farmers' representatives from the Northern provinces led by Daniel Perrson i Tällberg, were worried about their own marginalization within the Liberal movement (Rustow, 1955, 71–72; Verney, 1957, 172).

²⁵ For constitutional reasons, the 1907 reform had to be confirmed by the new parliament in 1909, which is why the introduction of PR in Sweden is usually dated as 1909 (Carstairs, 1980, 103). Interestingly, in the 1909 vote, most Liberals supported the reform, while the Socialists continued to oppose it (Rottwilm, 2015, 155; Rustow, 1955, 71).

following, we focus on the parties representing the part of Austria-Hungary that formed modern Austria after the First World War.

In 1907, Austria-Hungary introduced direct elections and universal male suffrage, relying on an MR system with runoffs and mostly single-member districts (Poier, 2010, 184). To protect the dominance of the German speakers within the empire, the 1907 reform designed highly malapportioned districts that allocated the German-speaking areas (35.8% of the population) 45.1% of the seats in parliament (Braunias 1932, 411; Ucakar 1985, 356). In the parliamentary debate on the 1907 reform, the adoption of PR was briefly considered but found little support. Both the German Nationals and the Christian Democrats argued that PR would not be compatible with the monarchy and the continued over-representation of the empire's German-speaking part, from which they were the main beneficiaries (Carstairs 1980, 126; Ucakar 1985, 309–352).²⁶ The Socialists favoured the adoption of PR. In fact, PR had become part of the Socialists' programme already in 1901, but the leading Socialist Karl Renner believed it to be unattainable in 1907, which is why the Socialists focused on universal male suffrage instead (Ucakar, 1985, 293–296, 366–367).

In any case, the 1907 electoral law gave the Socialists little reason to reconsider their position on PR. For example, the creation of an anti-socialist alliance in parliament made the Socialists lose most of the runoffs in the 1911 election (Ucakar, 1985, 364). Moreover, as shown in Chapter 3, the 1907 electoral law did not just lead to the under-representation of the non-German-speaking parts of the empire, the single-member districts had also been designed to guarantee an under-representation of the Socialists. For these reasons, the Socialists remained vocal supporters of PR throughout the entire period (Ucakar, 1985, 366–367).

With the defeat of Austria-Hungary in the First World War looming, separatist tendencies within the empire grew. Facing the prospect of unrest among the different ethnic groups, Emperor Karl I issued a manifesto on 16 October 1918, which allowed the different ethnic groups to form their own states within the monarchy. The German territories were also free to form a state. Less than a month later, Karl I stepped down, thus paving the way for the dissolution of Austria-Hungary (Grass, 1969, 935–936). In this context, the three main parties in the German-speaking part of the empire

²⁶ At the time, the party system in Austria-Hungary was exceptionally fragmented. There were 37 parties organized into 12 clubs, often along ethnic lines (Braunias, 1932, 412; Grass, 1969, 934). For the sake of simplicity, we use German Nationals to refer to the diverse groups of German parties, whereas Christian Democrats refers to the party resulting from the merger of the Christian Social Party and the Catholic Conservative Party in 1907 (Ucakar, 1985, 303).

(Christian Democrats, German Nationals, and Socialists) had to start their negotiations on the constitution for the new Austrian Republic, including the new election system.

The three parties quickly converged on PR. Unsurprisingly, the Socialists were most outspoken in their support for PR. The Socialist Karl Renner wrote the first draft of the new electoral law (Seliger & Ucakar, 1984, 57). The Christian Democrats and the German Nationals were at first reluctant to give up on the monarchy, but once it became clear that there was no alternative to the republic, they endorsed the PR system (Ucakar, 1985, 374–390). Hence, after the end of the First World War, there was a general agreement among the three major parties on the adoption of PR (Carstairs 1980, 127–128; Grass 1969, 936; Pelinka 1966, 267–268; Poier 2010, 172–173).²⁷

Why did the Christian Democrats and the German Nationals change their position on the adoption of PR? For starters, with the collapse of the Dual Monarchy, one key reason for maintaining the MR system, the over-representation of the empire's German-speaking parts, had disappeared (Ucakar, 1985, 389). In addition, especially the German Nationals, the political backbone of the previous political regime, were electorally under pressure. With the collapse of the empire and the massive loss of territory, the German Nationals were considered 'out of fashion' (Ucakar, 1985, 391). For this reason, the German Nationals favoured PR to maintain at least some parliamentary representation. Poier (2010, 172) argues that similar considerations also informed the Christian Democrats' position on electoral reform. He argues that Christian Democrats 'feared that they would be crushed' by a socialist majority without electoral reform (Poier, 2010, 172). These fears, however, were probably unwarranted. In the first election under the new electoral system, the Christian Democrats won 41.8% of the vote compared to the Socialists' 36.0% (Poier, 2010, 172).

In sum, in 1918, an all-party constitutional assembly adopted PR without much debate. However, this consensus disguises the fact that until the collapse of the Dual Monarchy, both the Christian Democrats and the German Nationals had supported the MR system. Only the Socialists had already been open supporters of PR before the First World War.

Denmark

There is considerable disagreement on Denmark. The Danish case is complicated by the fact that PR was introduced by means of two reforms (in

²⁷ The German Nationals had some concerns about the *specifics* of the PR system such as closed lists and district magnitude (see Seliger & Ucakar, 1984, 57; Ucakar, 1985, 398), but these concerns did not undermine their general support for PR.

1915 and in 1920). For these reasons, we discuss the Danish case in some detail.

Historically, Denmark relied on a plurality system with 102 single-member districts (1867–1894). Because districts were generally not adapted to population growth and domestic migration, the main rural party, the Liberals, benefited from malapportionment.²⁸ In 1894, the increase in the number of districts to 114, especially by adding more urban districts, reduced malapportionment somewhat, but the 1905 census clearly showed that the Conservatives and the Socialists still had to win considerably more votes to the obtain the same number of seats as the Liberals (Elklit 1992, 190; 2002, 31). One direct consequence was the Liberals' dominance of the lower chamber of parliament since the early 1870s and control over the government (appointed by the king) since 1901.

However, not all was good for the Liberals. In 1905, the left wing of the party broke away and formed its own party. These Social Liberals were the party of rural smallholders and more open to the welfare state, making them a possible ally for the Socialists. As the weaker of the two rural parties, the Social Liberals suffered from seat-vote distortions and demanded the adoption of PR (Elklit, 2002, 35). The Socialists, in turn, had seen their electoral support grow rapidly. In the 1913 election, the Socialists even won a plurality of votes (29.6%). Yet, the Liberals, with fewer votes (28.6%), won 12 seats more in the lower chamber (with 114 seats) thanks to malapportionment (Elklit, 2010, 536–552). The main victim of the electoral system's disproportional features, however, were the Conservatives, who, in 1913, won a paltry seven seats (6%) with a vote share of 22.4%. Unsurprisingly, the Conservatives were strong advocates of PR for elections to the lower chamber. Yet, the Conservatives' pro-democratic attitude did not extend to the upper chamber whose electoral system strongly favoured the Conservatives and where the Conservatives, as a result, held a strong, albeit constantly declining, majority (Elklit, 1988, 67). Without a majority in the upper chamber, the liberal incumbents were constantly forced to find agreements with their old rivals, the Conservatives.

From the early 20th century onward, the Socialists, after 1905 supported by the Social Liberals, became increasingly vocal in demanding electoral reform. The Socialists' main concern was malapportionment (Elklit, 2005, 453), but they also wanted to abolish the upper chamber and extend suffrage to voters below the age of 30. The adoption of PR was not among the

²⁸ We do not differentiate between Venstrereformpartiet and Moderate Venstre. From 1910 onward, the two parties campaigned together as Venstre. Their positions on electoral reform did not differ significantly.

Socialists' demands (Kreuzer, 2010b, 27). The Conservatives supported reapportionment and the adoption of PR, but they were opposed to most other reforms, especially reforms that endangered their strong position in the upper chamber (Elklit, 2005, 453–454). This conservative opposition to further reforms was precisely why the Socialists remained critical of PR. In 1905, the Socialists argued that as long as the Conservatives prevented other democratizing reforms, the Socialists could not support conservative demands for PR (Elklit, 1988, 74–75). Put differently, the Socialists did not oppose PR in principle, but they understood that if PR was introduced in isolation, it would mainly benefit the Conservatives. The Liberals, in turn, understood that they were to lose greatly from a more proportional electoral system, but they had a keen interest in reforms that would weaken the Conservatives' firm grip on the upper chamber (Elklit, 2002, 34–35).

After the publication of the 1905 census that documented the dramatic extent of malapportionment in Denmark, the Socialists' calls for reapportionment became hard to ignore. In this situation, as Elklit (1988) shows, the Liberal Prime Minister Jens Christian Christensen adopted a strategy that tried to play the Conservatives off against the Socialists and the Social Liberals. While it would have been in the power of the lower chamber to reform districts (and thus reduce malapportionment), the constitutional reform necessary for changing the electoral system, reforming the upper chamber, and extending suffrage rights required the support of the upper chamber. By pushing for a broad reform package, Christensen could rally the Socialists and the Social Liberals behind the Liberals' reform agenda. Due to their agreement on the need for constitutional reform, the three parties were called the constitutional parties. At the same time, Christensen could rely on the conservative majority in the upper chamber to block any reform that undermined the Conservatives' position in this chamber. In this way, Christensen managed to maintain the status quo, which was—not least due to malapportionment and the MR system—favourable for the Liberals.

However, developments were slowly moving against the Liberals. In 1903, they had won 73 of 114 seats in the lower chamber. In the 1906 and 1909 elections, their number of seats had declined to 48 (Elklit, 2010, 552). While still the strongest party in the lower chamber (in terms of seat shares), the Liberals were forced to accept a minority government led by the Social Liberals and supported by the Socialists. After the Liberals had regained government control a year later, in 1910, the 1913 election led to yet another social liberal government, led by Carl Theodor Zahle. The social liberal-socialist majority government was in office from 1913 to 1920. In parallel, the Conservatives' control over the upper chamber was crumbling because some of

the (life-long) members of the upper chamber, typically Conservatives, were dying, whereas the incumbent government, since 1901 no longer in the Conservatives' hands, was entitled to nominate some of the members of the upper chamber. With the death of Jacob B. S. Estrup, Conservative prime minister from 1875 to 1894, in 1913, the Conservatives' majority in the upper chamber was lost (Elklit, 1988, 83).

The Conservatives' loss of majority in the upper chamber was both good and bad news for the Liberals (Elklit, 1988, 2005). It was good news in the sense that the three constitutional parties now had majorities in both chambers, making a broad reform package electorally possible. However, it was also bad news because the loss of majority in the upper chamber increased the Conservatives' willingness to compromise with the Social Liberals and the Socialists, possibly to the disadvantage of the Liberals. It is in this context, in which the Liberals were still strong enough to influence the terms of the reform, that the Liberals finally stopped their delaying tactic.

In 1915, the Liberals, Social Liberals, and Socialists agreed on a broad reform package that also included the introduction of PR. However, the new electoral system maintained some of the distorting features of the previous MR system (Elklit, 2002). Most notably, outside the Copenhagen region, the new electoral system continued to rely on single-member districts (combined with some adjustment seats to increase proportionality). Hence, while Denmark adopted PR in 1915, the new PR system maintained some of the disproportional features that benefited the Liberals in their rural strongholds outside the capital area (see section 7.2.1 for a more detailed discussion of the 1915 system).

Unsurprisingly, the Socialists and the Social Liberals were not happy with the new electoral system. Soon after the reform, the Socialists and the Social Liberals agreed that another reform was needed to make the electoral system less favourable to the Liberals (Elklit, 1988, 89). In this context, the two parties could count on the support of the Conservatives who continued to be the party most disadvantaged by the electoral system's seat-vote distortions. In 1919, the conservative member of parliament (MP), Asger Karstensen, proposed a more proportional system for elections to the lower chamber.

Many Conservatives were still reluctant to join a reform coalition with the Socialists and the Social Liberals as long as they still had the support of the king. However, following the Easter Crisis of 1920, the king's role was reduced to that of symbolic head of state. The Easter Crisis was the result of a conflict between the king and the government, led by the Social Liberal Zahle, about the reclamation of land from Germany in Schleswig following the First World War. Dissatisfied with the government's defensive approach, the king had

dismissed the Zahle cabinet and installed a conservative-leaning caretaker government. This royal intervention triggered mass protests and ultimately led to the king's acceptance of parliamentary primacy (Elklit 1988, 89–93, 2005, 454–455).

The king's withdrawal from politics paved the way for a compromise between the Conservatives, the Socialists, and the Social Liberals on electoral reform. The new electoral system, based on Karstensen's proposal, found a majority in parliament despite opposition by the Liberals (Elklit, 1988, 91–92). As we discuss in more detail in section 7.2.1, the 1920 electoral system was deliberately designed to maximize proportionality by increasing district magnitude across the country and adding more adjustment seats (Elklit, 1992, 195–196).

In sum, in Denmark, two parties consistently demanded the adoption of PR, the Conservatives and the Social Liberals. The Liberals agreed to the 1915 reform that introduced PR, but it would be wrong to consider them advocates of PR. Clearly, the Liberals tried to delay the introduction of PR. They agreed to the reform only once they risked that a reform without their support might result in a more unfavourable electoral system. Instead, they used their (still) strong bargaining position to extract a beneficial district map that maintained many of the previous electoral system's disproportionalities. The main losers of the 1915 reform were the Conservatives, which had opposed the democratizing reforms and now suffered from an unfavourable district map. Having lost most of their privileges, the Conservatives now sought a coalition with the Socialists and the Social Liberals to redesign the district map. Only a few years after the creation of the original district map, a coalition consisting of the Conservatives, the Social Liberals, and the Socialists introduced a new district map, which removed the biases that had advantaged the Liberals, turning the Danish PR system into one of the most proportional in the world. Unsurprisingly, the Liberals fought the 1920 reform. The Socialists were at first divided on PR, but they clearly supported the 1915 constitutional reform that introduced PR (Elklit, 2002, 35). Moreover, after 1915, the Socialists cooperated with the Conservatives and the Social Liberals to increase the proportionality of the Danish electoral system, which unduly favoured the Liberals (Elklit, 2002, 37). Hence, from 1915 onward, the Socialists supported PR.

France

There is no shortage of electoral reforms in the French Third Republic (1870–1940). In this period, France passed no less than three electoral laws that (re-)established MR systems with single-member districts, in 1875, 1889, and 1927 (Ehrhard & Passard, 2020). The MR system introduced in 1889

was used until 1919, when it was replaced with a hybrid system combining both proportional and majoritarian elements. In the following, we focus on the adoption of the 1919 hybrid system and the re-establishment of an MR system in 1927, which remained in place until the Second World War. The French case is challenging because numerous legislators ran under very loose political coalitions, which complicates the identification of party positions on electoral reform (Boix, 2010, 407). In this section, we differentiate between three broad groups: The Conservatives who generally supported PR, the Socialists who favoured a PR system in 1919 but voted for the return to the MR system in 1927, and the Radicals who were critical of electoral reform in 1919 and were the main driving force behind the return to MR in 1927.

In France, debates about the adoption of PR go back a long way (Ahmed, 2013, 142–144; Ehrhard & Passard, 2020, 17), but it was not until the first decade of the 20th century that PR became a serious option. In 1907, the adoption of PR was first discussed in parliament on the grounds of making representation less particularistic and local (Kreuzer, 2010a, 382). However, electoral reform was also expected to have clear distributional implications—in particular to the detriment of the Radicals. On the one hand, the Radicals regularly employed district design to contain political challengers (Ahmed, 2013; Balinski, 2008; Marty, 2013). On the other hand, the MR system with runoffs benefited the Radicals because, as the centrist party, they were able to draw on support from left and right voters in the runoffs (Carstairs, 1980, 178; Medzeg & Nohlen, 1969, 472–473). For this reason, they benefited from seat-vote distortions, whereas the Conservatives and the Socialists were under-represented and forced to rely on complicated electoral alliances to compensate for their disadvantages (Ahmed, 2013, 157; Medzeg & Nohlen, 1969, 472–473; Nohlen, 2010, 648).

However, public opinion clearly favoured electoral reform, and both Conservatives and Socialists demanded the adoption of PR. Moreover, electoral reform also enjoyed some support among Radicals, not least Prime Minister Aristide Briand (Ahmed, 2013, 158–159). In 1909, the lower chamber passed a bill suggesting the adoption of PR by a vote of 281 to 235 (Garner, 1913, 615). Yet, as Ahmed (2013, 158) writes, in a surprising move, Prime Minister Briand now ‘rejected the bill, explaining that the country was not yet ready for it’. Tying the issue of electoral reform to a vote of no confidence, the lower chamber ‘thereupon rescinded its action by a vote of 291 to 225’ (Garner, 1913, 615).

Clearly, most Radicals opposed PR. Yet, the topic remained high on the public agenda. In the 1910 election, most candidates declared their support for some sort of voting system reform (Ahmed, 2013, 159). Of the 597

deputies elected, Garner (1913, 615) writes, '134 had declared themselves in favour of electoral reform without specifying the nature of the reform desired; 223 had expressed a preference for proportional representation; 50 had demanded the introduction of the system of "scrutin de liste" without proportional representation,' and only 50 were open advocates of the status quo. Unsurprisingly, after the election, the lower chamber continued the debate about electoral reform. In 1912, a parliamentary committee submitted a proposal for PR, which was passed easily despite the Radicals' opposition by a vote of 339 to 217. However, the bill also needed the support of the upper chamber, the Senate, where the Radicals still held a majority. In November 1913, the Radicals temporarily ended the reform debate by rejecting the proposal for the adoption of PR in the Senate (Ahmed, 2013, 159).

The First World War did little to reduce the pressure on the Radicals to allow for electoral reform. Quite the contrary, in 1919, the partisans of voting system reform finally broke the Senate's resistance, but several concessions were needed to prompt enough Radicals to support the reform. These concessions were such that it is doubtful whether the 1919 electoral system can be considered a PR system at all (Boix, 2010, 411; Nohlen, 2010, 648). Under the 1919 electoral law, elections were held in multi-member constituencies, and electors were given as many votes as there were seats to be filled. However, the electoral formula was complicated. As Carstairs (1980, 178; emphasis in the original) explains, 'seats in each constituency were allocated to parties and candidates in three stages. (1) Any candidate supported by an absolute majority of voters was elected. (2) A Hare quota was calculated by dividing the number of voters by the number of seats to be filled. For each party list the average vote for candidates was calculated by dividing the number of votes for the list by the number of candidates. Each party obtained as many seats as the number of times the constituency quota was contained in the party's average of votes per candidate. (3) If any seats remained vacant, they *all* went to the party with the highest average of votes per candidate.' Unsurprisingly, the 1919 electoral system did little to increase proportionality. Although the new electoral system reduced the effective electoral threshold from 35% (the threshold in the previous MR system) to 29%, electoral disproportionalities 'actually jumped from an average of 7% before the war to 14.5% in 1919' (Boix, 2010, 411).

What made matters even worse, under the 1919 system, electoral outcomes became highly unpredictable, as electoral alliances had a large impact on election success. In the 1919 election, a broad right-wing alliance ran as the 'Bloc National' and benefited from seat-vote distortions. In 1924, the 'Bloc National' could not renew its alliance. Instead, left-wing parties

were able to build a large alliance, the 'Cartel des Gauches', which won the 1924 election and benefited from seat-vote distortions before the left alliance broke down again in 1926 (Medzeg & Nohlen, 1969, 475–476; Nohlen, 2010, 649).

In the 1920s, dissatisfaction with the new electoral system was mounting. The Radicals continued to prefer the 'old' MR system with runoffs and single-member districts, but they needed some support from other parties to get a reform through parliament. Following the 1924 election, the French Electoral Reform Commission recommended the adoption of a proper PR system. Yet, in 1927, the commission surprisingly changed its position and now advocated the re-establishment of the MR with runoffs and single-member districts. The reason for this U-turn was the Socialists' change of position on the question of electoral reform. The resulting bill, thanks to the support of the Radicals and the Socialists, passed handily in both chambers and came into effect for the 1928 election (Ahmed, 2013, 164).

Historically, the Socialists had opposed the MR system and demanded the adoption of PR (Nohlen, 2010, 649; Penadés, 2008, 215). What made them change their position? The reason was the emergence of a new electoral threat that specifically challenged the Socialists. After the First World War, the Communists had appeared on the scene. In the 1924 election, the Communists won almost 10% of the vote, approximately half of the Socialists' vote share (Nohlen, 2010, 692). Suddenly facing a communist electoral threat, the Socialists tried to rekindle their electoral alliance with the Radicals' left wing. Moreover, the Socialists changed their position on electoral system choice because they believed that single-member districts with runoffs would help them contain the Communists (Ahmed, 2013, 163–164; Ehrhard & Passard, 2020, 16; Kreuzer, 2010a, 377–378). The Conservatives tried to prevent the 1927 electoral reform by inviting the Socialists to join their demand for a proper PR system (unlike the 1919 mixed system). However, the Socialists remained firm in their support for a return to an MR system with runoffs and single-member districts (Ehrhard & Passard, 2020, 16). As mentioned in Chapter 3, the 1927 electoral reform also installed highly malapportioned districts, which were primarily meant to disadvantage the Communists (Ahmed, 2013, 164; Balinski, 2008, 175). However, like most other electoral reforms in the French Third Republic, the 1927 electoral law did not deliver what the designers had originally intended either (Alexander, 2004; Ehrhard & Passard, 2020; Nohlen, 2010).

In sum, the Conservatives consistently supported PR, while the Radicals predominantly opposed PR (although there were some prominent dissenters). The Socialists initially favoured PR, but after the emergence of a

communist electoral threat, the Socialists changed their position and helped reestablish an MR system in 1928.

Germany

At first sight, the German case looks like a prototypical example of the socialist electoral threat thesis. The Socialists' vote share had been constantly growing. In the 1912 election, the Socialists obtained more than twice the vote share of the second strongest party (Lindner & Schultze, 2010, 775). At the same time, the non-socialist parties were highly fragmented. The Liberals mainly represented the interests of the Protestant bourgeoisie and the new economic elites. However, the more right-wing National Liberals and the more left-wing Progressive Liberals were in conflict on questions of further parliamentarization, free trade, and social policy. The rural-based conservative groups were divided along religious lines, with the Conservatives having their strongholds in the Eastern (and Protestant) provinces of Prussia, whereas the Centre Party represented the Catholics in the Southwest (Rottwilm, 2015, 96–97). In such situations, the socialist electoral threat thesis suggests that the fragmented non-socialist parties proactively adopt PR to limit their seat losses in the face of a rapidly growing electoral threat (Rokkan, 1970). However, this is not what happened in Germany. Three factors complicated the situation: malapportionment, electoral geography, and electoral coordination.

Since 1871, Germany had relied on a two-round majority runoff electoral system with 382 single-member districts (397 since 1874 with the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine). For the first election, the districts had been designed based on the 1864 census with an MP per 100,000 inhabitants (Rauh, 1977, 408). In the decades that followed, Germany underwent a massive process of industrialization (Flora, 1986), which implied large population shifts. Yet, districts were not adapted between 1871 and 1918 (Reibel, 2007, 37–38). Unsurprisingly, the rural-based parties, the Conservatives and the Centre Party, were the main beneficiaries of this malapportionment, while the more urban-based parties were disadvantaged. This is particularly true for the Socialists, but also the two liberal parties were somewhat disadvantaged, with periods of under-representation sometimes followed by periods of over-representation (Schröder & Manow, 2014, 539).²⁹

²⁹ In Table 5.3, we code the Conservatives and the Centre Party but not the National Liberals as the beneficiaries of district design as a containment measure. Historically, the Conservatives and the National Liberals had dominated politics. However, after 1890, support from the Centre Party was increasingly necessary to win majorities for government proposals in parliament. In this role, the Centre Party was also decisive in frustrating attempts by the Progressive Liberals to reduce malapportionment. The National Liberals were also part of this coalition. However, the National Liberals did not benefit from district design.

The liberal parties were also troubled by their dispersed electoral geography. Unlike the other large parties, the Liberals had a comparatively dispersed voter base (Boix, 2010, 407; Mares, 2015, 204), which is harmful for smaller parties in MR systems (Calvo & Rodden, 2015). Malapportionment and dispersed voter bases created major challenges for the Liberals. From the late 19th century onward, prominent Liberals therefore began advocating a PR system (Gagel, 1958, 127–129; Mares, 2015, 203–207), yet others remained in opposition to PR. It was only during the First World War that the liberal parties began to display consistent support for PR (Schanbacher, 1982, 39–40; Schröder & Manow, 2014, appendix, 3–4).

Successful electoral coordination explains why the Liberals remained divided over PR. Germany had a long tradition of electoral alliances (Reibel, 2007). By 1912, 96% of all runoffs featured some form of electoral coordination (Rottwilm, 2015, 107). As shown in Chapter 3, electoral coordination between the non-socialist parties worked and typically came at the expense of the Socialists while benefiting the Liberals (Rottwilm, 2015; Schröder & Manow, 2014). Hence, successful electoral coordination allowed the Liberals to offset some of the negative consequences of malapportionment and dispersed voter bases. However, over time, the Liberals grew increasingly dependent on electoral coordination. In 1912, almost 98% of all liberal legislators were elected thanks to electoral coordination (Rottwilm, 2015, 111), which shows that the Liberals had hardly any strongholds of their own.

The 1912 election was the last one in the German Empire. In 1914, the First World War started. Initially, all major parties supported the war effort, but over time dissatisfaction grew. In 1916, the National Liberals joined the Socialists, the Centre Party, and the Progressive Liberals in calling for a bigger role for parliament in war-time political decision making. Moreover, in 1917, many of the opponents of the war among the Socialists left the party to form the Independent Socialists. Those remaining were called the Majority Socialists. In this context, parliament also addressed the question of electoral reform.

In May 1917, a parliamentary committee debated three proposals for electoral reform. Two proposals from the Socialists demanded the introduction of PR, which, however, did not find any support among the representatives of the non-socialist parties. In contrast, the Progressive Liberals' proposal was more modest. It suggested the allocation of additional seats to districts that had experienced strong population growth. In these multi-member districts, they suggested the use of PR. In contrast, in the rest of the country, the MR system with single-member districts was to be maintained. This more

modest proposal was supported by most representatives of the liberal parties, the Majority Socialists, and the Centre Party (Rauh, 1977, 408–410). The German government, keen on maintaining the Socialists' support for the continued war effort, welcomed the proposal and recommended its adoption in parliament (E. R. Huber, 1978, 125; Schröder & Manow, 2014, 538). On July 12, 1918, the lower chamber adopted the proposal against the opposition of the Conservatives and the Independent Socialists (E. R. Huber, 1978, 473; Rauh, 1977, 410; Schröder & Manow, 2020, 259).

The new PR system was clearly designed to limit the effective degree of proportionality (Walter, 2021). Most notably, by maintaining 361 single-member districts, the reform limited the Socialists' ability to capitalize on electoral reform. Nevertheless, knowing that their own proposal stood no chance of winning a majority in parliament, the Majority Socialists supported the electoral reform because it was likely to improve their seat share (Schanbacher, 1982, 43; Schröder & Manow, 2014, 543). In contrast, the new electoral system clearly favoured the Liberals. The reapportionment increased the number of seats in urban areas, while the PR system in the multi-member districts put them in a better position to compete with the Socialists.

The Centre Party's support for the reform needs more explanation. Clearly, the reform did not concern their rural strongholds, which remained single-member districts, while it improved the competitive position of its workers' wing in urban areas. Hence, in the short run, the reform did not impose any costs on the Centre Party (Schröder & Manow, 2014, 543). In the long run, however, they risked that this reform would ultimately lead to a proper PR system—a possibility the Conservatives explicitly mentioned in the discussion of the reform (Rauh, 1977, 409, 411), although in the parliamentary debate, the leader of the Progressive Liberals, Friedrich von Payer, argued that no further extension of PR was planned (Schröder & Manow, 2014, appendix, 9–10).³⁰

The Centre Party clearly benefited from the MR system. At the same time, however, the Centre Party cooperated with the Progressive Liberals, the Majority Socialists, and to some extent the National Liberals in strengthening the role of the German parliament. Agreement to electoral reform was clearly part of the price to be paid for further parliamentarization (Rauh, 1977, 411).

³⁰ There was no roll-call vote on this reform. In the vote analysed by Leemann and Mares (2014), parties voted only on a specific feature of the new PR system. The controversial paragraph contained an automatic reapportionment mechanism, meaning that the district magnitude was to be adjusted to population growth in the future. The Conservatives and the Centre Party opposed this automatism, while the Socialists and the Liberals supported it (Schröder & Manow, 2020; Walter, 2021).

The modest reform proposal, which did much to protect the interests of the Centre Party, demonstrates that the other parties were aware of the Centre Party's limits. At the same time, the Liberals and the Majority Socialists understood that in the light of the Conservatives' continued opposition to any electoral reform (and the Independent Socialists' rejection of parliamentary democracy), they needed the Centre Party to have majorities in both chambers (Rauh, 1977, 409).

In any case, the electoral reform was never implemented. Only a few months later, after Germany's defeat in the First World War, the Majority Socialists and the Independent Socialists assumed power in the Council of the People's Deputies. Unconstrained by the need to find an agreement with the Liberals and the Centre Party, the Council of the People's Deputies discussed and decided on the new electoral law within two weeks, implementing a highly proportional PR system (Schanbacher, 1982, 49–52; Schröder & Manow, 2014).

In view of their foreseeable electoral dominance, why did the Socialists not stick to the MR system (cf. Lindner & Schultze, 2010, 776)? Although we cannot know for sure, it is likely that the two socialist parties would have been able to win an absolute majority in parliament if they had maintained the MR system (Schanbacher, 1982, 54–55). This had at least been the concern of the German government before the collapse of the empire (Rottwilm, 2015, 121). Yet, once in control, the Socialists still introduced PR, thus offering the struggling non-socialist parties a certain amount of protection.

Schanbacher (1982, 44) argues that the Socialists might have had no alternative to PR. Ever since the Erfurt Program of 1891, the Socialists had been demanding the introduction of PR. In November 1918, the demand had been taken over by revolting sailors and soldiers. It would have been difficult for the Socialists to change their position on electoral reform. Moreover, before the onset of the German Revolution, the Majority Socialists had in fact already agreed with the Centre Party and the Liberals on the nationwide introduction of PR (the Conservatives continued to oppose PR). The non-socialist parties' change of heart was clearly informed by the prospect of a socialist landslide win in the next election. For instance, the Progressive Liberals expressed concerns about the flooding of parliament with socialist representatives in case of an election under the MR system (Schröder & Manow, 2014, appendix, 11). Similar concerns were expressed by representatives of the Centre Party and the National Liberals. The last chancellor of the German Empire, Prince Maximilian von Baden, agreed to the introduction of PR on 7 November 1918. After the Council of the People's Deputies had assumed power on 10 November 1918, the Centre Party and the Liberals

were quick to remind the Socialists of their previous agreement to introduce PR (Schanbacher, 1982, 44–61).

Most importantly, however, the Majority Socialists were probably not keen on governing solely with the Independent Socialists, which were critical of parliamentary democracy and preferred a political system in which the government was formed of workers' councils. The relationship between the two socialist parties was highly contentious. Instead, the Majority Socialists preferred to cooperate with the reform-oriented non-socialist parties, most notably the Progressive Liberals and the Centre Party. However, to ensure these parties' political survival, a PR system was necessary (Schanbacher, 1982, 56–60). As the suddenly appearing enthusiasm especially of the Centre Party in the period between July and November 1918 demonstrates, the reform-oriented non-socialist parties were more than happy to grab this lifeline.

Limited sovereignty

Finland

Finland adopted PR in 1906 when still under Russian rule. At the time, several conflicts, including the First Russian Revolution of 1905 and the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905), had weakened the czar's position. In an attempt to calm tensions in this part of the empire, the czar tasked the Finnish parliament to carry out a reform of the electoral system (Anckar & Anckar, 2010, 593, Carstairs, 1980, 113; Nohlen & Torika, 1969, 416). Despite the new parliament, Finland was to remain part of the Russian Empire and under the control of the czar. However, the reform offered the Finnish parties the possibility to increase their independence from Russia.

In December 1905, the old Finnish Senate appointed an all-party committee including the Socialists to make proposals for the reform of the representative system (Carstairs, 1980, 113; Törnudd, 1968, 28). Sundberg (2002, 72) argues that 'the general aim was to form, nationally, as strong a parliament as possible, in order to be able to resist the Russians' (see also Raunio, 2005, 474–475). For this reason, the committee's proposals tried to maximize the democratic legitimacy of the new Finnish parliament. The committee recommended the introduction of universal suffrage, the creation of a unicameral parliament, and the adoption of PR (Anckar & Anckar, 2010, 593; Törnudd, 1968, 30). All parties welcomed the proposal, although the Swedish minority, representing a disproportionate share of the Finnish nobility, first insisted on the creation of an upper chamber. When it became clear that

the unicameral system would prevail, the Swedish minority endorsed the PR system (Carstairs, 1980, 113).

What made all Finnish parties agree on such a bold reform? At the beginning of the debate, some more moderate reforms were also considered. However, the Socialists were able to convince the other parties of a more ambitious reform project. Clearly, the joint experience of Russian occupation mattered too. Sundberg (2002, 72) argues that the Finnish parties 'were faced with a common enemy', which explains why they 'could reach unanimity in great reforms' (see also Raunio, 2005, 474–475). As a result, PR in Finland was adopted by an all-party constituent assembly, although it would take another 11 years before Finland was finally able to declare independence from Russia.

Ireland

Like Finland, Ireland also adopted PR under foreign rule. The first elements of PR were already part of the Government of Ireland Act of 1914, which aimed for some limited home rule. For election to the Irish lower chamber, the act introduced an MR system with single-member districts, although in the few multi-member districts, elections were to rely on PR (Nohlen, 1969a, 651–652). However, disagreements over the separate treatment of Northern Ireland and the onset of the First World War led to the postponement of the act's implementation. Moreover, tensions in Ireland mounted during the First World War, leading the British government to realize that Irish independence was inevitable, although in the Protestant North of Ireland, support for the union with Great Britain remained strong.

Ultimately, the 1914 act was never implemented (Gallagher, 2005, 512). Instead, the Government of Ireland Act of 1920 separated Ireland into two self-governing polities, Northern Ireland and Southern Ireland. For both the Northern and the Southern parliament (lower chambers), the act defined the STV as the electoral system (Carstairs, 1980, 202–203; Nohlen, 1969a, 654–655). Coakley (2008, 156) argues that the British government favoured the STV system in Ireland as a device to protect the position of the Protestant minority in the South and the Catholic minority in the North (see also Gallagher, 2005, 513). Following the Irish War of Independence (1919–1921), the Anglo-Irish Treaty of December 1921 ended British rule over Southern Ireland. The 1922 Irish Constitution maintained the STV system, which was not seriously contested by anybody (Carstairs, 1980, 203; Coakley, 2008, 156–157; Nohlen, 1969a, 657), possibly because the 'party system which has prevailed in Southern Ireland was created almost entirely after the adoption of PR' (Carstairs, 1980, 204).

However, it would be wrong to conclude that PR was forced upon the Irish. Support for PR was also strong among Irish Nationalists, which explains why the STV system was not contested after 1921. In the 1918 election, Sinn Féin had become the dominant political party in Southern Ireland. Sinn Féin's support for PR had already begun before the war, when they were still a marginal political actor, not least because some form of minority protection was thought to pave the way for Irish independence. In fact, the Sinn Féin leader, Arthur Griffith, was a founding member of the Proportional Representation Society of Ireland. In any case, after its rise to power, Sinn Féin remained committed to PR, which certainly facilitated the treaty negotiations with the British. The two parties into which Sinn Féin split, the pro-treaty Fine Gael and the anti-treaty Fianna Fáil, did not question the election system either (Carstairs, 1980, 203; Coakley, 2008, 156–157; Gallagher, 2005, 512–513).

Weak support for PR

Canada and the USA

For both Canada and the USA, there is little disagreement in the literature on party positions. In both countries, the main parties have never clearly supported the adoption of PR.³¹ In Canada, some provinces experimented with the STV system (Courtney, 2008, 11). Moreover, at the federal level, the adoption of PR was debated several times in parliament. However, neither of the two parties, the Conservatives or the Liberals, ever fully endorsed it. According to Ward (1950, 165), this lack of interest in PR can be explained by the fact that ‘there has been no evidence at any time to suggest that Canadian citizens have been greatly exercised over proportional representation’. Similarly, in the USA, some municipalities adopted PR (Barber, 2000; Santucci, 2022), but at the federal, neither the Democrats nor the Republicans ever openly supported PR. Ahmed (2013, 99–109) reports that the rise of the Socialist Labor Party of America triggered some debates about electoral reform. However, the Socialists remained weak and were never able to seriously challenge the duopoly of the Democrats and the Republicans. Instead, in both Canada and the USA, the two major parties continued to alternate in power, with neither party gaining a long-term and structural advantage over the other.

³¹ As shown in Chapter 3, in both countries the main parties engaged in district design to gain partisan advantage. For this reason, we code the Canadian Conservatives and Liberals as well as the US Democrats and Republicans as beneficiaries of containment measures.

Australia

The situation was more complicated in Australia. Historically, there were multiple non-socialist parties in Australia. The Free Trade Party turned into the Anti-Socialist Party in 1906 and the latter merged with the Protectionist Party in 1909 to form the Commonwealth Liberal Party, although the more left-wing protectionist legislators joined the Socialists instead (Boix, 2010, 409).³² This reorganization of the non-socialist parties was primarily the result of the declining relevance of the tariff question but to some extent also a response to the rise of the Socialists, which were able to capitalize on the remaining divisions among the non-socialist parties. Sawer (2004, 476–477) argues that in particular the more liberal Protectionists were squeezed by the rising Socialists and thus forced to merge with the more conservative Free Traders.

However, this reorganization did not result in a two-party system, as the political organization of farming interests resulted in the creation of the Australian Country Party (formally established at the federal level in 1920). The conservative Country Party was mostly the junior partner in coalition governments led by the Liberals. This liberal-conservative coalition benefited from considerable gerrymandering and malapportionment (Juriansz & Opeskin, 2012; Orr & Levy, 2009). However, due to the Socialists' electoral strength and the Country Party's regionally concentrated voter base, the Liberals grew increasingly dependent on their junior partner. In 1918, the Country Party (or rather their regional predecessors) successfully pressured the Liberals into adopting an AV system with single-member districts for elections to the lower chamber. They were able to do so by threatening the Liberals with withholding support for their candidates (Farrell & McAllister, 2005b, 82–83). According to Sawer (2004, 478), 'the farmers were interested from the beginning in the introduction of an electoral system that would maximize their own bargaining power as a third party without automatically favouring "socialist" candidates.' The AV system facilitated electoral coordination between the two non-socialist parties while allowing the Country Party to stay formally independent from the Liberals. For the same reasons, the Socialists opposed the adoption of the AV system in 1918 (Sawer, 2004, 476–481). Hence, Australian politics, for a long time, was characterized by a *de facto* duopoly, although the non-socialist pole consisted of two parties whose electoral coordination was facilitated by the AV system.

³² The Commonwealth Liberal Party turned into the Nationalist Party of Australia in 1917 and into the United Australia Party in 1931. Each time, the name change was related to the joining of socialist dissidents. The United Australia Party is the predecessor of today's Liberal Party.

Similar to Canada and the USA, there was plenty of experimentation with PR for elections other than the elections to the lower chamber. However, none of the major parties favoured the adoption of PR for elections to the lower chamber (Farrell & McAllister, 2005a; McLean, 1996; Sawyer, 2004). Hence, in line with the existing literature, we code all three parties, the Liberals, the Socialists, and the Country Party, as opposed to PR.

New Zealand

In New Zealand and the UK, there were periods of three-party competition that prompted the weaker of the two non-socialist parties, in both cases the Liberals, to endorse PR. However, in both countries, the Liberals' turn to PR came too late, preventing them from reforming the electoral system. In New Zealand, the Liberals ultimately merged with the Conservatives, while in the United Kingdom, the Liberals turned into a marginal party.

Historically, in New Zealand, the Liberals (renamed the United Party in 1927) were the dominant political group, controlling the government from 1891 to 1912. Importantly, this liberal dominance was not the result of electoral engineering by means of district design. As argued by McRobie (2008, 27), 'from the time of the establishment of a politically independent Representation Commission in 1887, New Zealand has been largely free of the partisan wrangles over redistricting that have plagued many other Western democracies'. In addition, universal male suffrage had already been introduced in 1879. In this 'Liberal Period' (Department of Justice, 1986, 43), the Liberals, like their Australian peers (Sawyer, 2004, 476–477), tried to mobilize the working class as part of the Liberal movement (Penadés, 2008, 229). However, this lib-lab strategy eventually failed and in 1916, various socialist groups formed a national party (Overacker, 1955). Next to the Liberals and the Socialists, there were several conservative political groups, which ultimately formed the Reform Party in 1908.

Anticipating the arrival of these new competitors, the Liberals passed the Second Ballot Act of 1908, which introduced a two-round majority system with runoffs and single-member districts, which was clearly meant to further the Liberals' electoral interests (Department of Justice, 1986, 50–52). Most notably, the runoff system in which only two candidates would advance to the second round was meant to benefit the centrist party that could hope to draw on support from both the left and the right in runoffs. However, with their dispersed electoral geography, the Liberals struggled to translate votes into seats, as they faced strong socialist candidates in urban districts and strong conservative candidates in rural districts (Hagel, 2004, 530). Unsurprisingly, the Liberals lost the 1911 election, but the Conservatives (i.e., the Reform

Party) won only a plurality of the seats. This allowed the Liberals to retain control over the government, but after a lost vote of confidence, the Conservatives were finally able to take over (in 1912). The Conservatives remained in charge until 1928, the so-called 'Reform Period' (Department of Justice, 1986, 52).

Squeezed between emerging Socialists and electorally strong Conservatives, the Liberals turned their attention to PR. According to Boix (2010, 409), the Liberals already committed to PR in their 1914 electoral campaign. In 1928, the Liberals, now called the United Party, argued that they disfavoured 'the present unfair system of electing parliamentary members' (Department of Justice, 1986, 56). However, neither the Conservatives nor the Socialists, as the two now dominant parties, were seriously interested in PR (Boix, 2010, 409). The Conservatives and the Liberals formed a coalition government from 1928 to 1935, but no agreement on electoral reform could be reached (Department of Justice, 1986, 56). After the Socialists' victory in the 1935 election, the Conservatives and the Liberals merged to form the National Party in 1936. The resulting two-party duopoly controlled politics in New Zealand for the next 60 years (Hagel, 2004, 530).

In sum, the Liberals changed their position on PR after they had become the 'third' party. At first, the Liberals had tried to contain the Conservatives and the Socialists by means of a two-round majority system with runoffs. However, this containment strategy failed and the Conservatives became the electorally dominant non-socialist party. Both the Conservatives and the Socialists formed comparatively late as national parties, but once they had formed, they were quick to find electoral success under the MR system, which is why they opposed the adoption of PR.

United Kingdom

Developments were similar in the UK. Historically, British politics was characterized by the two-party duopoly of the Conservatives and the Liberals. Suffrage extension raised the question of a possible working-class mobilization. In response, the Conservatives and the Liberals agreed on the introduction of single-member districts in 1884, which they hoped would contain the socialist electoral threat (Carstairs, 1980, 195). The Liberals, in particular, hoped to benefit from the combination of suffrage extension and single-member districts, because they believed that single-member districts would push the working-class votes into their arms (Ahmed, 2013, 126).³³ In contrast, the

³³ In contrast, the Liberals worried that PR would encourage the creation of a socialist party, hence their opposition to PR in the late 19th century (Ahmed, 2013, 126).

Conservatives benefited from a ‘very substantial pro-Conservative bias’ built into the electoral system due to the over-representation of rural districts and irregular reapportionment (Rossiter et al., 1999, 35).

At first, the Liberals’ strategy worked. Moreover, even after the formation of a socialist party (the Labour Party) in 1900, cooperation continued. In 1903, the two party leaders, Herbert Gladstone (Liberals) and Ramsay MacDonald (Socialists) made a pact to coordinate their candidates in an attempt to beat the incumbent Conservatives (Ahmed, 2013, 136). The pact was a great success, helping the Liberals to win the 1906 election (Andrews & Jackman, 2005, 73–74).

Until the beginning of the First World War, party positions on PR are relatively clear. As the main party of the countryside, the Conservatives were clearly opposed to PR. The Liberals and the Socialists had established an effective system of electoral coordination, which, however, primarily benefited the Liberals, while the Socialists, as the weaker party, struggled to turn their votes into seats. For these reasons, the Liberals endorsed the MR system, whereas the Socialists favoured electoral reform (Andrews & Jackman, 2005, 73–74; Carstairs, 1980, 191–165; Nuscheler, 1969, 624).

However, throughout the 1910s, the positions of the Liberals and the Socialists on electoral reform began to change. As early as 1914 at a party conference, the Socialists, following the recommendation of their leader MacDonald, rejected PR, arguing that with universal suffrage, the MR system would work in their favour (Andrews & Jackman, 2005, 74–75). The Liberals, in turn, stumbled into an internal conflict in 1916, resulting in the split of the party into the Coalition Liberals, led by the Liberal Prime Minister David Lloyd George, and the Independent Liberals, led by the party leader Herbert Henry Asquith. In this period, several proposals for more proportional electoral systems were discussed in parliament. However, none of these proposals found majority support. As Andrews and Jackman (2005, 75) show for the three parliamentary votes in 1917 and 1918, the Conservatives were consistently opposed to PR, whereas the Liberals and the Socialists were divided. Importantly, the leaders of both liberal groups, Asquith and George, continued to oppose PR (Ahmed, 2013, 137; Carstairs, 1980, 195–196; Hart, 1992, 185).

Party positions became clearer after the 1922 election. The election was a great success for the Socialists who managed to overtake the Liberals.³⁴ Following the election, both parties clarified their position on electoral reform.

³⁴ In the 1922 election, the Independent Liberals and the Coalition (now National) Liberals still ran as two separate groups. The Socialists won more votes and more seats than the two liberal groups together (Rose & Munro, 2010, 2023, 2029).

The Liberals began to openly support PR, while the Socialists took position against electoral reform (Andrews & Jackman, 2005, 74–76; Braunias, 1932, 223; Carstairs, 1980, 196; Nuscheler, 1969, 624). However, having fallen behind the Socialists in terms of electoral support, the Liberals no longer had it in their own hands to change the electoral system. Instead, they had to rely on coalition partners. The Liberals had two opportunities to reform the electoral system. In 1924 and again in 1929, the Socialists formed minority governments dependent on support from the Liberals. In both cases, the Liberals tried to make their support conditional on electoral reform. However, in both cases, the Socialists failed to comply (Braunias, 1932, 223; Carstairs, 1980, 196; Nuscheler, 1969, 624). By the 1930s, the UK had transformed into a two-party electoral system consisting of the Conservatives and the Socialists. The Liberals, by contrast, had become an insignificant third party with a seat share not exceeding 3% in all elections from the 1950s to the 1980s (Rose & Munro, 2010, 2030–2031).

In sum, as the dominant rural party, the Conservatives were consistently opposed to PR, while the Liberals and the Socialists changed their positions on electoral reform. As long as the Liberals believed in their ability to mobilize the working-class vote, they favoured the MR system. When it became clear that this strategy had failed, they began to support PR. In case of the Socialists, we observe the opposite development. For a long time, they considered electoral reform as a means to gain independence from the Liberals. However, after overtaking the Liberals in terms of electoral support, they endorsed the MR system.

Designing districts for new PR systems

Questions of electoral system choice and district design are inextricably linked. The previous chapters have demonstrated the importance of district design in majoritarian representation (MR) systems. In this chapter, we show that district design also plays an important role in PR systems.

In principle, proportional representation (PR) systems are supposed to ensure a proportional relationship between votes cast for each party at an election and the number of seats won in parliament (Colomer, 2005). Yet, a closer look reveals that PR systems differ strongly regarding district magnitude, both within and across countries. Consider the examples of the Netherlands, Norway, and Switzerland. At the end of the First World War, Norway adopted a PR system with rather small and uniform districts, the Netherlands created one nation-wide district with 100 seats, whereas Switzerland designed districts whose magnitude ranged from one to 32 seats.

These differences matter. Research has shown that district magnitude is the main determinant of the effective proportionality of PR systems (e.g., Blais & Carty, 1991; Boix, 1999; Cox, 1997; Gallagher, 1991; Lijphart, 1994; Taagepera & Shugart, 1989). Moreover, variation in district magnitude influences, among others, the number of parties, party system fragmentation, turnout, as well as the selection and diversity of candidates (e.g., Becher, 2016; Becher & González, 2019; Bochsler et al., 2024; Carey & Hix, 2011; Grofman, 2016; Iversen & Soskice, 2006; Kedar et al., 2016; Lachat, 2015; Lucardi, 2019; Monroe & Rose, 2002; Norris, 2006; Walter & Emmenegger, 2019). There are also important effects on political representation. For instance, small district magnitude makes it more difficult for urban interests to convert electoral support into parliamentary representation (Monroe & Rose, 2002; Rodden, 2019), has a negative effect on the political representation of left-wing parties (Becher, 2016, Iversen & Soskice, 2006; Kedar et al., 2016), and quite generally favours large parties (Lachat, 2015; Lucardi, 2019).

What explains these differences in district design in PR systems? This question has not received a lot of attention in the literature because district reforms in PR systems are often incremental and primarily concerned with

adapting district magnitude to account for population growth. More substantial district reforms are rare (Nunez & Jacobs, 2016; Pilet & Bol, 2011). To be clear, due to low district magnitude and the constant need to adapt district boundaries to accommodate population shifts, partisan districting is more important in MR systems than in PR systems. Moreover, the fact that district magnitude can be easily adapted in PR systems implies that once districts are set, their boundaries are hard to manipulate for partisan gain.

However, PR systems offer great potential for partisan districting at the moment of their adoption, especially when there is geographic variation in parties' electoral strength (Grofman, 2016). As countries adopt PR, district maps must be completely redrawn, which results in singular changes in district magnitude. This initial design of districts is highly resilient, as countries often stick to the initial district maps. Still today, the Netherlands relies on one nation-wide district, whereas the Norwegian districts are more uniform than the Swiss ones. Hence, the design of districts in newly adopted PR systems creates a unique opportunity for parties to gain a decisive long-term advantage in the translation of votes into seats.

In this chapter, we develop an argument that can account for differences in district magnitude within and across countries in newly adopted PR systems. More specifically, we argue that parties, based on the geographical distribution of their voters, prefer different district designs in PR systems. The designing parties engage in either the making of their own electoral strongholds or the breaking of other parties' strongholds. If their voters are highly concentrated in certain areas, parties advocate low district magnitude in these areas and, if necessary, merge districts with homogeneous voter bases to maximize their seat share in parliament. Under these conditions, barriers for other parties to win seats remain high even under PR. By sheltering locally dominant parties from competition, these districts inherit some of the distorting features of MR systems because they allow locally dominant parties to 'sweep' the district.

In contrast, if their voters are geographically dispersed, parties have an interest in increasing district magnitude to reach the minimum threshold for turning votes into seats. Put differently, such parties push for large districts that guarantee the proportional translation of votes into seats, thus allowing them to win seats despite their dispersed voter bases. Importantly, parties' geographical distribution of voters varies within a country, suggesting different strategies in different regions. Hence, the same party might opt for low district magnitude in some regions, while favouring high district magnitude in others.

In this chapter, we first discuss the neglected role of district design in the literature on electoral system change and demonstrate that existing approaches fail to explain differences in district magnitude under PR rules. Subsequently, we develop our argument about the link between electoral geography and district design, which we will test empirically in Chapter 7.

6.1 Variety of district maps in PR systems

The PR systems introduced at the beginning of the 20th century display considerable differences in terms of district magnitude (see Table 6.1). For example, average district magnitude ranged from 1.15 in Germany in 1918 (July reform) to 100 in the Netherlands in 1917. In addition, most electoral systems had at least one district with a magnitude of less than four, which can result in large disproportionalities even in PR systems (Carey & Hix, 2011; Taagepera & Shugart, 1989). Finally, countries with lower average district magnitude display a higher coefficient of variation, which suggests that certain areas within these countries were more likely to benefit from potential vote-seat distortions than others.

The limited available evidence suggests that the setting of district boundaries in these new PR systems was highly contentious. The examples of Norway, Switzerland, and the Netherlands are instructive. For Norway, Cox et al. (2019) show that legislators preferred different district plans. Voting records indicate that the Socialists supported large districts across the country, whereas the Conservatives preferred small districts in their strongholds (small cities). Finally, the Liberals wanted to maintain as many elements of the existing MR system as possible to shield their rural strongholds. In the

Table 6.1 Distribution of PR district magnitude in 10 countries

Country	N	Mean	Median	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.	Coef. of Var.
Austria (1918)	38	6.68	7	2.61	1	12	0.39
Belgium (1899)	30	5.07	4	3.41	2	18	0.67
Denmark (1915)	93	1.25	1	2.38	1	24	1.91
France (1919)	97	6.01	5	3.12	2	23	0.52
Germany (July 1918)	388	1.15	1	0.71	1	10	0.62
Italy (1919)	54	9.41	8	3.84	5	20	0.41
Netherlands (1917)	1	100	100		100	100	
Norway (1919)	29	5.17	5	1.49	3	8	0.29
Sweden (1907/9)	56	4.11	4	1.14	3	7	0.28
Switzerland (1918)	25	7.56	6	7.61	1	32	1.01

end, Norway adopted PR with rather small districts and uniform district magnitude.

The outcome was different in Switzerland. Here, the Socialists and the Conservatives used direct democratic instruments to introduce PR and break the dominance of the Liberals. The proponents of PR agreed to use the cantonal boundaries as districts, which meant that the rural strongholds of the Conservatives remained low in magnitude, while the urban centres ended up in large districts. For instance, five predominantly Catholic regions remained single-member districts even under the new PR system, whereas urban districts received up to 32 seats (Emmenegger & Walter, 2021a). Thus, Switzerland adopted a PR system with districts that differed considerably in terms of magnitude.

The adoption of PR in the Netherlands was equally controversial. While all parties had agreed on the adoption of PR as part of a policy package to introduce universal suffrage and pacify the state-church cleavage, their preferences on district magnitude varied considerably. The Catholic Party, with its highly concentrated voter base in the South, supported the so-called 'Belgian solution' (PR with small districts in the countryside). In contrast, the Liberals wanted a nation-wide district to eliminate disproportionalities as much as possible. The Socialists, finally, were primarily concerned with suffrage extension and spent little thought on the specific design of districts in the new PR system. Given that the liberal minority government, tolerated by the Socialists, initiated the reform and dominated the relevant reform commission, the Netherlands adopted a nation-wide district (Loots, 2004).

The examples show that the specific design of districts is controversial in newly adopted PR systems. However, what explains why the Netherlands designed a nation-wide district, Norway created uniform low magnitude districts across the country, and Switzerland introduced districts ranging from one to 32 seats? While the literature on electoral system choice has produced several explanations for the adoption of PR, we demonstrate in the following that these explanations cannot account for variation in district magnitude within and across countries.

6.2 Literature review

In general, the literature on electoral system choice focuses on why parties, groups within parties, or individual members of parliament (MPs) support or oppose PR. Party-based approaches start with the entry of a new challenger party that alters the existing electoral equilibrium. If the new entrant

can gather enough electoral support or has a concentrated voter base (Boix, 1999; Calvo, 2009), established parties may lose a significant number of seats. Under these conditions, established parties may be increasingly disadvantaged and push for PR to abolish the distorting electoral consequences of MR systems. Related approaches focusing on party factions and individual MPs argue that even if a party is advantaged by MR, individual MPs might defect from the party line if they face fierce competition from insurgent parties in their districts (Leemann & Mares, 2014). Again, the expectation is that MPs begin to support PR because they want to reduce entry barriers to increase their own re-election prospects.

Although often not explicitly spelt out, the implication of these contributions is that large districts under PR provide a lifeline for parties with inefficiently distributed voter bases (possibly due to competition among established parties) and neutralize the most adverse effects of the emergence of insurgent parties. As a result, these approaches to electoral reform cannot account for the creation of low magnitude districts. In fact, such districts would neutralize the very effect PR adoption was supposed to have on the future electoral viability of established parties. Instead, these approaches suggest that parties favouring the adoption of PR should strive to create nation-wide districts that maximize proportionality (Schröder & Manow, 2014, 2020).

Other approaches highlight party elites' interest in legislative cohesion (Cox et al., 2019; Schröder & Manow, 2014, 2020). More specifically, party elites advocate PR in order to monopolize control over the candidate selection process to limit vote defection from the party line. In turn, backbenchers oppose electoral reform because PR would weaken responsiveness to their local constituencies. In terms of electoral design, this argument implies that party elites prefer large districts to be able to channel their resources to fewer districts. In contrast, backbenchers are expected to support single-member districts and oppose PR. Thus, district design is the result of a bargaining process between party elites and backbenchers. We should therefore expect that the more backbenchers are involved in district design, the lower the district magnitude should be (Schröder & Manow, 2020). However, from this perspective, it is unclear why district magnitude should vary within countries, because variation in backbencher strength is a country-level phenomenon.

In sum, the literature on electoral system choice cannot account for variation in district magnitude in newly adopted PR systems. In the following, we therefore develop a new argument to explain parties' positions on district design.

6.3 District design for new PR systems

There is a rich literature on how districts are adapted for partisan advantage, in particular the maximization of seat shares (e.g., McGhee, 2020).¹ Yet, this literature suffers from two shortcomings. First, unlike research on MR systems, research on partisan districting in PR systems has paid little attention to electoral geography. This is a mistake because geographic variation in parties' electoral strength has the 'potential for bias even under PR, and this potential is enhanced when districts vary in magnitude' (Grofman, 2016, 532). As shown above, there is considerable variation in electoral geography and in district magnitude in PR systems both within and across countries.

Second, research on partisan districting has failed to explore district design in newly adopted PR systems. District reforms under PR rules are often concerned with adapting district magnitude to account for regional differences in population growth. In contrast, more substantial district reforms with significant implications for parties' ability to win seats and enter parliament are rare. In fact, the lack of district reforms under PR rules has even triggered research investigating why such reforms are rare despite potential benefits (Nunez & Jacobs, 2016; Pilet & Bol, 2011). For example, Pilet & Bol (2011) argue that uncertainty about the effects of electoral reform impedes parties from supporting even seemingly advantageous changes in PR systems.

Yet, the literature has overlooked the fact that PR systems offer great potential for partisan districting at the moment of their adoption. In fact, in the case of PR adoption, district reform is unavoidable, because the old districts of the previous MR systems are typically too small for the new PR systems. Figure 6.1 displays the effective electoral threshold for the mean district magnitude under PR or, alternatively, the PR tier in mixed electoral systems. Following Boix (1999), we use the effective electoral threshold as an indicator of electoral systems' degree of proportionality.

Figure 6.1 shows that in each case, the adoption of PR was associated with a strong decrease in the electoral systems' entry barriers. This is because as countries adopt PR, district maps must be completely redrawn, since districts in MR systems are typically small (often single-member districts) and thus unsuitable for PR systems, which require larger districts. Subsequent changes in the effective electoral threshold are minimal in comparison to the changes caused by the adoption of PR. However, Figure 6.1 also displays large differences in the effective proportionality of PR systems. For example, after the

¹ Of course, there are also other reasons for district reform (Hooghe et al., 2006; Pilet, 2007; Renwick, 2010).

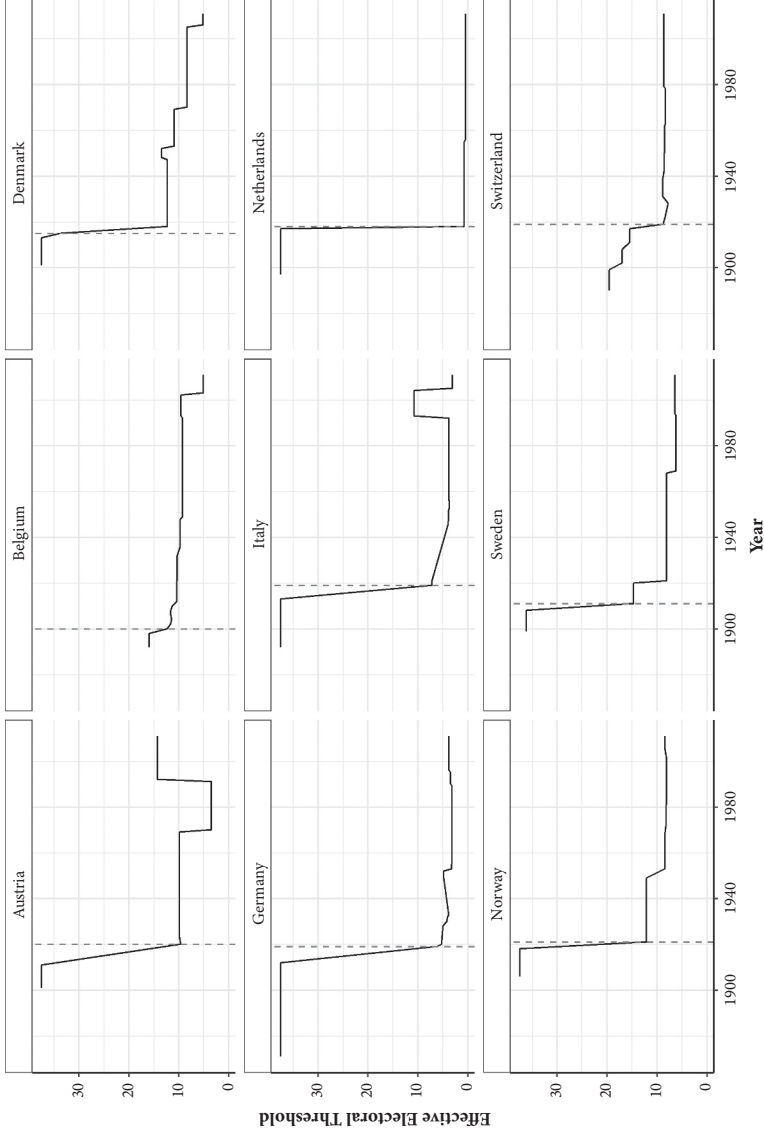


Fig. 6.1 Development of the effective electoral threshold in mean-sized districts

Notes: The threshold captures the vote share a party must receive to have a 50% chance to win one seat in a district. The dashed line indicates the year of PR adoption. The figure provides data for all countries used in the main analysis in Chapter 7 with the exception of France, which used a system combining PR and MR elements in the 1919 and 1924 elections and PR from 1945 to 1956 (on France, see Boix, 1999, 618).

Sources: Fiva & Smith (2017b), Grofman & Lijphart (2002), Mackie & Rose (1982), Nohlen & Stöver (2010), Pilet et al. (2016), and Ucakar (1985).

adoption of PR, the effective electoral threshold in the mean-sized district was 1% in the Netherlands, whereas it remained above 10% in neighbouring Belgium. Moreover, as Table 6.1 has shown, there are also important within-country differences, with Norwegian districts ranging from three to eight seats, compared to French districts, which ranged from two to 23.

What explains this variation between and within countries? We argue that parties can maximize their seat share by strategically drawing districts for the new PR systems. We assume that once the decision to adopt PR has been made, a coalition of parties begins a bargaining process regarding district design. Based on the literature on electoral geography (Boix, 2010; Brady & Mo, 1992; Rodden, 2010), we argue that parties develop their position on district magnitude based on the ideological composition of these districts, which is reflected in the geographical distribution of party voters. More precisely, depending on their electoral geography, parties can pursue two strategies to maximize their seat share.²

On the one hand, if the parties' voters are comparatively concentrated in terms of electoral geography, we expect them to create high entry barriers for other parties in these regions. Such parties strive to keep districts with low magnitude and oppose mergers with ideologically heterogeneous districts. As a result, these districts constitute strongholds in which other parties struggle to make any advances because of high electoral thresholds (due to small district magnitude) and homogeneous voter bases. By sheltering locally dominant parties from competition, these districts inherit some of the distorting features of MR systems.

On the other hand, if the parties' voters are comparatively dispersed, we expect them to reduce entry barriers in these regions. Such parties are harmed by low magnitude districts. Thus, they are expected to push for large districts that guarantee the proportional translation of votes into seats, thus allowing them to win seats despite their dispersed voter bases. Put differently, they prefer the creation of large and ideologically heterogeneous districts with low electoral thresholds. If necessary, this strategy also implies the breaking up of strongholds of other parties.

Based on their electoral geography, we thus expect parties to favour low magnitude districts if their voter bases are comparatively concentrated, and high magnitude districts if their voter bases are comparatively dispersed.

² Our argument focuses on the electoral geography of the political parties involved in district design for the new PR system. We do not consider the electoral geography of the parties not involved in district design. Most notably, we do not examine the fragmentation of the parties not involved in district design. This fragmentation is a key variable in explanations of why parties might prefer PR to MR (most notably Boix, 1999). However, the fragmentation of the remaining parties is considerably less relevant in PR systems, because PR systems do not follow a winner-takes-all logic.

Importantly, the degree of voter-base concentration is likely to vary within a country, which implies that party positions on district design can differ between regions. Hence, the same party might pursue low magnitude districts in some regions and large magnitude districts in other regions.

Of course, party positions on the design of districts matter only if these parties are involved in the design of these districts (Calvo & Micozzi, 2005). In the empirical analysis (in Chapter 7), we capture party influence on district design directly. However, at this point, two theoretical observations are important.

First, if a single party influences district design, we can expect this party to design districts to its specific needs. However, often, multiple parties are involved in district design. In these cases, it is plausible to assume that all coalition members benefit to some extent from participating in the reform coalition. Empirically, such compromises decrease the potential for electoral geography to affect district magnitude.

Second, district design is a zero-sum game because any efficiency gain in the translation of votes into seats must come at the expense of another party. Consequently, designing coalitions that exclude at least one party are likely to make the excluded party the loser in this process. In turn, if no (major) party can be excluded, for instance because institutional hurdles prevent such an exclusion, we should expect to observe PR systems with medium-sized districts with relatively low variation in magnitude across the country. In such encompassing coalitions, all major parties must agree to the reform, which implies that no major party can gain large benefits from district reform at the expense of another major party. This should result in a compromise deal on districts.

To make these claims empirically testable, we formulate two hypotheses on region-specific district magnitude, which link district design to parties' electoral geography but differ depending on whether a party is part of the designing coalition. More precisely, in case of geographically concentrated voter bases, we generate the following theoretical expectation about party influence on district design.

Hypothesis 6.1 *A high geographical concentration of a party's voter base in a specific region is likely to lead to a low district magnitude in that region if the party can influence the design of districts.*

In contrast, for geographically dispersed voter bases, we expect the effect of electoral geography and political influence on district magnitude to change.

Hypothesis 6.2 *A low geographical concentration of a party's voter base in a specific region is likely to lead to a large district magnitude in that region if the party can influence the design of districts.*

Hence, we expect the creation of large districts in regions where parties' voter bases are inefficiently distributed or, alternatively, concentrated, but parties are unable to influence the district design. At the most extreme, this can result in the creation of a single nation-wide district. In contrast, we expect the creation of small districts in regions where parties' voter bases are concentrated or, alternatively, inefficiently distributed, but parties are unable to influence the district design. Finally, given that strategic redistricting is a zero-sum game, we expect that the larger the reform coalition, the weaker the ability of individual parties to bias the district design to their advantage. At the most extreme, a national unity coalition involving all relevant parties will design rather uniform, mid-sized districts that do not particularly benefit any of the involved parties.

To illustrate our argument visually, we discuss redistricting in the context of the French electoral reform. Until 1914, French elections were conducted in a runoff system with single-member districts. After the First World War, France adopted PR with multi-member districts. Figure 6.2 provides a map showing the division of France into single-member districts (1914) with dotted borders, multi-member districts with black borders (1919), and the combined vote share of the dominant centre parties (i.e., Radicals and allied Republicans), which were prominently involved in the design of the new district map (see Chapter 7).

According to the new electoral law, the administrative structure which divided the country into differently sized departments ought to serve as blueprint for the districts. In addition, district magnitude was supposed to vary between three and six seats. The district map for the new PR system shows, however, that these legal requirements were transgressed in numerous instances. For example, many districts featured between seven and 23 seats and thus exceeded the maximum threshold of six seats. In other instances, departments were divided in a manner that benefited the dominant parties. We show two examples of the latter in Figure 6.2. In these two cases, the departments had more than six seats and were divided into multiple districts.

In Bouches-du-Rhône, two districts with nine seats in total were created. As Figure 6.2 shows, the low magnitude district containing large parts of the department was clearly dominated by the centre parties. More precisely, three seats were allocated to the district in which the centre bloc received a majority of votes in all areas. In contrast, the geographically smaller but more populous district in the East that covers the city of Marseille and its

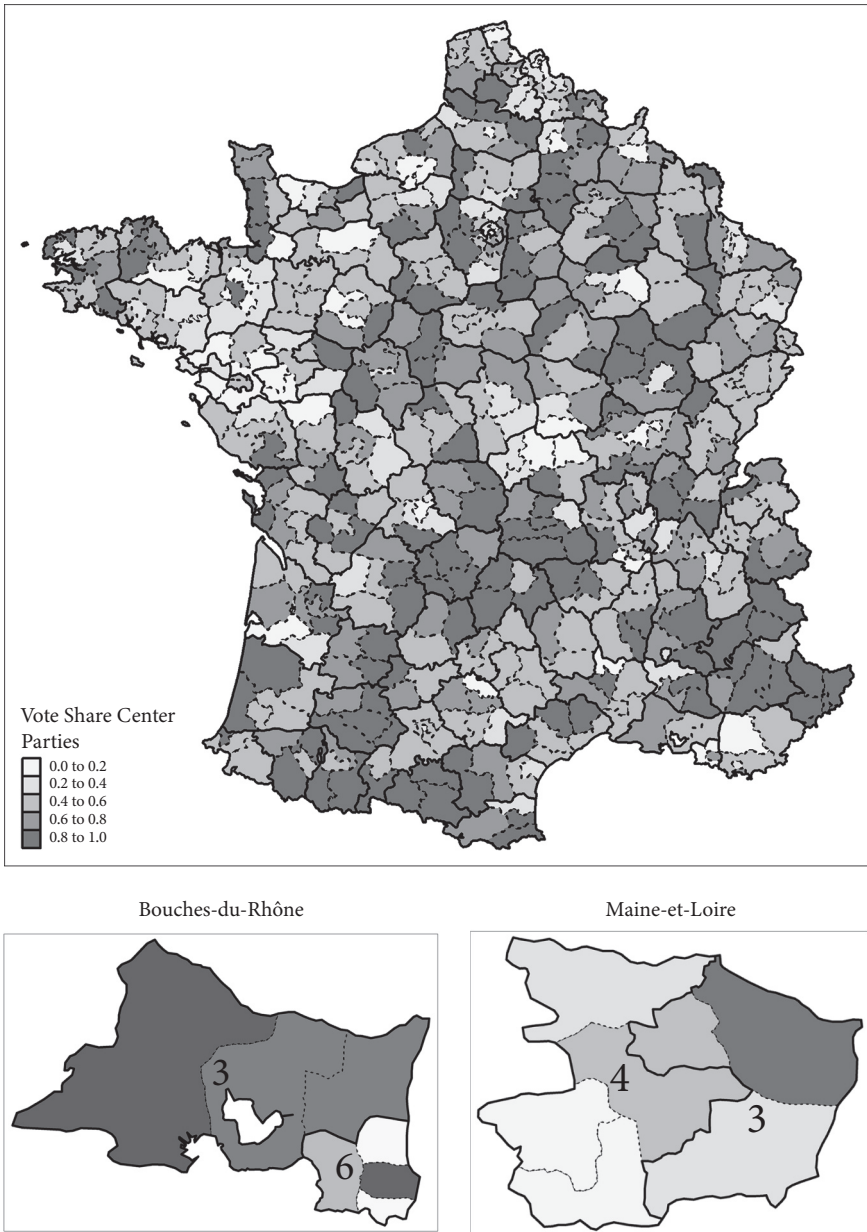


Fig. 6.2 Pre-reform and post-reform districts in France

surrounding areas had six seats but was ideologically more heterogeneous.³ In Maine-et-Loire, the Eastern district was dominated by the centre parties

³ The city of Marseille contained multiple single-member districts before 1919. However, we did not have sufficient information and detailed data to locate the three districts within the city. Thus, we display Marseille as a single district in Figure 6.2.

with a district magnitude at the lower legal threshold of three seats. In contrast, the electoral support in the Western district was more diverse and the district magnitude thus slightly larger. These examples suggest that there is a link between the geographical distribution of parties' support base and district magnitude.

Critical readers might argue that parties with concentrated voter bases are expected to oppose PR and are therefore unlikely to be part of the designing coalition in the first place. While this would indeed be the prediction of some electoral geography approaches, several parties with geographically concentrated voter bases were in favour of PR such as different non-socialist parties in Belgium, France, the Netherlands, and Switzerland (see Chapter 5). In addition, the geographical voter base of parties can vary considerably within a country. The Belgian Conservatives, for instance, were essentially unchallenged in rural Flanders but also held a large number of seats in highly competitive urban districts such as Brussels (see Chapter 8). Among the countries examined in this chapter, there are multiple examples of parties with regionally concentrated voter bases participating in the coalitions that designed the new districts. Finally, the ability to influence districts under the new PR rules and support for the adoption of PR are not identical. For example, the Belgian Liberals supported PR but were not able to influence district design (see Table 7.1 below and Chapter 8). In contrast, the Danish Liberals, the German Centre Party, the Norwegian Liberals, and Sweden's Socialists were at best divided over the desirability of a PR system, but were part of the coalition designing the new districts (Boix, 2010; Cox et al., 2019; Emmenegger & Walter, 2019, 2021a; Särilvik, 2002; Schröder & Manow, 2014).

In sum, we argue that district design in newly adopted PR systems reflects the designing parties' electoral geographies. In the next chapter, we test these expectations using both quantitative and qualitative data.

The politics of district design in new PR systems

In the previous chapter, we argued that, based on the geographical distribution of their voters, parties prefer different district designs in newly adopted proportional representation (PR) systems. If their voters are highly concentrated in certain regions, parties advocate low district magnitude in these regions. In contrast, if their voters are geographically dispersed, parties have an interest in increasing district magnitude to reach the minimum threshold for turning votes into seats. In this chapter, we examine these expectations both quantitatively and qualitatively.

We have collected data for several Western European countries on electoral outcomes at the district level, party influence on district design, and geographical boundaries of districts before and after the introduction of PR. By focusing on electoral geography and whether parties were able to influence district design, we find robust evidence that geographical variation in partisan support is an important determinant of district magnitude within and across countries. Importantly, these results hold when we control for administrative structures at a subnational level, which might have served as focal points in the design of districts. Finally, we show that parties that influenced the district design continued to benefit from seat-vote distortions in subsequent elections under new PR systems.

We complement our quantitative analysis with three case studies of Denmark, Germany, and Norway. In these three countries, multiple district maps for the new PR systems were openly discussed, which allows us to examine the reasons why parties favoured some district maps over alternative ones. We show that in all three countries, parties consistently expressed different preferences for district maps for the new PR systems, and that these preferences reflected the parties' electoral geographies. In both Denmark and Germany, shifting designing coalitions resulted into two (widely) different district maps, while in Norway, the three large parties ultimately agreed on a compromise proposal.

7.1 Quantitative evidence

In the following section, we present our data and research design for the quantitative analysis. Subsequently, we subject our theoretical argument to a systematic empirical test.

7.1.1 Research design and data

Our quantitative analysis consists of three parts. First, we employ the available data to provide evidence for our argument in a larger set of countries. Second, we limit our sample to countries where multiple electoral reforms were legislated by different reform coalitions over a short period of time, or where multiple competing proposals were on the table at the same time (Denmark, Germany, and Norway). It is often argued that in PR systems, administrative structures at subnational level serve as focal points in the design of districts (López-Pintor, 2000, 80). By examining multiple district maps for the same country, these more restrictive specifications allow us to control for these focal points, thus increasing the credibility of our findings. Finally, we show that parties that influenced the district design benefited from disproportionalities in the subsequent elections under PR.

To test our hypotheses, we assembled a data set with the electoral outcomes at district level in the last election before the introduction of PR in six countries.¹ In these cases, we use the electoral reform that abolished majoritarian representation (MR) in the first step of the analysis. The six countries are Belgium (1899), Denmark (1915), France (1919), Germany (July 1918), Norway (1919), and Switzerland (1918). Subsequently, we georeferenced the location of all pre-reform districts in these countries to match them with the post-reform districts under PR.

The data thus covers the majority of the Western European countries that introduced PR before the Great Depression in the 1920s and had elections as independent states under pre-PR electoral systems. In contrast, we do not cover Austria (1918), Italy (1919), the Netherlands (1917), and Sweden (1907/1909) in this first step of the analysis. In the case of Italy and Sweden, we could not find the relevant data. For Italy, to the best of our knowledge, the relevant electoral data is simply not available at the pre-reform district level. In Sweden, by contrast, the data is available at the pre-reform district

¹ In electoral systems with runoffs, we use the first-round vote share because we expect less strategic candidate entry and voting.

level, but it is not possible to allocate all candidates at district level to the relevant parties, which makes an examination of party strategies in the reform of districts impossible. Despite having also collected data on Austria and the Netherlands, we were forced to exclude both countries from the analysis. In Austria, most pre-reform single-member districts do not map onto the post-reform districts, making it impossible to identify how pre-reform districts were divided and assigned to different PR districts.² In contrast, the Netherlands created a single nation-wide district with the magnitude of 100, which implies that there is no variation in district magnitude under PR (see Table 6.1).³

Existing research on districting in MR systems has used simulations based on a number of objective criteria to disentangle partisan bias from naturally occurring bias originating from the geographical sorting of voters (Chen & Rodden, 2013). In MR systems, both types of bias are difficult to disentangle because elections are held in single-member districts that might cover only few densely populated municipalities or communities. If these areas are also ideologically homogeneous, partisan bias might arise without intentionally (re)drawing boundaries.

However, these issues are less important under PR because elections are held in multi-member districts. The geographical scope of a district can be expanded by adding more seats. Put differently, the problem is not primarily where a district boundary is drawn, but how many seats are allocated to it, making electoral geography endogenous to party strategies. Based on these considerations, we define pre-reform districts as our unit of analysis. Our dependent variable is the magnitude of the new district under PR to which this pre-reform district was assigned.

What explains whether pre-reform districts under MR are assigned to small or large districts under PR? The basic intuition of our modelling strategy is as follows. For the sake of simplicity, let us assume that pre-reform districts are single-member districts, whereas post-reform districts (now

² Without Austria, there are only three cases in which pre-reform districts were divided and assigned to different PR districts (out of 1,406 cases in our sample). In these three cases (all of which are in Germany), we focused on the part with the largest population when assigning pre-reform districts to PR districts.

³ It is worth emphasizing that at the aggregate level, the district design in these countries' newly adopted PR systems corresponds to our expectations. In the Netherlands, the Liberals oversaw district design (see Table 7.1 below). With their dispersed voter base (Boix, 2010, 407), the Liberals created a single nation-wide district. In the other three countries, the designing coalitions had mixed electoral geographies (i.e., concentrated in some regions, dispersed in others). In Sweden, all major parties were part of the coalition involved in district design, which resulted in medium-sized districts whose magnitude barely varied across the country (ranging from three to seven; see Table 6.1) because no party could gain benefits from district design at the expense of another major party. In contrast, in both Austria and Italy, some major parties were not able to influence the design of districts. Consequently, variation in district magnitude in these two countries is higher than in Sweden (ranging from one to 12 in Austria and 5 to 20 in Italy).

under PR) must have a magnitude greater than one.⁴ A party with regional strongholds is interested in keeping district magnitude in these regions low. For instance, if a party has a vote share of 75% (plus one vote) or more in two contiguous single-member districts, a merger (now a district with a magnitude of two) would result in an effective electoral threshold that is still large enough to prevent any other party from gaining a seat. In this example, the party has merged two single-member districts into a district under PR with a magnitude greater than one. However, by merging two strongholds and keeping district magnitude small, the party could preserve some of the advantages of the regionally concentrated voter base. The opposite logic applies for parties whose voter base is dispersed. If a party's vote shares in a larger number of proximate single-member districts is 5% (plus one vote), a district with a magnitude of 14 would be sufficient to allow the party to gain a seat under the new PR system. In this example, the party has managed to turn 14 single-member districts, all of which it had lost under MR (by wide margins), into a large PR district, where it has a reasonable chance to win at least one seat.

However, whether parties can shape the design of districts depends on their ability to influence electoral reform. To measure parties' influence on the design of districts under the new electoral system, we consulted country experts and reviewed primary and secondary sources on the policy processes that resulted in the adoption of PR. Based on these reviews, we have created a binary indicator to capture whether a party was able to influence the district design and, thus, was part of the designing coalition. An overview can be found in Table 7.1. The data sources as well as a detailed explanation of our coding decisions are documented in section 7.2, Chapter 8, and in Tables 7.7 and 7.8 in the Appendix to this chapter.

We capture the geographical distribution of parties' voter bases using two variables. First, among the coalition of parties influencing the district design in the newly adopted PR systems, we use the vote share of the coalition party that has the highest electoral support in a pre-reform district. While parties pursue different strategies depending on their electoral geography, we argue that they are primarily interested in preserving local strongholds (Cox et al., 2019). It is here that parties have concentrated benefits (in terms of seats to be won), whereas the other coalition parties have rather diffuse costs

⁴ Some countries had multi-member districts already under MR (Colomer, 2007). In addition, there are examples of districts with a magnitude of one under PR. However, as a rule, PR districts are equal or larger than MR districts in magnitude. Hence, the logic of the example applies to all cases examined in this chapter.

Table 7.1 Coding of party influence on electoral laws (district design)

Country	Year	Party	Influence
Austria	1918	Christian Democrats, Socialists	Yes
		German Nationals	No
Belgium	1899	Conservatives	Yes
		Liberals, Socialists	No
Denmark	1915	Liberals, Social Liberals, Socialists	Yes
		Conservatives	No
Denmark	1918	Conservatives, Social Liberals, Socialists	Yes
		Liberals	No
France	1919	Centre bloc (Radicals), right bloc (Conservatives)	Yes
		Socialists	No
Germany	July 1918	Centre Party, National Liberals, Progressive Liberals, Socialists	Yes
		Conservatives	No
Germany	November 1918	Socialists	Yes
		Centre Party, National Liberals, Progressive Liberals, Conservatives	No
Italy	1919	Liberals (incl. Radicals)	Yes
		Christian Democrats, Socialists	No
Netherlands	1917	Liberals	Yes
		Socialists, Religious Parties	No
Norway	1919 (I)	Liberals (failed reform)	Yes
		Conservatives, Socialists	No
Norway	1919 (II)	Liberals, Conservatives, Socialists	Yes
Sweden	1907/9	Conservatives, Liberals, Socialists	Yes
Switzerland	1918	Conservatives, Socialists	Yes
		Liberals (Democrats, Radicals, Liberals)	No

(in terms of seats they may be able to win if districts were larger). Therefore, the coalition parties' distribution of concentrated voter bases is crucial to understand district design in PR systems.

Second, its vote shares in neighbouring pre-reform districts capture whether a designing party has the opportunity to merge districts with homogeneous voter bases. In all newly adopted PR systems in this chapter, pre-reform districts had to be contiguous to be merged. Therefore, we create a measure of the maximum vote share of the (locally) dominant coalition party in all neighbouring pre-reform districts. We use the maximum instead of the mean because in case of an unequal distribution of a party's vote share in contiguous districts, the mean vote share under-estimates the potential for a party to create low magnitude districts with homogeneous voter bases under PR.

To put both measures in a relationship, we use an interaction term of the vote share of the dominant coalition party in a pre-reform district and its maximum vote share in the neighbouring districts. This interaction allows us to capture the parties' electoral geography. High vote shares in two neighbouring districts allow designing parties to create low magnitude districts with a concentrated voter base (stronghold). The coefficient of the interaction term should thus be negative (resulting in a low magnitude district).

We include three control variables. First, we add a variable for the magnitude of pre-reform districts. Switzerland and Belgium already had multi-member districts, whereas the other countries relied on single-member districts before the adoption of PR (Colomer, 2007). In our sample, none of the pre-reform multi-member districts were broken up, not even the exceptionally large Brussels district, presumably because this would have damaged the legitimacy of the new PR system. Second, we include a dummy variable for socialist parties to account for their possible ideological tendency towards large districts (Bol, 2016). Third, we use country fixed effects (FE) to capture idiosyncrasies of electoral laws that apply nation-wide such as differences in the seat allocation formula.⁵ The summary statistics can be found in Tables 7.9 and 7.11 in the Appendix.

To get our quantities of interest, we employ the following estimation equation for all pre-reform districts i :

$$PRdismag_i = \alpha + \beta_1 votsh_i + \beta_2 maxshnd_i + \beta_3 votsh_i \cdot maxshnd_i + \beta_4 X_i + \epsilon_i$$

where $PRdismag$ is the magnitude of the post-reform district after PR was introduced. In addition, $votsh$ represents the vote share of strongest party in a pre-reform district i and $maxshnd$ is the maximum vote share of the party in all neighbouring districts of pre-reform district i . We are especially interested in the estimate of β_3 of the interaction term that tests whether there is a systematic effect of electoral geography on the magnitude of PR districts. Furthermore, X is a stacked matrix that contains the control variables.

The first part of our analysis exploits variation within countries and between pre-reform districts by focusing on the design of the electoral system that abolished MR. However, some researchers may be concerned that administrative structures at subnational level that pre-date the new district

⁵ In Germany and Denmark, adjustment seats are used on the subnational level for multiple districts and are, therefore, not captured by our country FE. However, adjustment seats should weaken the incentive to strategically draw districts. Including both countries in our analysis, therefore, constitutes a conservative test.

Table 7.2 District magnitude by country: Two subsequent reforms

Country	N	Mean	Median	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.	Coef. of Var.
Denmark (1915)	93	1.25	1	2.38	1	24	1.91
Denmark (1918)	22	6.32	6	1.59	2	9	0.25
Germany (July 1918)	388	1.15	1	0.71	1	10	0.62
Germany (November 1918)	37	11.70	12	2.90	6	17	0.25
Norway I (1919)	126	1	1		1	1	
Norway II (1919)	29	5.17	5	1.49	3	8	0.29

Note: Norway I: 126 single-member districts with 24 adjustment seats (Cox et al., 2019, 114).

map (e.g., departments, states, cantons) provide focal points for district design and are only poorly captured in our model (López-Pintor, 2000, 80).⁶ Put differently, district design might be less driven by partisan concerns than pre-existing administrative structures.

To account for this problem, the second part of our analysis uses information on multiple electoral reforms that were proposed or passed in parliament in Denmark, Germany, and Norway (see Table 7.2). This empirical strategy allows us to focus on variation in party positions while holding above-mentioned focal points and electoral geography constant. Therefore, in the second part of our quantitative analysis, we exploit only variance in post-reform district magnitude and differences in political influence. We use the electoral reforms in Denmark in 1915 and 1918, in Germany in July 1918 and November 1918, and the failed proposal to maintain single-member districts (Norway I) as well as the adopted version of PR in Norway in 1919 (Norway II).⁷

The sample thus consists of six countries (first analysis) and six reforms in three countries (second analysis), respectively, that differ in terms of number of districts. For instance, we have 579 observations for France but only 41 observations for Belgium. To avoid our results being primarily driven by countries with many pre-reform districts, we employ inverse probability weights to give every country the same leverage in our estimation.

⁶ There are many examples where administrative structures were taken as reference points for the design of districts such as departments in the French reform, the cantons in the Swiss reform, or the administrative districts (*Regierungsbezirke*) in Germany.

⁷ In Germany and Norway, no elections were held between the reforms. In Denmark, a ‘silent election’ took place in most constituencies (i.e., no competition due to war-time emergency), providing parties with no new information on their electoral support. Therefore, vote shares in pre-reform districts are held constant as well. We discuss the details of these reforms in the case studies below.

In the third part of our quantitative analysis, we demonstrate that the parties that influenced district design benefited from disproportionality in the first election under the new PR systems. In this part, we use information on 47 parties in 10 countries.⁸ We use the difference between seat and vote share as the dependent variable and our binary influence measure as the predictor. In addition, we include a measure for disproportionality under the previous MR systems using the data for the last election before the introduction of PR to demonstrate that disproportionalities on the party level are not simply inherited from the previous electoral system.

To obtain our estimates for the first two parts of our analysis, we rely on negative binomial regressions for count data. The Cameron-Trivedi test for over-dispersion suggests that PR district magnitude, conditional on the covariates, is not equidispersed (Cameron & Trivedi, 1990). Therefore, we employ a negative binomial instead of a poisson regression. In addition, we present Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) estimates with the log-transformed district magnitude as the dependent variable. We also account for the non-independence of observations within and across parties by clustering the standard errors on the country level. Moreover, we include party fixed effects (FE) in some of our specifications as well as using multi-level models with random intercepts on the party and country level as robustness checks. In the third part of our analysis, we use outlier-robust regressions with cluster-robust standard errors to estimate the effect of influence on disproportionalities under PR.

7.1.2 Empirical findings

In Chapter 6, we outlined our theoretical expectation that reform coalitions with partly concentrated or mixed electoral geographies create districts with smaller magnitude than coalitions with dispersed voter bases (hypothesis 6.1) and vice versa (hypothesis 6.2). In the first part of our analysis, we now investigate this link in detail. Our main interest is the interaction between a district-designing parties' vote share in a pre-reform district and their maximum vote share in the neighbouring districts, which we expect to be negative (i.e., the creation of local strongholds).

In model 1 in Table 7.3, we use negative binomial regressions with country FE. Our interaction is significant at the 1% level. Adding party FE to the

⁸ We have included all parties that received more than 1% of the national vote share. The data come from Mackie and Rose (1982) except for the Austrian election in 1911, for which we obtained data from Poier (2010).

Table 7.3 Electoral geography and PR district magnitude

	Neg. Binomial			OLS		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Vote Share	2.49*** (0.52)	2.58*** (0.49)	2.58*** (0.11)	2.21** (0.74)	2.34** (0.73)	2.34*** (0.10)
Max. Vote Share Neigh. Districts	0.74 (0.64)	1.06 (0.56)	1.06*** (0.08)	0.86 (0.48)	1.03 (0.59)	1.03*** (0.07)
Vote Share x Max. Vote Share Neigh. Districts	-3.20*** (0.72)	-3.34*** (0.66)	-3.34*** (0.14)	-2.83** (0.88)	-2.98** (0.91)	-2.98*** (0.13)
Pre-Reform District Magnitude	0.11*** (0.01)	0.10*** (0.01)	0.10*** (0.00)	0.13*** (0.02)	0.13*** (0.01)	0.13*** (0.00)
Socialist Party	0.23 (0.14)	-0.12 (0.12)	0.31 (0.25)	0.22* (0.10)	-0.07 (0.10)	0.21 (0.11)
Intercept	0.60 (0.31)	0.38 (0.28)	0.37 (0.32)	0.34 (0.23)	0.22 (0.34)	0.17 (0.30)
Country FE	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Party FE	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Country RE	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Party RE	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Cluster-Robust Std. Err. by Country	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
AIC	39029.10	38144.68	38222.75			14858.96
BIC	39091.13	38248.07				
Log Likelihood	-19502.55	-19052.34	-19102.37			-7420.48
Deviance	6996.28	6693.85				
Num. obs.	1299	1299	1299	1299	1299	1299
Num. groups: Country			6			6
Num. groups: Party			15			15
Var: Country (Intercept)			0.49			0.52
Var: Party (Intercept)			0.17			0.03
R ²				0.62	0.64	
Adj. R ²				0.62	0.63	

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

specification in model 2 does not affect our main result. For model 3, we use random intercepts on the country and party levels instead of FEs. However, the results are virtually unchanged. In models 4 to 6 in Table 7.3, we use OLS estimators with the same specification as in models 1 to 3 but a log-transformed dependent variable. Our interaction term remains significant across all model specifications. Hence, Table 7.3 provides strong evidence that districts in newly adopted PR systems were strategically drawn.⁹ The constitutive term of the vote share variable shows that a higher vote share in a pre-reform district is associated with a higher post-reform district magnitude. This relationship holds if the maximum vote share in neighbouring districts is low, which mirrors a dispersed voter base. However, the negative coefficient of the interaction term suggests that with larger values of the maximum vote share in neighbouring districts, the positive relationship between the vote share in pre-reform districts and post-reform district magnitude weakens and reverses eventually. This provides support for our hypotheses that a concentrated voter base (i.e., high values of both constitutive terms) is associated with lower post-reform district magnitude, while a more dispersed voter base is associated with higher post-reform district magnitude. We discuss this finding visually and more substantively below.

Readers might be concerned that unobserved constant confounders, most notably the existence administrative structures at subnational level, limit the strategic design of districts in newly adopted PR systems. If these subnational structures are associated with parties' electoral strength, the observed correlation might be spurious. To address this problem, the second part of our quantitative analysis uses six electoral reforms in Denmark,¹⁰ Germany, and Norway (see Table 7.4). These estimations include pre-reform district FEs and thus exploit only variation in PR district magnitude and differences in political influence. As before, we use OLS and negative binomial regression models. Table 7.4 shows that our interaction term remains statistically significant at the 0.1% and 1% level, respectively, when accounting for unobserved constant confounders.

To give a substantive interpretation to our interaction term, Figure 7.1 shows two hypothetical scenarios with predictions using estimates from

⁹ In the Appendix to this chapter, we show that our results are not driven by individual countries (Table 7.11), by the weights (Table 7.12), or by using the maximum vote share in neighbouring districts (Table 7.13).

¹⁰ Copenhagen constituted a district with a magnitude of 24 in 1915. The 1918 reform divided Copenhagen into three districts with seven, eight, and nine seats, respectively. We were unable to identify how the pre-reform districts were assigned to the three new districts. In Table 7.4, we have set district magnitude to eight for all three post-reform districts. Dropping Copenhagen from the sample does not affect our results.

Table 7.4 Electoral geography and PR district magnitude: District FE

	Neg. Binomial Model 1	OLS Model 2
Vote Share	2.35*** (0.70)	2.37* (0.95)
Max. Vote Share Neigh. Districts	0.45 (0.55)	0.45 (0.73)
Vote Share x Max. Vote Share Neigh. Districts	-4.14*** (1.17)	-4.17** (1.54)
Socialist Party	2.17*** (0.07)	2.11*** (0.09)
Intercept	1.38*** (0.31)	1.05* (0.42)
District FE	Yes	Yes
AIC	1284.09	
BIC	4547.27	
Log Likelihood	-7.05	
Deviance	2.94	
Num. obs.	1260	1260
R ²		0.46
Adj. R ²		-0.08

Notes: Cluster-robust standard errors by electoral district.

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

model 1 in Table 7.3. To avoid having our results depend on extrapolation, we select two examples with the highest density of pre-reform vote shares and maximum vote shares in neighbouring districts. Figure 7.2 shows the distribution between the vote of the strongest party in a pre-reform district (x-axis) and its maximum vote share in all contiguous districts (y-axis). Given that many observations overlap, we have opted for a density plot with lighter coloured hexagons displaying more observations. Figure 7.2 shows that the hypothetical scenarios presented in Figure 7.1 are common ones.

In the first scenario in Figure 7.1, we fix the vote shares of the (locally) dominant coalition party at 90% in the pre-reform and the neighbouring district. Following hypothesis 6.1, we label this scenario as concentrated and expect that the post-reform districts are small in magnitude. In the second scenario, we provide evidence for hypothesis 6.2 by fixing the vote shares of the dominant coalition party at 28% in the pre-reform and the neighbouring

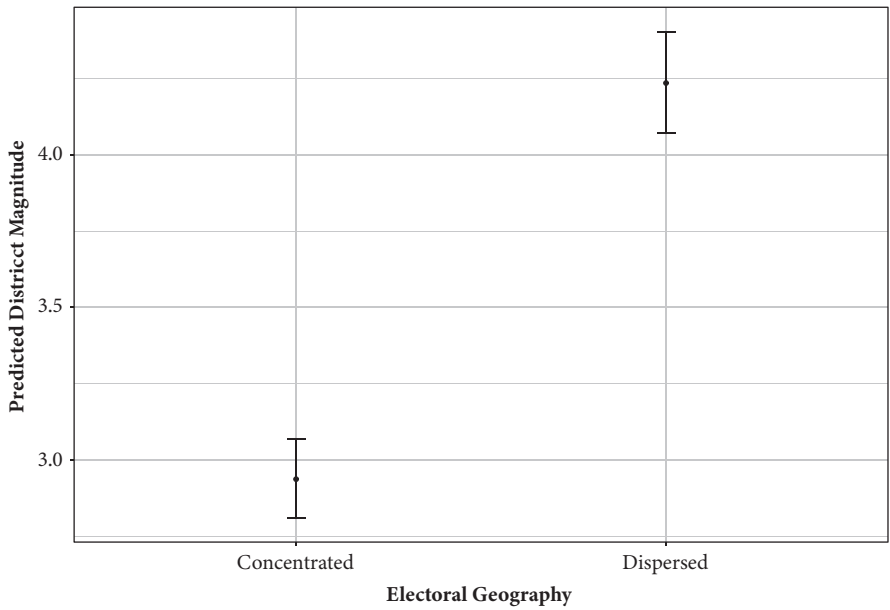


Fig. 7.1 Party influence, electoral geography, and district magnitude

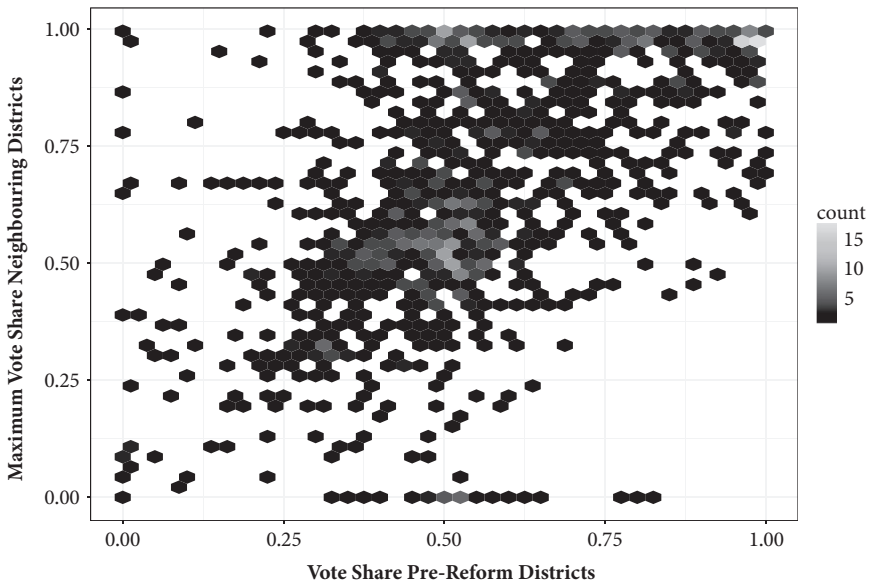


Fig. 7.2 Bivariate density plot for pre-reform district vote shares and maximum vote shares in neighbouring districts

Table 7.5 Influence on design and disproportionality under PR

	Disproportionality PR	
	Dispro. Lag	Country FE
Influence on District Design	1.42* (0.64)	2.22* (1.10)
Disproportionality MR	0.17*** (0.04)	
Intercept	-0.33 (0.33)	-0.44 (0.55)
Num. obs.	47	47

Notes: Country-level cluster-robust standard errors in parenthesis.

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

district. We label this scenario as dispersed and expect larger post-reform district magnitudes.

The predictions for our sample, displayed in Figure 7.1, provide evidence for our hypotheses. We find that district magnitudes are small if the voter bases of the (locally) dominant coalition party are highly concentrated. More precisely, the predictions suggest that the district magnitude is below 3. In contrast, district magnitude is larger if the voter base of the dominant coalition party is dispersed. On average, the magnitude exceeds four seats.

Even though the strategic drawing of districts can have unintended consequences, we expect parties that influenced the district design to benefit from electoral disproportionalities in the new PR systems. The third part of our quantitative analysis presents evidence that this is indeed the case. Table 7.5 examines whether parties that influenced the district design benefited from vote-seat distortions in the first election in the new PR systems (controlling for disproportionalities in the last election in the MR systems). The dependent variable is the difference between seat and vote share of a party under PR. In both models, we include our dummy variable capturing a party's influence on the district design (see Table 7.1) as the main independent variable.

In model 1 in Table 7.5, we add parties' seat-to-vote difference under MR as an independent variable while adding country FE in model 2. As expected, levels of electoral disproportionality under MR are positively related to disproportionalities under PR. This finding suggests that some disproportionalities carry over from the old electoral system, regardless of parties' influence on the district design. More importantly in the context of this chapter, our influence measure shows that parties that shaped the design of

districts were more likely to benefit from electoral disproportionalities in the new PR systems. On average, these parties had about 1.4 percentage points more seats than votes than parties that did not influence the district design. In addition, the seat bonus increases to 2.2 percentage points in the specification with country FE. Hence, using different specifications, we find a statistically significant effect of membership in the designing coalition on benefiting from electoral disproportionality in the new PR system. This finding provides additional evidence that parties use district design to create partisan advantages.

In sum, we find strong evidence that the design of district maps in newly adopted PR systems is influenced by the designing parties' electoral geographies and that the designing parties benefit from seat-vote distortions after the reform.

7.2 Qualitative evidence

This section complements the quantitative empirical analysis with three short case studies of Denmark, Germany, and Norway (i.e., the same countries we already used in the second part of our quantitative analysis). In these countries, several district maps were openly discussed, which allows us to explore the reasons why parties favoured some district maps over alternative ones. In this way, they provide additional evidence on the highly political character of district design in newly adopted PR systems. The three case studies are primarily based on secondary sources and electoral statistics.

7.2.1 Denmark

The political process leading up to the adoption of PR in 1915 and its reform in 1920 has already been discussed in the Appendix of Chapter 5. In the following, we focus on the two district maps for lower chamber elections.

The Danish Liberals benefited from the MR system, which is why they actively tried to delay the adoption of PR. However, with the Conservatives losing their absolute majority in the upper chamber, the Liberals faced the possibility that a coalition consisting of the Conservatives, the Social Liberals, and the Socialists might implement a PR system despite their opposition. It is in this context, in which the Liberals were still strong enough to influence the terms of the reform, that the Liberals finally stopped their delaying tactic (Elklit, 1988, 2005).

In 1915, the three constitutional parties (Liberals, Social Liberals, and Socialists) finally agreed on the introduction of PR, but the new electoral system had a few peculiar features (Elklit, 2002). Most notably, the country was divided into three regions (the capital, the islands, and Jutland). For the capital region (Copenhagen and Fredriksberg), the reformers created a multi-member district with a magnitude of 24, allocated using the D'Hondt electoral formula to translate votes into seats. In contrast, for the islands and Jutland regions, the reformers created 42 and 51 single-member districts respectively. The number of seats in the lower chamber was increased to 140 (from 114) and 23 adjustment seats were added to increase proportionality. However, 20 (of 23) adjustment seats were allocated to the regions (nine to the islands and 11 to Jutland) to ensure proportionality within the regions. In contrast, only three adjustment seats were allocated to ensure overall national proportionality (Elklit, 1992, 194). Hence, while the 1915 electoral system increased overall proportionality, it also maintained some of the disproportional features that benefited the Liberals in their rural strongholds outside the capital, especially in Jutland.

The 1915 electoral system was used only once, in 1918. Even before the 1918 election, the Socialists and the Social Liberals had agreed that further reform was necessary to make the electoral system more proportional (Elklit, 1988, 89). In this endeavour, they could now count on the support of the Conservatives who had lost control over the upper chamber and continued to be the party most disadvantaged by the electoral system's disproportionalities. In contrast, the Liberals wished to maintain the 1915 electoral system. In 1919, the conservative MP Asger Karstensen proposed a new electoral system for the lower chamber, which was to 'maximize' proportionality at the national level. The conservative proposal was ultimately supported by the Socialists and the Social Liberals and found a majority in parliament despite opposition from the Liberals (Elklit, 1988, 91–92).

The electoral system of 1920 created 22 multi-member districts with magnitude varying between two and seven seats (the single-member district for the Faroe Islands being the only exception). Regional and national adjustment seats were pooled, increased to 29 (from 23), and allocated nationally to increase proportionality across the entire country (Elklit, 1992, 195–196; 2005, 455). The result of the new electoral system and the new district map led to another increase in the overall proportionality of the Danish electoral system.

In sum, the Danish case demonstrates how seat maximization concerns and shifting reform coalitions informed district design in the newly adopted PR system. Needing Liberal support in the upper chamber to enact the

desired democratizing reforms, the Socialists and the Social Liberals agreed to a district map that greatly favoured the Liberals. The main losers were the Conservatives, which had opposed these democratizing reforms and now suffered from a most unfavourable district map. However, after having lost most of their non-democratic privileges, the Conservatives sought a coalition with the Socialists and the Social Liberals to redesign the district map. Only four years after the creation of the original district map, a coalition consisting of the Conservatives, the Social Liberals, and the Socialists introduced a new district map, which removed the biases that had benefited the Liberals, turning the Danish PR system into one of the most proportional in the world.

7.2.2 Germany

The political process leading to the two electoral system reforms in 1918 was already discussed in Chapter 5. Here, we focus on the two district maps for lower chamber elections.

In Germany, the rural-based Conservatives and Centre Party benefited from the MR system with 397 single-member districts. However, developments related to the First World War forced the topic of electoral system reform onto the political agenda. In 1917, a parliamentary committee debated three proposals for electoral reform. Two proposals from the Majority and the Independent Socialists, respectively, demanded the adoption of PR. Both proposals were rejected by the representatives of the non-socialist parties (E. R. Huber, 1978, 473). Instead, the Progressive Liberals' more modest proposal found majority support. The Progressive Liberals suggested that single-member districts that had experienced strong population growth should be turned into multi-member districts. In these new districts, they suggested the use of PR. In the rest of the country, they proposed to maintain the MR system with single-member districts. The proposal was supported by the two liberal parties, the Majority Socialists, and the Centre Party (Rauh, 1977, 408–410). In July 1918, the lower chamber adopted the Progressive Liberals' proposal against the opposition of the Conservatives and the Independent Socialists (E. R. Huber, 1978, 473; Rauh, 1977, 410; Schröder & Manow, 2020, 259).

The reform was a 'masterpiece of electoral engineering' (Rottwilm, 2015, 120). Although the number of seats was increased to 441, the reform concerned only a minority of districts: Of the resulting 387 districts, 361 were to remain single-member districts. Of the 26 multi-member districts, only three had a district magnitude of five seats or more. Put differently, about 82% of all parliamentary seats were still contested in single-member districts

under the new system. The median magnitude of the new multi-member districts was two (Schröder & Manow, 2014, 541–542). Using the data from the 1912 election, Walter (2021, appendix) shows that in most of the newly created multi-member districts, the Socialists would have obtained an absolute majority in the first round (median 53%). Walter (2021) thus argues that the creation of multi-member districts was an attempt by the non-socialist parties to make inroads into socialist strongholds (see also Schanbacher, 1982, 43). The positive correlation between district magnitude and the Socialists' first-round vote shares suggests that the decision to create multi-member districts was meant to limit the partisan effect of reapportionment. While reapportionment increased the number of seats in the Socialists' strongholds, it simultaneously reduced vote-seat distortions that favoured the Socialists. Put differently, while there would be more seats in urban districts, PR made sure that the Socialists would not be able to win them all.

The Socialists were aware of the distributional implications of the new system. In the parliamentary debates, the Socialist Herzfeld argued: '[The statement of the government] increases my confidence that the law is an exceptional law against the workers [. . .] It is a fact that the concentration of workers in the large electoral districts [the newly founded multi-member districts] prevented the minorities from gaining representation. We do not complain that they can gain representation under proportional representation, but we complain that workers, where they are a significant minority, do not have the same right because proportional representation is not applied in those electoral districts' (Parliamentary protocols, session 186, 08.07.1918, 5921–5922, cited in Walter, 2021, appendix, 33). Still, knowing that their own proposal stood no chance to win a majority in the parliamentary committee, the Majority Socialists ended up supporting the electoral reform because it was likely to improve its seat share (Schanbacher, 1982, 43). According to the simulation by Schröder and Manow (2014, 543), the reapportionment effect (positive for the Socialists) was larger than the PR effect (negative for the Socialists). Using the data from the 1912 election, they show that the Socialists would have been able to increase their seat share by more than two percentage points.

It is easy to see why the two liberal parties supported the reform. The reapportionment increased the number of seats in urban areas, whereas the PR system in the multi-member districts put them in a better position to compete with the Socialists. At the same time, by maintaining 361 single-member districts, the reform limited the ability of the Socialists to capitalize on electoral reform. The Centre Party's support for the reform is more surprising. However, the reform did not concern their rural strongholds, which

remained single-member districts. Moreover, the reform improved the competitive position of its workers' wing in urban areas (Schröder & Manow, 2014, 543). Given the Conservatives' continued opposition to any electoral reform (and the Independent Socialists' rejection of parliamentary democracy altogether), the two liberal parties and the Majority Socialists needed the Centre Party to support the reform to have a majority in both chambers of parliament and to convince the German Government (Rauh, 1977, 409). The Progressive Liberals' modest reform proposal demonstrates that the two liberal parties and the Majority Socialists were aware of the Centre Party's interests.

In any case, the electoral reform was never implemented. Only a few months later, after the German Empire's defeat in the First World War, the Majority Socialists and the Independent Socialists assumed power in the Council of the People's Deputies (*Rat der Volksbeauftragten*). Unconstrained by the need to find an agreement with the two liberal parties and the Centre Party, the Council of the People's Deputies decided on the new electoral law, including the question of district design, within two weeks. The body, consisting exclusively of Socialists, decreed a new, highly proportional PR system with district magnitude ranging from 6 to 17 seats (Schanbacher, 1982, 49–52; Schröder & Manow, 2014).

In sum, the German case shows how electoral geography and seat-maximization concerns inform district design in newly adopted PR systems. The first, ultimately failed, attempt to adopt PR suggested a district map that would have primarily benefited the non-socialist parties (Schröder & Manow, 2014, 543). The second district map, designed exclusively by the Socialists, looked very different and reduced electoral disproportionalities much more effectively.

7.2.3 Norway

The political process leading to the adoption of PR in 1919 has already been discussed in Chapter 5. In this context, multiple proposals were considered. Here, we focus on the suggested district maps.

Throughout the 1910s, the Conservatives, Liberals, and Socialists had converged on the need for electoral system reform. In 1917, the Liberal majority government appointed an electoral reform commission, which reported on the reform possibilities in April 1919 (Cox et al., 2019, 128). The commission majority recommended introducing a PR system with multi-member districts. In contrast, the commission minority, consisting of only Liberals,

recommended maintaining the system of plurality vote in single-member districts but adding 24 adjustment seats to reduce electoral disproportionalities, similar to the 1915 reform in neighbouring Denmark (Cox et al., 2019, 113, 128).

Hence, there was a broad consensus on the need for electoral reform, which was also acknowledged by the liberal prime minister, Gunnar Knudsen, in a parliamentary speech in November 1919. Explicitly pointing to the seat-vote distortions disfavouring the Socialists, he argued for the need to find ‘a more just electoral rule’ (cited in Cox et al., 2019, 111). However, as so often, broader agreement in principle can disguise large disagreement over the specifics. The district map was a case in point.

After lengthy debates in parliament, five different proposals were ultimately tabled for votes in parliament (plus a vote on postponing the reform). Table 7.6 shows the proposals and partisan support (as percentage of party groups). The voting sequence in parliament was chosen strategically. According to Cox et al. (2019, 113–115), ‘the order was set so that expressive preferences could be counted on Proposals A through D, while the leadership [here the presiding offer of the Parliament, Otto B. Halvorsen of the Conservative Party] was aware that Proposal E would ultimately win.’ Table 7.6 shows that the Socialists clearly favoured proposals A and B (100% support), which promised to achieve the highest level of proportionality. However, for both the Conservatives and the Liberals, this was not an enticing option. The Conservatives clearly favoured proposal C (96% support), which would have introduced PR in all regions of the country except in their strongholds, the small cities, which would have remained single-member districts. The Liberals (83% support), finally, preferred the status quo, albeit with newly added adjustment seats to reduce seat-vote distortions.

Table 7.6 Reform proposals in Norway in 1919

Proposal	Socialists	Liberals	Conservatives	Overall
A: PR	100	0	6	17
B: PR with separate districts for large cities	100	4	26	27
C: PR with SMDs for small cities	89	2	96	53
D: MR with 24 adjustment seats	6	83	18	44
E: PR with mid-sized districts	94	72	66	73

Source: Cox et al. (2019, 114).

However, electoral reform required a constitutional amendment, which in turn needed the support of two-thirds of the parliament. Given that proposals A to D were clearly tailored to the interests of a specific party, none gained enough support to pass parliament. Hence, only a mixture of these proposals received enough support from all parties, the eventually successful proposal E. It maintained the distinction between urban and rural districts, the so-called peasant clause. In addition, the new PR system was combined with rather small districts (median size 5) and comparatively little variation in district magnitude (coefficient of variation 0.29), thus ensuring that the non-socialist parties would continue to perform well (Cox et al., 2019, 118). For small cities, disjointed multi-member districts were created. In short, the resulting electoral system had all the hallmarks of a big compromise in the sense that all parties saw their preferences met to some extent, whereas none of the parties was particularly advantaged.

In sum, the Norwegian Conservatives, Liberals, and Socialists agreed on electoral reform but disagreed on district design. Given that an electoral reform needed a two-thirds majority in parliament, the three largest political blocs had to find a compromise. The reform debate documents how the different parties suggested district maps that favoured their parliamentary representation. However, only a mixture of those proposals—mid-sized districts with comparatively little variation—ultimately received enough support from the three main political blocs.

7.3 Conclusion

The adoption of PR has attracted considerable attention in the scholarly literature. Yet, existing research on the politics of electoral reform has over-looked the large differences among PR systems in district magnitude both within and across countries. What explains these differences in the design of districts in PR systems? We have argued that parties' positions on district design depend on the geographical distribution of their voters. More precisely, if their voters are highly concentrated in certain areas, parties try to design small district magnitudes (in those areas) to maximize their number of seats in parliament. In contrast, if their voters are geographically dispersed, parties try to design large districts to reach the minimum threshold for turning their votes into seats. Importantly, the geographical distribution of voters varies within a country, which implies that parties might pursue different strategies in different regions.

Whereas MR systems undoubtedly offer more potential for partisan districting, this chapter shows that district design is a key political process in countries with PR systems. Indeed, the design of districts should not be neglected in PR systems, as it has important implications for electoral, political, and economic outcomes. Moreover, we argue that our approach also helps to understand district design in mixed systems where legislators and parties decide on different balances between MR and PR seats (Bawn, 1993; Giannetti & Grofman, 2011).

Our analysis also contributes to the debate on partisan biases of electoral systems (Becher, 2016; Döring & Manow, 2017; Höhmann & Tober, 2018; Iversen & Soskice, 2006). The existing literature has often argued that MR disadvantages left-wing parties, although the empirical evidence is not always conclusive. As we have shown, parties with concentrated voter bases are one of the main reasons for the creation of PR systems with low magnitude districts, which indicates that also PR systems have the potential to be biased against left-wing parties (Kedar et al., 2016; Monroe & Rose, 2002). Hence, this analysis re-emphasizes the importance of electoral geography, including under PR rules, for shaping electoral reforms and partisan strategies (Bochsler, 2019; Calvo, 2009; Rodden, 2010), as differences in the geographical distribution of voter bases can account for differences in party positions on district magnitude.

In this chapter, we have argued that district design matters also in PR systems. However, the district map is not the only aspect of PR systems that can be adapted for partisan gain. Other features of electoral laws can weaken or amplify the effects of biased district maps. For instance, parties may try to influence statutory electoral thresholds, which define a minimum share of the vote which candidates or parties must obtain to be entitled to any representation in parliament. Such electoral thresholds typically advantage larger parties (Bol, 2016; Walter & Emmenegger, 2019). Alternatively, partisan engineers may target the electoral formula, which is the mathematical function that governs the conversion of votes into seats (Benoit, 2000). Initially, most new PR systems relied on the D'Hondt formula for vote-to-seat allocation (Bormann & Golder, 2013), which tends to favour large parties (Benoit, 2000). In the presence of several mid-sized parties, however, some countries later switched to the Sainte-Laguë formula (Grofman & Lijphart, 2002; Schuster et al., 2003).

So far, we have provided mainly quantitative evidence on the politics of containment and electoral system choice. In the next chapter, we complement our quantitative analyses with a qualitative-historical analysis of political developments in Belgium and Switzerland. In addition to further

documenting the direct link between the use of containment measures and the politics of electoral reform, these two case studies also allow us to show the systematic relationship between the potential district maps of the new PR systems and the parties' preferences for electoral system change.

Appendix

Table 7.7 Data sources

Country	Sources
Austria	Austria-Wiki (https://austria-forum.org/af/AustriaWiki?start=1&limit=0); Reichswahlordnung 1907; Gesetz über die Einberufung der Konstituierenden Nationalversammlung 1918; Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research, Chair for Geodesy and Geoinformatics, University of Rostock (2012)
Belgium	Emmenegger & Walter (2019)
France	Unkown (1916); Lachapelle (1914); Gaudillere (1995); Fantino & Erismann (2011)
Denmark	Danmarks Statistik (1913, 1919)
Germany	Reibel (2007); Zibblatt & Blossom (2011); Verordnung über die Wahlen zur verfassunggebenden deutschen Nationalversammlung 1918
Netherlands	Elections Dutch Lower Chamber 1848–1918 (http://resources.huuygens.knaw.nl/verkiezingentweedekamer/index_html_en)
Norway	Fiva & Smith (2017b)
Switzerland	Gruner (1978a); Emmenegger & Walter (2021a)

Table 7.8 Coding of party influence variable

Austria: After the breakdown of the Austrian Empire, the German parties (Christian Democrats, German Nationals, Socialists) gathered in the provisional national assembly to decide on the electoral system. All parties were in favour of PR (Ucakar, 1985, 391). The electoral law was prepared by the Socialist state chancellor Karl Renner and supported by the Socialists and the Christian Democrats. However, the German Nationals, although in support of PR, were divided over district design. According to the proposal, district magnitude ranged from 1 to 12 seats, yet remained often below 10. Thus, one group within the camp of the German Nationals submitted an amendment, unsuccessfully demanding a nation-wide district. A small minority of German National MPs even started to display opposition to PR altogether (Ucakar, 1985, 398–399). However, the district map backed by the Socialists and the Christian Democrats was ultimately accepted.

France: In preparation of the 1919 electoral reform, the French government, led by the Radicals, consulted local prefects to inquire about their preferences and suggestions for district design under the new PR system. Importantly, these prefects were mainly affiliated with parties of the political centre (Radicals and allied Republicans) and to some extent the

political right (in particular the Conservatives), which explains why they suggested the merger and breakup of districts in a way that favoured the political right and in particular the political centre (Marty, 2013, 98–102). According to Marty (2013), the prefects' responses were decisive in the districting process and reflected a 'spirit of self-defence of the Radicals' (Marty, 2013, 98), which allowed the radical government to resort to 'gerrymandering' (Marty, 2013, 91). Yet, suggestions of local prefects belonging to the political right were also taken into consideration (Marty, 2013, 102). In contrast, district design was mostly meant to weaken the position of the Socialists. According to Marty (2013, 102–104), the reform was supposed to break the Socialists' strongholds and make them accessible for candidates of the Radicals.

Italy: The extension of male suffrage and the introduction of PR was a joint project of the incumbent Liberals as well as the two mass parties, the Christian Democrats and the Socialists. Although in support of PR adoption, the Liberals had little interest in large districts, which would have primarily been advantageous for the two mass parties, the Christian Democrats and the Socialists. As a result, the commission in charge of designing the districts for the new PR system, dominated by the Liberals, designed small districts. As Noiret (1997, 91) argues, 'everywhere, except in Emilia-Romagna [a well-known socialist stronghold], the commission took care to form the smallest circumscriptions that were possible.' In response to these decisions, several prominent members of the other parties left the reform commission, which, however, had no impact on the design of the districts.

Netherlands: The adoption of PR was initiated by the Liberal minority government as part of the Pacification Agreement, which also included public recognition and subsidies for religious schools and the introduction of universal male suffrage. The deliberations in the commission were not recorded but the commission was dominated by the Liberals, which preferred a nation-wide district due to their dispersed voter base (Andeweg, 2005, 493; Loots, 2004). The other parties had less influence on district design. The religious parties, in particular the Catholics, proposed small districts in rural areas, the so-called 'Belgian solution' (Loots, 2004, 97–98). The Socialists, finally, had formally endorsed PR in their programme, but their support waned in the early 20th century, as they started to win in elections. Given that PR occupied only a minor position in their programme, they did not discuss any specific design (Loots, 2004, 99–103). Importantly, in the resulting PR system with a nation-wide district, only the seat allocation process was on the national level. In contrast, the candidate selection process was delegated to 18 subnational constituencies to limit the influence of the leadership of the different parties.

Sweden: Confronted with liberal and socialist calls for universal male suffrage, the Conservatives insisted on the adoption of PR to protect their position in the Swedish party system. The Conservatives, however, did not have majorities in both chambers, which forced them to cooperate with the Liberals and the Socialists in the reform process. The resulting 'broad political compromise' (Särilvik, 2002, 232) consisted of male universal suffrage and PR with medium-sized districts. The combination of the D'Hondt electoral formula and the medium-sized districts was undoubtedly beneficial to the three main parties, the Conservatives, the Liberals, and the Socialists, whereas smaller parties suffered from electoral disproportionalities (Särilvik, 2002, 239–240). There is admittedly some uncertainty about the extent to which the Socialists participated in the district design. However, both the Liberals and the Socialists repeatedly expressed their preference for a MR system with small multi-member districts (one or two seats), whereas the Conservatives pushed for PR and large districts (Boix, 2010; Lewin, 1988; Penadés, 2008; Särilvik, 2002). Such an encompassing reform coalition (including all major parties) with varying degrees of voter base concentration is consistent with the resulting PR system with medium-sized districts and low magnitude variation. Moreover, the Socialists were, according to Särilvik (2002, 240), the main beneficiaries of disproportionalities in the new PR system.

Notes: The Belgian, Danish, German, Norwegian, and Swiss cases are covered in section 7.2 and chapter 8.

Table 7.9 Summary statistics

Variable	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Pre-Reform District Magnitude	1.19	1.00	1.00	1.00	18.00
Post-Reform District Magnitude	5.34	4.00	5.41	1.00	32.00
Socialist Party Max. Vote Share Contiguous Districts	0.21	0.00	0.41	0.00	1.00
Vote Share	0.65	0.65	0.26	0.00	1.00
Vote Share	0.55	0.53	0.21	0.00	1.00

Table 7.10 Summary statistics by country

Variable	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Belgium					
Pre-Reform District Magnitude	3.71	3.00	3.41	1.00	18.00
Post-Reform District Magnitude	4.85	4.00	3.12	2.00	18.00
Socialist Party Max. Vote Share Contiguous Districts	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Vote Share	0.78	0.81	0.18	0.44	1.00
Vote Share	0.61	0.57	0.21	0.21	1.00
Switzerland					
Pre-Reform District Magnitude	3.88	4.00	1.94	1.00	8.00
Post-Reform District Magnitude	13.18	8.00	10.27	1.00	32.00
Socialist Party Max. Vote Share Contiguous Districts	0.61	1.00	0.49	0.00	1.00
Vote Share	0.49	0.45	0.29	0.05	0.98

Variable	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Vote Share	0.38	0.35	0.30	0.00	0.98
Denmark					
Pre-Reform District Magnitude	1.00	1.00	0.00	1.00	1.00
Post-Reform District Magnitude	4.66	1.00	8.45	1.00	24.00
Socialist Party	0.32	0.00	0.47	0.00	1.00
Max. Vote Share Contiguous Districts	0.45	0.50	0.30	0.00	1.00
Vote Share	0.56	0.53	0.12	0.33	1.00
France					
Pre-Reform District Magnitude	1.00	1.00	0.00	1.00	1.00
Post-Reform District Magnitude	7.61	6.00	4.41	2.00	23.00
Socialist Party	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Max. Vote Share Contiguous Districts	0.79	0.86	0.21	0.00	0.99
Vote Share	0.62	0.58	0.22	0.00	0.99
Germany					
Pre-Reform District Magnitude	1.00	1.00	0.00	1.00	1.00
Post-Reform District Magnitude	1.19	1.00	0.79	1.00	10.00
Socialist Party	0.45	0.00	0.50	0.00	1.00
Max. Vote Share Contiguous Districts	0.53	0.52	0.22	0.00	0.97
Vote Share	0.46	0.46	0.19	0.00	0.97

continued

Table 7.10 *continued*

Variable	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
			Norway		
Pre-Reform District Magnitude	1.00	1.00	0.00	1.00	1.00
Post-Reform District Magnitude	5.56	5.00	1.43	3.00	8.00
Socialist Party	0.22	0.00	0.42	0.00	1.00
Max. Vote Share Contiguous Districts	0.59	0.61	0.22	0.00	0.96
Vote Share	0.55	0.53	0.14	0.27	0.96

Table 7.11 Robustness test: Negative binomial regressions excluding one country

	Without Belgium		Without Switzerland		Without Denmark		Without France		Without Germany		Without Norway	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9	Model 10	Model 11	Model 12
Vote Share	2.75*** (0.53)	2.75*** (0.12)	2.29*** (0.67)	2.30*** (0.15)	1.84*** (0.31)	1.83*** (0.10)	2.71*** (0.56)	2.71*** (0.16)	2.68*** (0.50)	2.68*** (0.14)	2.77*** (0.43)	2.77*** (0.13)
Max. Vote Share Neigh. Districts	1.12	1.12***	0.31	0.31**	1.45**	1.44***	1.11	1.10***	1.11	1.11***	1.00	1.00***
Vote Share X Max. Vote Share Neigh. Districts	(0.61)	(0.09)	(0.35)	(0.11)	(0.44)	(0.07)	(0.68)	(0.13)	(0.57)	(0.11)	(0.67)	(0.10)
	-3.74***	-3.73***	-2.63***	-2.63***	-2.70***	-2.69***	-3.42***	-3.42***	-3.49***	-3.49***	-3.51***	-3.51***
Pre-Reform District Magnitude	(0.74)	(0.17)	(0.57)	(0.19)	(0.58)	(0.13)	(0.87)	(0.23)	(0.66)	(0.18)	(0.63)	(0.17)
	0.06**	0.06***	0.12***	0.12***	0.09***	0.09***	0.10***	0.10***	0.10***	0.10***	0.10***	0.10***
Socialist Party	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)
	-0.16	0.29	-0.18	0.22	0.02	0.26**	-0.10	0.35	-0.12	0.34	0.20*	0.39
	(0.13)	(0.25)	(0.12)	(0.29)	(0.05)	(0.10)	(0.14)	(0.27)	(0.12)	(0.35)	(0.09)	(0.31)
Intercept	1.27*** (0.34)	0.44 (0.39)	0.73*** (0.21)	0.55 (0.34)	0.22 (0.25)	0.43 (0.34)	0.30 (0.28)	0.14 (0.35)	0.35 (0.29)	0.61* (0.25)	0.39 (0.34)	0.30 (0.39)
Country FE	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No

continued

Table 7.11 *continued*

	Without Belgium		Without Switzerland		Without Denmark		Without France		Without Germany		Without Norway	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9	Model 10	Model 11	Model 12
Party FE	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Country RE	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Party RE	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Cluster-Robust Std. Err. by Country	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
AIC	31381.96	31452.58	27850.90	27918.58	27871.32	27922.25	17239.67	17299.05	24347.07	24405.44	28877.86	28940.58
BIC	31479.57	-15717.29	27943.26	-13950.29	27957.65	17322.09	17322.09	24424.05	24424.05	28964.00	28964.00	
Log Likelihood	-15671.98	-15717.29	-13907.45	-13950.29	-13918.66	-13952.12	-8601.83	-8640.52	-12157.53	-12193.72	-14421.93	-14461.29
Deviance	5467.80		5086.61		4706.11		3027.16		4280.36		5010.82	
Num. obs.	1258	1258	1250	1250	1186	1186	720	720	908	908	1173	1173
Num. groups: Country	5		5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Num. groups: Party	14		13	13	12	12	13	13	11	11	12	12
Var: Country (Intercept)	0.64		0.47	0.47	0.56	0.56	0.45	0.45	0.14	0.14	0.60	0.60
Var: Party (Intercept)	0.16		0.17	0.17	0.02	0.02	0.19	0.19	0.24	0.24	0.19	0.19

***: $p < 0.001$; **: $p < 0.01$; *: $p < 0.05$

Table 7.12 Robustness test: Electoral geography and district magnitude without weights

	Neg. Binomial			OLS		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Vote Share	1.95** (0.60)	1.94** (0.60)	1.95*** (0.29)	1.58** (0.60)	1.56** (0.57)	1.56*** (0.21)
Max. Vote Share Neigh. Districts	0.51 (0.29)	0.54 (0.38)	0.53* (0.21)	0.46** (0.18)	0.41 (0.26)	0.41** (0.16)
Vote Share X Max. Vote Share Neigh. Districts	-2.56*** (0.58)	-2.60*** (0.64)	-2.61*** (0.36)	-2.01** (0.62)	-2.03** (0.63)	-2.03*** (0.27)
Pre-Reform District Magnitude	0.10*** (0.01)	0.10*** (0.01)	0.10*** (0.02)	0.14*** (0.03)	0.13*** (0.02)	0.14*** (0.02)
Socialist Party	0.21*** (0.06)	-0.17* (0.07)	0.28 (0.24)	0.14*** (0.03)	-0.12* (0.06)	0.17 (0.11)
Intercept	0.79*** (0.21)	0.82** (0.28)	0.78* (0.35)	0.61** (0.19)	0.69** (0.24)	0.62 (0.32)
Country FE	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Party FE	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Country RE	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Party RE	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Cluster-Robust Std. Err. by Country	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
AIC	5928.61	5844.87	5894.72			2024.22
BIC	5990.64	5948.26				
Log Likelihood	-2952.30	-2902.44	-2938.36			-1003.11
Deviance	1053.05	1013.19				
Num. obs.	1299	1299	1299	1299	1299	1299
Num. groups: crty			6			6
Num. groups: Party			15			15
Var: crty (Intercept)			0.51			0.53
Var: Party (Intercept)			0.14			0.02
R ²				0.73	0.74	
Adj. R ²				0.73	0.73	

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

Table 7.13 Robustness test: Electoral geography and district magnitude: Mean vote share in neighbouring districts

	Neg. Binomial			OLS		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Vote Share	0.35 (0.44)	0.43 (0.50)	0.43*** (0.06)	0.30 (0.33)	0.39 (0.39)	0.39*** (0.05)
Mean Vote Share Neigh. Districts	3.43 (12.83)	7.53 (10.99)	7.51*** (1.26)	3.37 (9.38)	5.65 (8.95)	5.59*** (1.17)
Vote Share X Mean Vote Share Neigh. Districts	-12.01 (12.59)	-14.20 (11.94)	-14.19*** (1.77)	-9.44 (8.72)	-10.91 (8.87)	-10.87*** (1.55)
Pre-Reform District Magnitude	0.10*** (0.01)	0.10*** (0.01)	0.10*** (0.01)	0.13*** (0.02)	0.13*** (0.02)	0.13*** (0.01)
Socialist Party	0.40** (0.14)	0.02 (0.05)	0.44 (0.29)	0.29** (0.11)	0.02 (0.04)	0.27* (0.13)
Intercept	1.18* (0.52)	0.96* (0.41)	1.00** (0.30)	0.95* (0.42)	0.81 (0.41)	0.79** (0.28)
Country FE	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Party FE	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Country RE	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Party RE	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Cluster-Robust Std. Err. by Country	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
AIC	39904.45	38,770.48	38,849.80			15,452.56
BIC	39966.49	38,873.86				
Log Likelihood	-19940.23	-19,365.24	-19,415.90			-7,717.28
Deviance	7153.43	6,755.45				
Num. obs.	1299	1,299	1,299	1,299	1,299	1,299
Num. groups: crty			6			6
Num. groups: Party			15			15
Var: crty (Intercept)			0.41			0.45
Var: Party (Intercept)			0.23			0.04
R ²				0.59	0.61	
Adj. R ²				0.58	0.60	

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

Electoral system choice in Belgium and Switzerland

The previous chapters have provided quantitative evidence to demonstrate that electoral geography, district design, and electoral alliances shape parties' preferences for electoral system choice. This chapter offers qualitative evidence on the adoption of proportional representation (PR) in Belgium and Switzerland. Both countries were pioneers in electoral system reform. In 1899, Belgium was the first country to adopt PR at the national level. At this point six Swiss cantons had already adopted PR (starting with Ticino in 1890/1891), although Switzerland would only adopt PR at a national level in 1918. Both countries served as inspiration for PR advocates in other countries and were regularly used as examples in political debates.

There are also methodological reasons for this case selection. Both countries were mostly democratic already in the years before electoral system change. Consequently, the question of electoral system choice was largely independent from questions of democratization, and reforms did not coincide with regime transitions. Second, the new electoral laws were not part of large and complicated package deals, which make it difficult to identify actors' positions on the electoral system specifically. Finally, both countries introduced clear cases of PR that did not mix different elements of majoritarian representation (MR) and PR systems.

As we show in this chapter, the two countries are in many ways typical cases of the politics of containment and electoral system choice. In both countries, parties benefiting from seat-vote distortions dominated national politics, controlling absolute majorities in parliament and government. In Switzerland, regular reapportionment strengthened the political position of the more urban-based Liberals, whereas the main opposition party, the rural-based Conservatives, increasingly lost ground. When the Socialists began to challenge the Liberals in their urban strongholds, the Liberals relied on gerrymandering to contain the electoral threat. In return, the Conservatives and the Socialists joined forces and began pursuing PR by means of direct democracy. The third joint popular initiative, in 1918, proved to be successful.

Aware of the importance of district design, the conservative-socialist coalition not only demanded the adoption of PR but also designed the district map, thereby introducing biases that favoured themselves.

The Belgian case displays a different dynamic. The MR system with multi-member districts created seat-vote distortions favouring the Conservatives, who had their strongholds in rural areas but also managed to win substantial representation in the growing urban districts. In contrast, the urban-based Liberals, with their large but dispersed voter base, struggled to turn votes into seats. Increasingly desperate, the Liberals turned to the Socialists to form electoral alliances in large urban districts in the hope of challenging the Conservatives' electoral dominance. At the same time, regular reapportionment, mandated by the constitution, reduced the seat share of the Conservatives' mostly rural strongholds. Facing the possibility of losing the large urban districts to the liberal-socialist alliance and becoming the party of rural Flanders, the Conservatives decided to engage in electoral system reform before they would lose their absolute majority. The various reform proposals the Conservatives discussed, including for the PR system ultimately adopted in 1899, illustrate that they considered how district maps would affect their parliamentary representation.

The case studies also add nuance to our argument. The Belgian case shows that electoral system reform can result in intraparty conflicts. While the Conservatives had reached a consensus on the need for electoral reform, factions within the party strongly disagreed on the merits of different reform proposals, leading to three different conservative cabinets in 1899 alone. In Switzerland, intraparty conflicts explain why some Conservatives opposed the adoption of PR. They worried that electoral reform at a national level would set a precedent for electoral reform at a subnational level where, in some cantons, they were the ones benefiting from seat-vote distortions.

Moreover, the two cases demonstrate that the attempts to maximize seat shares by means of parliamentary engineering encouraged the disadvantaged parties to cooperate. In Belgium, Liberals and Socialists formed electoral alliances, whereas in Switzerland, Conservatives and Socialists started cooperating in their pursuit of electoral reform. Such cooperation can also result in extra-parliamentary mobilization. In Switzerland, opposition parties took advantage of direct democratic institutions to circumvent the Liberals' parliamentary majority, whereas in Belgium, opposition parties jointly organized mass protests in an attempt to influence the bargaining between the Conservatives' different factions.

In this chapter, we first examine the adoption of PR in Switzerland. Subsequently, we turn to the Belgian case. The final section discusses the main

insights from the two case studies and how they relate to the arguments put forward in this book.

8.1 Switzerland: Gerrymandering and direct democracy

This section is organized in three parts. The first part reviews the literature on the Swiss case. Subsequently, we show how the incumbent Liberals relied on electoral engineering to contain the electoral threats posed, first, by the Conservatives and, second, by the Socialists. In the final section, we examine how the Conservatives and the Socialists joined forces and used extra-parliamentary means to adopt PR. By forcing PR upon the reluctant Liberals, the successful conservative-socialist coalition also managed to install a favourable district map in the new PR system.

8.1.1 Literature review

The Swiss case has not received a lot of attention in the literature. This is unfortunate because in many ways, Switzerland was a pioneer in the adoption of PR. As early as 1842, Victor Considérant, one of the earliest advocates of PR, recommended PR to the constituent assembly in Genève. The constituent assembly had been convened due to repeated popular disturbances that broke out after the publication of the (distorted) election results. In 1846, Considérant resided again in Genève and once again protests followed the most recent election. In a letter to the Grand Council, Considérant advocated the adoption of PR, but his arguments were not heard (Carstairs, 1980, 137–137).

In 1864, the Conservative Ernest Naville observed how the elections in Genève led to an uprising after the incumbent would not accept defeat. Naville hoped that a more proportional electoral system and the resulting need to share power would prevent such conflicts in the future. In 1865, Naville created the influential ‘Association réformatrice’, whose aim was the promotion of PR in Genève, Switzerland, and beyond (Wisler, 2008, 84–87). Similar associations soon followed in other cantons and at the national level. PR advocates worldwide followed debates and developments in Genève. However, it would need a contested election and protests in another canton to set Switzerland on the path to PR.

Like Genève, Ticino had seen numerous, sometimes bloody, conflicts between the main political groups. After some decades of liberal dominance

in the middle of the 19th century, the Conservatives began to gain the upper hand. Once in power, the Conservatives relied on gerrymandering and malapportionment to cement their position. In the 1889 election for the cantonal parliament, the Conservatives managed to win 75 seats with 12,653 votes, whereas the Liberals won only 37 seats with a comparable vote share (12,108 votes). Dissatisfied with the outcome, liberal activists stormed the government building in 1890 and kidnapped the conservative members of the government, killing one of them during the attack. The federal government immediately sent in troops to calm the situation and free the hostages. Ultimately, the federal government insisted on constitutional reform and the adoption of PR to permanently pacify the situation in Ticino. In 1890, PR was used for the election of the members of the constituent assembly and, in 1891, the constituent assembly introduced PR for elections to the cantonal parliament (Kölz, 2004, 379–399).

Ticino set an example for many other cantons to emulate. Genève adopted PR in 1892, Neuchâtel and Zug followed in 1894, Solothurn in 1895, and Schwyz in 1898. After the turn of the century, PR was adopted in Basel-Stadt (1905), Luzern (1909), St. Gallen (1911), and Zürich (1916). Put differently, by the time Switzerland adopted PR for national elections, in 1918, 10 out of 25 cantons had already introduced PR for their cantonal elections. Another seven cantons would follow in the early 1920s (Walter & Emmenegger, 2019, 68). Hence, although Switzerland did not pioneer the adoption of PR for national elections, it was an early mover at the subnational level and these reforms served as reference points for future reforms, including the 1899 reform in Belgium (e.g., Mahaim, 1900).

Despite this pioneering role, there is little scholarly literature focusing solely on Switzerland, although the country is often covered in comparative studies. For example, Rokkan (1970) identifies the adoption of PR in Switzerland as a case of minority protection. As one of Europe's most culturally heterogeneous countries, Switzerland introduced PR, according to Rokkan (1970, 157), to safeguard the (democratic) political system. Yet, as Calvo (2009, 275) observes, Rokkan's rationale for classifying Switzerland as a cultural minority case probably rested on his analysis of cantonal reforms, whereas at the national level, the incumbent Liberals showed little interest in power sharing and minority representation. Accounts emphasizing joint economic interests—because of either trade orientation (Rogowski, 1987) or economic coordination (Cusack et al., 2007, 2010a)—suffer from the same problem. Their expectation of a consensual adoption of PR is not consistent with the highly conflictual political process. Most notably, the Liberals,

the principal vehicle of business, strongly opposed PR until the very end (Kreuzer, 2010a, 377; Lutz, 2004, 284–286).

Boix (1999, 2010) argues that developments in Switzerland are in line with his electoral threat thesis. Pointing to the fragmentation of the non-socialist parties, Boix (1999, 621) observes that the adoption of PR at the national level took place after the Socialists had begun to threaten the Liberals' hegemony. In an updated version of his electoral threat thesis, Boix (2010) acknowledges that the politically dominant Liberals in fact opposed PR. He explains this continued liberal opposition by arguing that the Socialists did not challenge the Liberals in their districts (Boix, 2010, 408). However, as we show below, this is clearly incorrect. The Socialists primarily attacked liberal strongholds, but due to gerrymandering and electoral alliances, liberal candidates were typically able to beat the socialist challengers. Ultimately, Boix (2010, 411) argues, there was no majority for reform in Switzerland. This may be true for parliament, but with this argument, Boix cannot explain why Switzerland ultimately adopted PR. In addition, Boix's electoral threat thesis cannot explain why the Socialists were the main driving force for the adoption of PR (Calvo, 2009; Lutz, 2004).

Ahmed's (2013) existential threat thesis cannot account for the Swiss case either. The Swiss Socialists are a clear example of reformed socialism (Marks et al., 2009). To explain the adoption of PR in 1918, Ahmed (2013, 85) therefore argues that the Socialists 'experienced an abrupt and intense period of radicalization' in the years of the First World War. Following strikes and riots, 'in 1919, right parties agreed to put the issue [i.e., the adoption of PR] to a national referendum' (Ahmed, 2013, 86).

However, this account overlooks a number of critical points. For starters, it was not the decision of the right-wing parties to put the issue to a national referendum. Instead, these popular votes were held at the behest of the Socialists. In 1891, Switzerland had introduced the instrument of popular initiatives, which require the support of at least 50,000 citizens and allow the suggestion of constitutional articles that need to be implemented by law if approved in a popular vote (Leemann et al., 2025). Parliament and government do not have to endorse these proposals and they cannot adapt them either. By 1918, Swiss citizens had already voted twice (in 1900 and 1910) on the adoption of PR. Moreover, the Conservatives joined the Socialists in pushing for the adoption of PR. It is hard to see how a conservative-socialist proposal against liberal opposition was as a response by right-wing parties to an existential socialist threat. Finally, while it is true that there was a large strike in *November* 1918, the (successful) popular vote on PR had already taken place in *October* 1918 (Linder et al., 2010). There was no disagreement on implementing the

proposal (which now had the status of a constitutional article). The 1918 general strike did refer to PR, but the demand was an immediate election under the new electoral rules. The federal parliament complied with this demand by moving forward the next federal election from October 1920 to October 1919.

A final set of contributions emphasizes seat-vote distortions to explain developments in Switzerland (Andrews & Jackman, 2005; Calvo, 2009; Rodden, 2009). These accounts hold that the Socialists and the Conservatives supported electoral reform because they suffered from seat-vote distortions that they hoped to neutralize by means of PR. However, these contributions have less to say about the sources of these seat-vote distortions. Moreover, they struggle to explain how these seat-vote distortions and the resulting opposition to reform by the advantaged parties were overcome. Some authors have identified the role of uncertainty as the key to this puzzle, especially as the number of competing parties increased (Blais et al., 2005; Colomer, 2005). However, uncertainty about election outcomes was very low in Switzerland. Throughout the entire period, the Liberals controlled absolute majorities in both parliament and government (Gruner, 1978b). The Liberals' dominant political position was never in question.

In the following, we develop our own account of the politics of electoral system choice in Switzerland. We agree that the Liberals responded to electoral threats, but instead of electoral reform, the Liberals relied on gerrymandering to contain the electoral threats, which, however, resulted in growing seat-vote distortions. Their shared experience of suffering from gerrymandering made the Conservatives and the Socialists join forces and demand electoral system reform. Facing unaccommodating Liberals, the conservative-socialist coalition increasingly relied on extra-parliamentary means to push for electoral reform, most notably direct democracy.

8.1.2 Liberal containment of electoral threats

Modern Switzerland was created in 1848. The new constitution ended a 50-year period of constant conflict. In 1798, France had invaded Switzerland and—in collaboration with Swiss revolutionaries—toppled the old cantonal regimes. The new regime adopted a centralized form of government with significantly extended political rights, but not for long: By 1803, the regime had restored considerable power back to the cantons once more, although it did not fully re-establish the old order. Several decades of back and forth followed, which ultimately led to a civil war in 1847. In this conflict, the

liberal proponents of a federal state and modern (representative) democracy faced the conservative defenders of cantonal sovereignty and traditional authorities, the so-called Special League (Sonderbund) (Tilly, 2007, 66–72).¹

After their decisive victory in the civil war, the Liberals created a reform commission tasked with the drafting of a new constitution. Each of the 25 cantons had one representative in the commission. However, given that the Liberals had installed ‘puppet regimes’ (Altermatt, 2020, 37) in the conservative cantons, Liberals also represented the latter (Holenstein, 2018). Next to introducing direct voting and universal male suffrage, the reform commission set the constitutional rules for district design. The commission quickly settled on the principle of one legislator per 20,000 residents. This is important because it implies that districts had to be regularly updated to account for population growth. In the period from 1848 to 1918, districts were adapted in 1851, 1863, 1872, 1881, 1890, 1902, and 1911—each time following a population census. This was clearly in the interest of the Liberals, as they could expect higher levels of population growth in urban centres than the more rural, former Special League cantons. In 1850, the former Special League cantons had roughly 17% of the population, but by 1920, this share had declined to 15% (according to the 1850 and 1920 census). Put differently, by adapting districts to population growth, the Special League cantons were denied the possibility to benefit from malapportionment (Altermatt, 2021, 60).

In contrast to the question of regular reapportionment, the design of specific districts proved to be controversial. Ultimately, the commission decided that districts were not allowed to cut across cantonal borders because representatives of non-German-speaking minorities and small cantons worried that their candidates would not find sufficient support in a nation-wide district (Bucher, 1977, 1008–1011; Holenstein, 2018, 302–303; Kölz, 1992, 567–568; Natsch, 1967, 538). In 1850, the four largest cantons had 46% of the population, and roughly 70% of the population were German speaking (according to the 1850 census). The task of specifying further details was left to parliament. For the first election under the new constitution, in 1848, the cantons were supposed to set the rules. They were simply informed about

¹ The Liberals typically originated from more urban, richer, and Protestant cantons, whereas the Conservatives typically came from more rural, poorer, and Catholic cantons. The division, however, was not clear cut. For instance, there were prominent liberal Catholics (e.g., Josef Munzinger and Stefano Francini, both members of the first federal government), whereas the Special League’s troops were led by a conservative Protestant (Johann Ulrich von Salis-Soglio). Moreover, although the civil war divided cantons, cantons were also internally contested. For example, until 1841, Luzern, the Special League’s lead canton, was firmly part of the liberal camp. However, the Conservatives regained power in Luzern in the 1840s (by democratic means) and introduced the first elements of direct democracy. After the conservative takeover, because of its important role as Switzerland’s leading Catholic canton, Luzern was repeatedly the target of illegal raids by liberal militias (in 1841, 1844, and 1845).

their number of representatives and asked to respect democratic procedures (Natsch, 1967, 539).

However, Switzerland was a country emerging from a civil war. In several cantons, the liberal occupation regimes did not have broad popular support. Allowing the Conservatives to win the election could have jeopardized the Liberals' modernization project. Drastic measures were therefore necessary to neutralize the 'die-hard enemies of our reborn fatherland' (Alfred Escher, president of the lower chamber, in a parliamentary speech on 12 November 1849, cited in Jorio, 1998, 89). The Liberals thus faced a dilemma. If they upheld democracy, they would risk losing power to the 'forces of darkness' (Gruner, 1978a, 315) whom they accused of trying to undermine the democracy from within. This had happened before. In 1841, the Conservatives had won in Luzern by democratic means and turned this historically important canton from a member of the liberal alliance to the lead canton of the Special League.² If the Liberals wanted to avoid the repetition of such an outcome and secure political power in the long term, they were forced to resort to illicit means. However, these means also risked undermining democracy.

One of these illicit means was gerrymandering. Complaints about gerrymandering accompanied federal elections from the beginning. Research suggests that these complaints were warranted. For example, in the reform commission, the Liberals openly discussed the implications of district magnitude on election outcomes. If there was a liberal majority, a single canton-wide district was preferable because it would allow the Liberals to win all the seats. In contrast, if the conservative opposition was strong, single-member districts were preferable to prevent a conservative landslide win (Gruner, 1978a, 322–323). Accordingly, Aargau opted for a multi-member district with nine seats, ultimately preventing the regionally concentrated conservative vote to win a single seat. In contrast, the predominantly conservative cantons Fribourg and Luzern were divided into single-member districts. Moreover, next to gerrymandering, the Liberals relied on other forms of electoral manipulation. For example, in Fribourg, voters were required to swear an oath on the federal constitution to prevent Conservatives from voting (von Greyerz, 1977, 1022). Consequently, voter turnout in Fribourg was a paltry

² After the 1815 Congress of Vienna gave Switzerland its modern territorial form, representatives of all cantons met annually in the Federal Diet (Tagsatzung). These meetings were always chaired by the representatives of Bern, Luzern, or Zürich. Between meetings, these three lead cantons also over-saw daily business. Still today, in official communication or visual representations, Swiss cantons always appear in the same sequence. The cantons Zürich and Bern, the two leaders of the anti-Special League coalition in the 1847 civil war, come first, followed by Luzern, the third of the three traditional lead cantons. Only then are cantons listed in the sequence in which they joined the Swiss Confederacy, starting with the three oldest members, Uri, Schwyz, and Unterwalden.

21% (Gruner, 1978b, 345). Ultimately, in 1848, not a single Conservative was elected in Fribourg, whereas in Luzern, the Conservatives managed to win only one single-member district. Liberal newspapers publicly applauded this political exclusion (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 18 November 1848, Nr. 323).

For the first election, the revision commission had left district design to cantonal authorities. For subsequent elections, the federal parliament was to specify further rules. In 1850, the federal government suggested that multi-member districts of three to four seats should be the rule but wanted to leave district design to cantonal authorities. The lower chamber, dominated by Liberals, agreed on district magnitude but insisted on having final authority over district design (Kölz, 2004, 491–492; Natsch, 1967, 539–540). The cantons' role was limited to making suggestions. Alfred Escher, president of the lower chamber and later the chair of the federal commission designing the districts, knew that district design had the potential to prevent a conservative victory in the 1851 election (Gruner, 1978a, 101). Referring to the possibility of a conservative return to power in some cantons, he argued that it would be 'naïve' to leave district design to cantonal authorities (personal letter, cited in Gagliardi, 1919, 168).

In 1850, Escher, supported by an all-liberal parliamentary commission, embarked on district design. Detailed calculations made by the commission for all districts, preserved in Escher's personal archive, document the commission's gerrymandering (Gruner, 1978a, 333–334). After the federal parliament had supported the commission's district map, Escher was satisfied, arguing that 'all liberal cantons are content, except Luzern. But the latter is hard to help if you do not want to leave the principled ground' (personal letter, cited in Gagliardi, 1919, 168). The evidence is clear: Despite the apparent inadequacies of Luzern's district map, the Liberals still won five out of seven seats in the 1851 election in the former Special League lead canton. The Liberals were thus confident about the upcoming elections. The liberal commission member, Jakob Dubs, who would later join the federal government, argued that thanks to Escher's leadership, the new 'districts are such that according to the worst scenario 40 [. . .] Conservatives will be elected to the [120 seats strong] lower chamber' (personal letter, cited in Gagliardi, 1919, 168).³

Gerrymandering was thus widespread in Switzerland (e.g., Degen, 1998; Gruner, 1978a; Kölz, 2004; Lipson, 1956; Natsch, 1967, 1972; Tanner, 1998; Vatter et al., 2020). The case of Luzern, discussed in some detail in

³ There were few limits to gerrymandering in Switzerland other than the requirement that districts not cross cantonal borders. Changing this constitutional rule would have required a popular vote with majorities required among both voters and cantons.

the following, illustrates how exactly the Liberals used gerrymandering to protect their parliamentary majority.⁴ After the end of the civil war, the winners installed a liberal government in Luzern, which was also in charge of devising the districts for the first national election in 1848. As mentioned, the liberal government opted for six single-member districts (see Figure 8.1), which proved to be a successful strategy, as the Liberals managed to win five of six seats in 1848. However, this decisive victory was also facilitated by massive mobilization problems on behalf of the Conservatives in the immediate aftermath of the civil war. In subsequent elections, this advantage was likely to disappear.

In the run up to the 1851 national election, the national parliament, now responsible for district reform, revisited the district map. Due to population growth, Luzern received a seventh seat in the federal parliament (following the 1850 census). Yet, there were concerns that the Conservatives were preparing for a political comeback. The districts in Luzern were thus the topic of long discussions in the lower chamber (Gruner, 1978b, 339–341). The liberal majority ultimately opted for three most unusual districts (see Figure 8.1). By packing as many conservative voters as possible into the 12th district, the national parliament created a district in which two conservative candidates would be elected virtually unopposed (with vote shares of 78% and 76% respectively). Yet, the national parliament kept the 12th district deliberately small, thus ensuring that the 12th district would not be allocated more than two seats. In this process, they even cut the 12th district into two parts without a direct point of contact. Instead, they created two districts of two and three seats respectively, which were structured in a way to make a liberal victory in both districts likely. For this purpose, they combined most unlikely areas, such as the rural and conservative Entlebuch with the city of Luzern, a liberal stronghold. This combination was necessary to ensure that the 12th district (which the Conservatives won) was not allocated a third seat.

Conservative legislators criticized this unusual combination of historical regions. Their speaker, Philipp Anton von Segesser (Luzern), argued that ‘no political district and no judicial district remained whole’ (cited in Kölz, 2004, 492). Pressed to justify these districts, the liberal speaker pointed to geological reasons, arguing that the ground below the 11th district was characterized by limestone, while the ground below the 12th district contained molasses. The 13th district was simply referred to as plain land (Gruner, 1978a, 340; Kölz, 2004, 492). Unimpressed by this argument, von Segesser mockingly

⁴ Here and in the following, vote and seat share data is from Gruner (1978b). For vote shares at the cantonal level, we rely on Gruner’s estimates of parties’ electoral strength. For individual candidates, we rely on the number of votes.

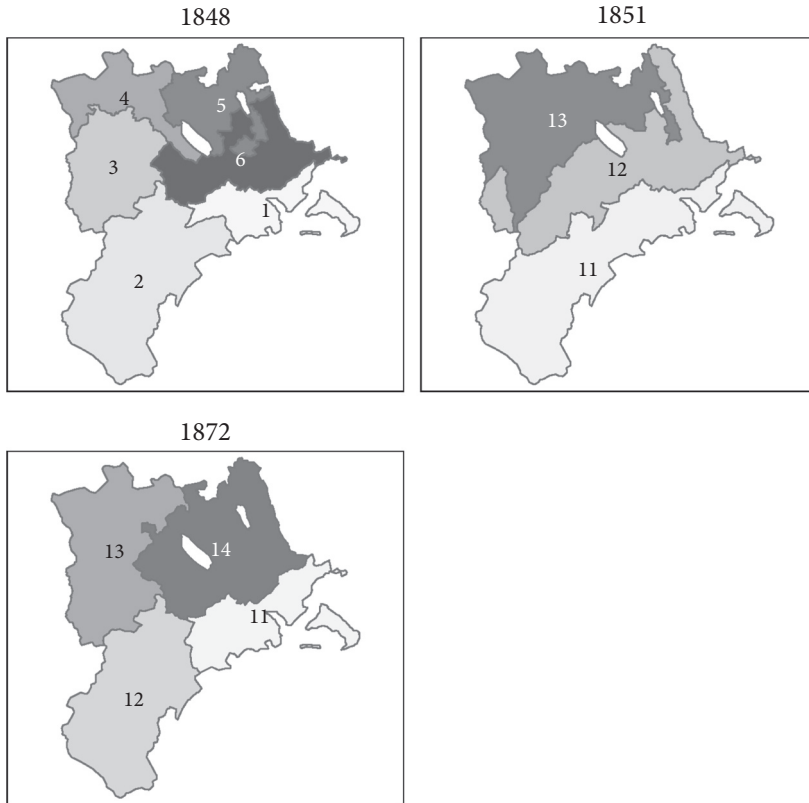


Fig. 8.1 District maps of Luzern

described the Liberals' behaviour in the following words: 'Leave it to me to find districts for the Luzern, and tell me, which party is supposed to win the majority. I will find districts for any party, so they can win the majority' (cited in Gruner, 1978a, 341). Yet, the liberal majority in the national parliament went ahead with their new district plans and the Liberals won five of seven seats in the 1851, 1854, 1857, and 1860 elections.

Given this success, there was no need to change districts in the canton Luzern for the 1863 election (following the 1863 census). The Liberals continued to win five of seven seats in the 1863 and 1866 elections. Yet, in the 1869 election, the Conservatives finally captured the 13th district, thus winning five of seven seats. Unsurprisingly, the Liberals took advantage of the 1872 district reform (following the 1872 census) to completely restructure the districts. As Figure 8.1 shows, there is hardly any resemblance between the districts set in 1851 and the ones set in 1872.

By the 1870s, the Conservatives had regained most of their former strength and now won about 70% of the vote in Luzern. Hence, the Liberals had to accept that the Conservatives would send a larger delegation to the lower chamber. Yet, by means of district design, now often with reference to the need to protect political minorities, they were still determined to win as many seats as possible. By expanding the 11th district (the city of Luzern) to the surrounding areas in 1872, they were able to protect their majority in the district, all the while keeping the district large enough to merit two seats. However, given the overwhelming strength of the Conservatives, the rest of the canton was now finally left to the political opposition.

In these early years, the use of gerrymandering is hard to deny. The Liberals spoke openly about it. Referring to the canton Aargau, the Liberal Augustin Keller argued that ‘even if they have to make crooked strokes, [. . .] where there is not enough, a few liberal municipalities will be added, so it cannot go wrong. Where there are too many black [conservative] or red [far left] voters, the council will say: let us move them where they do not trouble us’ (cited in Gruner, 1978a, 323). In fact, the Liberals did not hesitate to resort to more open manipulation strategies in the early period of the federal state. For example, after the Liberals had lost all six seats in the 1854 election in Ticino, the liberal majority in the federal parliament simply declared the election illegal—‘an obvious partisan decision’ (Tanner, 1998, 69). After the opposition leaders’ incarceration, the new election brought six Liberals back to power. However, for the Liberals, such blunt interventions were dangerous, as they undermined their claim to be the true defenders of democratization. Hence, over time, the Liberals preferred to rely on forms of electoral manipulation that are less visible and harder to prove, most notably gerrymandering.

Against this background, it is not surprising that conservative complaints about partisan districting did not abate over the following decades (Natsch, 1967; Tanner, 1998). In the late 19th century, the emerging Socialists would join these allegations (Degen, 1998). Gruner (1978a, 352) argues that ‘the federal authorities were positively bombarded with petitions’ for fairer districts. Yet, with an absolute majority in the lower chamber from 1848 to 1918, the Liberals were in control of district design for national elections. Admittedly, the Liberals had grown increasingly heterogeneous: A ‘radical left’ faced a ‘liberal centre’. Later, a democratic ‘extreme left’ would further fragment the liberal camp. With the Socialists’ emergence, the use of ‘left’ for the Radicals and ‘extreme left’ for the Democrats was discontinued. However, all these groups were united in the opposition to the ‘conservative right’ (Altermatt, 2020, 81; Jorio, 1998, 102–103) and, later, the Socialists as well

(Degen, 1998). The Democrats, Liberals, and Radicals also relied extensively on district-level electoral alliances to solve coordination problems (Gruner, 1978b). Finally, throughout the 1870s and 1880s, these three groups began to merge, ultimately leading to the creation of the Free Democratic Party in 1894 (Altermatt, 2021, 29). For the sake of simplicity, we continue to refer to these groups as the Liberals.⁵

Consequently, the Liberals rejected most petitions for fairer districts (Gruner, 1978a, 352–361). Moreover, they rejected accusations of partisan districting. For example, in an 1883 report commissioned by the federal government, Carl Hilty, a professor of public law and later liberal member of parliament (MP) (1890–1909), could not detect any bias in district design (Kölz, 2004, 693). Over time, Conservatives and Socialists increasingly relied on statistical means to document gerrymandering (Gruner, 1978a, 58–64), but the Liberals would have none of it. As late as 1914, the federal government, controlled by Liberals, rejected accusations of partisan districting. Based on their own calculations, the government argued, there is no ‘serious imbalance’ between votes and seats (Bundesrat, 1914, 146).

In light of the available evidence, the government’s claim appears doubtful. Figure 8.2 (upper panel) shows that the Liberals enjoyed a comfortable majority in parliament throughout the entire period. While the Conservatives gained considerably in the first three decades, their seat share stagnated subsequently. The Socialists’ entry at the turn to the 20th century did not alter the relationship fundamentally, even though they were able to snatch some seats from the Liberals. Importantly, the Liberals’ dominance was, to a large extent, built on seat-vote distortions (see lower panel). Admittedly, the Liberals’ seat bonus declined in the first decades from over 10 to 5 percentage points. This decline can be attributed to the Conservatives’ increasing electoral strength in small rural, especially Catholic, cantons, which limited the Liberals’ ability to influence electoral outcomes via redistricting. For example, the electoral strength of the Conservatives in strongholds such as Luzern, Fribourg, and Valais grew between 1848 and 1875 from 24% to 68%, 8% to 80%, and 38% to 70%, respectively. Despite various attempts to secure a strong liberal presence in these multi-seat cantons by adjusting district boundaries, the Conservatives’ overwhelming share of the vote made it difficult for the Liberals to change the outcome in their favour. Still, thanks to careful district design, the Liberals won four seats in these largely conservative cantons in the 1875 election.

⁵ Some Liberals in the French-speaking part of Switzerland formed an independent party. In the 1917 election, they won 4.9% of the vote. They initially opposed PR, but around 1905, they changed their position and began supporting PR. This position is in line with their status as a small, urban-based party.

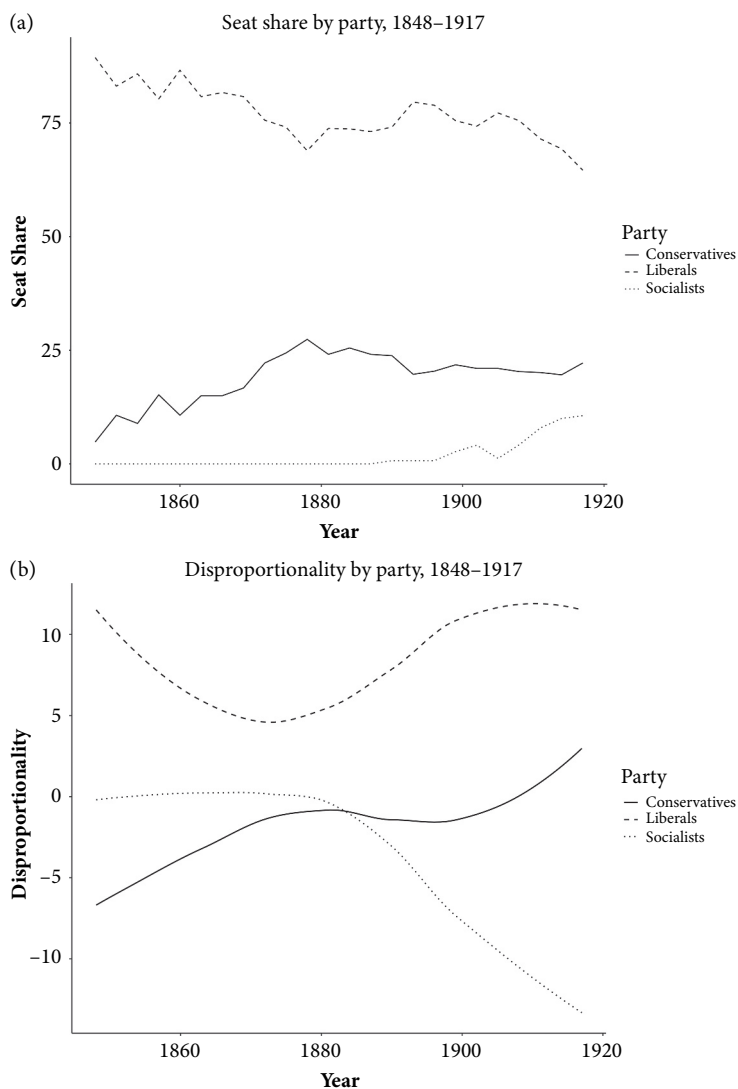


Fig. 8.2 Seat shares and electoral disproportionality, Switzerland, 1848-1917

Over time, however, the Liberals' attention increasingly turned to the Socialists. By entering the electoral arena in the urban and mostly Protestant cantons, the Socialists challenged the Liberals in their heartlands. Once again, the Liberals resorted to gerrymandering, which resulted in considerable electoral disproportionalities (see Figure 8.2). In the last election under MR, in 1917, the Socialists gained 44% and 39% of the vote in Zürich and Bern, respectively, but only 28% and 24% of the seats.

The canton Zürich offers a good illustration of these developments. Zürich had been a liberal stronghold since the creation of the federal state in 1848. Yet, at the turn of the century, the Socialists became a serious political challenger. In the 1899 national elections, the Socialists received 26% of the vote but gained only one of the 17 seats in the canton (6%). Following the 1900 census, the number of seats allocated to Zürich increased from 17 to 22. When district reform was discussed in the national parliament, the only Socialist elected in Zürich, Jakob Vogelsanger, complained about the size and boundaries of the current districts. To ensure a better representation of the voters' preferences, he demanded the adjustment of district boundaries to reduce the anti-socialist bias. However, his proposal was rejected by 71 to 38 votes. Instead, the parliament enacted the Liberals' proposal for Zürich's district map. Hence, while adjusting the magnitude of some districts as well as shifting a few municipalities across districts, the reform did nothing to remove the anti-socialist bias (*Amtliches Stenographisches Bulletin der Schweizerischen Bundesversammlung*, 1902, 5–6, 11). In the 1902 election, with a vote share of 26%, the Socialists won two out of 22 seats (9%). In the election before the next national census, in 1908, the Socialists received 35% of the vote, yet still won only two of the 22 seats.

The 1910 national census showed that rapid population growth in Zürich made district reform inevitable. The number of seats allocated to Zürich increased from 22 to 25. Since much of the population growth was concentrated in the industrial centre of the canton (the first district), the ensuing discussion was dominated by the question whether the first district, now consisting of 12 seats, should be split into two districts. The Liberals were divided on this question. One group of liberal legislators supported the division of the first district to reduce the level of electoral competition and make the outcome more predictable. To do so, they wanted to create a new district (the new second district) with five of the first district's 12 seats (see Figure 8.3). This new district was supposed to become a socialist stronghold, where all the socialist votes would be concentrated, thereby denying the Socialists an efficient use of their votes.

However, a second group criticized the proposal. The Liberal Walter Bissegger (Zürich) summarized the position. Responding to the Socialist Herman Greulich's (Zürich) claim that the Socialists' rise was unstoppable, Bissegger remained unimpressed: 'Claims about the unstoppable growth of the Socialist Party are quite self-serving. Yet, these claims are neither important nor instructive for this hall [i.e., the lower chamber]. Once again, the bourgeois parties will not have to fear this electoral contest and in fact they do not' (*Amtliches Stenographisches Bulletin der Schweizerischen*

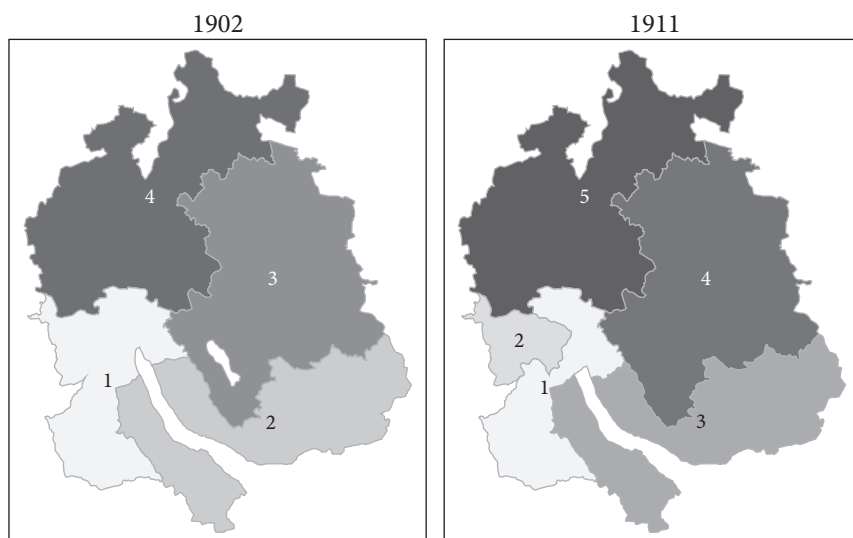


Fig. 8.3 District maps of Zürich

Bundesversammlung, 1911a, 110). However, a parliamentary majority ultimately voted in favour of splitting the first district. In this way, a new second district was created, which was designed to become a socialist stronghold. The Liberals thus contained the Socialists by means of redistricting (packing) rather than engage in direct electoral competition.

In the parliamentary debate, the Socialists attempted to push for better representation by demanding that the first district be split evenly. The new district in the socialist stronghold had about 95,000 inhabitants. Assigning a municipality with about 5,000 inhabitants from the old first district to this new district would have resulted in the reallocation of an additional seat from the first district to the newly created second district.⁶ Taking the mismatch of the socialist vote and seat share of the 1908 election as a point of reference (35% of the votes but only 9% of the seats), such a demand seemed justified. However, the proposal was clearly defeated in parliament by 118 to seven votes (*Amtliches Stenographisches Bulletin der Schweizerischen Bundesversammlung*, 1911a, 119).

Unsurprisingly, the Socialists reacted strongly to this decision. After several liberal legislators had argued for district reform in Fribourg to protect the minority of liberal voters in this otherwise conservative canton, the Socialist Greulich remarked mockingly that if only the Liberals were equally

⁶ According to the constitution, one MP was given per 20,000 residents. Hence, the newly created second district was rather malapportioned.

concerned when minorities other than liberal ones were affected. He then provided a whole list of district reforms that would help socialist candidates win seats and reduce some of the most extreme electoral disproportionalities, including a reform of districts in the canton Zürich (Amtliches Stenographisches Bulletin der Schweizerischen Bundesversammlung, 1911b, 132). In addition, Greulich explicitly described the districts in Zürich as an example of gerrymandering in ‘its most absurd form’ (Amtliches Stenographisches Bulletin der Schweizerischen Bundesversammlung, 1911a, 104).

The Liberal Robert Forrer (St. Gallen) immediately responded to Greulich, arguing that the situation in Fribourg was particularly bad and thus not comparable to the examples provided by Greulich (Amtliches Stenographisches Bulletin der Schweizerischen Bundesversammlung, 1911b, 134). Given the overall level of electoral disproportionality in Switzerland (see Figure 8.2), this is a questionable claim. In fact, in the 1908 election, the Conservatives had won five of six seats (83%) in Fribourg with a vote share of 74%. The sixth seat went to the Liberals. While indeed reflecting a certain disproportionality, the case of Fribourg does not appear to be particularly bad (at least in comparison to Zürich). Yet, Forrer’s statement lends evidence to Wong’s (2017) argument that gerrymandering is a particularly subtle form of electoral malpractice because its use is difficult to conclusively prove. In any case, Greulich’s demand for an additional seat for the newly created second district was rejected.

In the end, the new second district in Zürich slightly reduced the mismatch between vote and seat shares for the Socialists. In the 1911 election, the Socialists received 42% of the votes and six of 25 seats (24%; the Liberals won the other 19 seats). However, concentrating all socialist voters in a safe district limited their ability to make any further electoral advances. In the second district, the socialist candidates ran unopposed and won all seats with overwhelming majorities (with vote shares between 77% and 91%). Despite continuing vote growth, the Socialists thus struggled to gain any additional seats in subsequent elections. Hence, although the Socialists had become the strongest party (in terms of electoral support), they were still denied adequate representation in parliament. Ultimately, the Socialists had to wait for the first election under PR (1919) to win more seats than the Liberals in Zürich (nine seats with a vote share of 33% for the Socialists, and seven seats with a vote share of 29% for the Liberals, 25 seats in total).

In sum, there is considerable empirical evidence to suggest that the Liberals relied on gerrymandering to contain, first, the Conservatives and, later, the Socialists. In Chapter 3, we also offered quantitative evidence for gerrymandering in Switzerland. Against the background of Liberals openly admitting

such manipulation, the use of gerrymandering in Switzerland is hard to deny. In the next section, we examine how such containment strategies influenced the politics of electoral reform.

8.1.3 Breaking the Liberals' dominance by extra-parliamentary means

The previous section has shown that the Liberals used gerrymandering to contain the Conservatives and the Socialists. Seeing their requests for changes to the district map ignored, the two parties turned to electoral system reform. As early as 1872, the Conservative Adam Herzog-Weber (Luzern) was demanding the introduction of PR. Cantons were to be used as the districts in the new electoral system. However, there was considerable uncertainty about the specifics. Moreover, alternative reform proposals had suggested the introduction of single-member districts or the adoption of limited voting (Natsch, 1967, 543).⁷ From the 1880s onward, the Conservatives increasingly pinned their hopes on PR. In an 1884 parliamentary motion, three leading conservative legislators demanded a new district map or the adoption of PR—a clear sign that the Conservatives were converging on PR (Kölz, 2004, 639–640). Only three years later, the conservative leader Joseph Zemp (Luzern) declared that fairer districts would not be sufficient, because only the adoption of PR would satisfy their demands for more adequate representation (Natsch, 1967, 551).

The Conservatives were now joined by the Socialists in their efforts, the latter having slowly become a relevant political force in the 1880s. In the late 1880s, the two parties organized numerous joint rallies, yet the Liberals remained unimpressed (Natsch, 1967, 551). In 1881 and 1890, the district maps were adapted following population censuses, but the Liberals mostly ignored conservative and socialist requests for fairer district maps (Tanner, 1998, 68). Summarizing the discussion, a conservative legislator argued that 'instead of being a work of peace, the new district map will be the source of disunity and struggle' (*Der Bund*, 30 November 1889, Nr. 330). Even the influential liberal newspaper *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* acknowledged the use of gerrymandering: 'It should be said openly: We have the majority, and we want to make sure that we do not lose it' (28 November 1889, Nr. 332). However, this acknowledgement did not stop this influential mouthpiece

⁷ In the case of limited voting, electors have fewer votes than there are seats in a given district. In this way, limited voting systems are supposed to allow for some minority representation.

of the Liberals from continuing to oppose electoral reform (Natsch, 1972, 136–137).

The Liberals' position was undoubtedly hypocritical. They did not hesitate to bemoan the lack of representation of liberal minorities (in predominantly conservative) cantons and regularly intervened on their behalf. The cases of Fribourg and Luzern, mentioned above, are examples of such interventions. However, the Liberals were not particularly concerned about representation when other minorities were affected. Especially in the early years of the federal state, the Liberals openly admitted that the exclusion of other political groups was the goal of district design (Gruner, 1978a, 328).

The Liberals' hypocrisy was most visible in their position in the conflict in Ticino, the so-called 'Rivoluzione del 1890'. After the Conservatives had won power in Ticino, they relied on partisan districting to contain the Liberals in cantonal elections (for national elections, the national parliament oversaw district design). Questions of district design and electoral system reform were repeatedly the source of (sometimes violent) conflict with the Liberals regularly complaining bitterly about gerrymandering (Ghiringhelli, 1988, 48–51). After the particularly lopsided 1889 election, the Liberals once again demanded electoral reform (within the canton), but the conservative government displayed little interest, which ultimately triggered the 1890 uprising, the murder of a (conservative) member of the cantonal government, and the subsequent adoption of PR forced through by the federal government, mentioned above (Kölz, 2004, 379–399). As a welcome side effect of PR adoption, the federal government also helped the Liberals to gain a seat in the cantonal government (Szekendy, 2018, 52).

Yet, these developments did not stop the Liberals from relying on gerrymandering at the national level. Moreover, while the Liberals favoured the adoption of PR for cantonal elections in Ticino, allegedly to guarantee a fairer representation and pacify the canton, they fought PR at the national level until the very end. The Liberals' contradictory behaviour did not go unnoticed. In a letter to Ernest Naville in 1890, the Conservative Georg von Wyss complained about the Liberals' insincerity: 'What a sad spectacle that the councils, and the national council in particular, protect the revolutionaries of Ticino and demand concessions for them, which they obstinately at the same time deny to all those who do not think like them. I confess that this disgusts me deeply' (personal letter, cited in Wisler, 2008, 109).⁸ Yet, the Conservatives were no strangers to hypocrisy themselves. In

⁸ Von Wyss refers to the federal council (the government), the national council (the lower chamber), and the council of states (the upper chamber).

their strongholds, the Conservatives often opposed PR for cantonal elections (Lutz, 2004, 285; Natsch, 1972, 150; Szekendy, 2018, 57). The Conservatives of Fribourg even opposed the adoption of PR at the national level because they worried that such a reform could set a precedent for cantonal elections (Wigger, 1997, 299). These examples show that the Conservatives and the Liberals did not oppose or support PR out of principle. Instead, their position was typically informed by their expectations of the impact of electoral reform on their parliamentary representation.

The Conservatives and the Socialists did not stop submitting parliamentary motions demanding electoral reform and new district maps. However, in the late 19th century, it became apparent that they could not hope for any progress on these matters by parliamentary means. As a result, the Conservatives and Socialists increasingly turned their attention to extra-parliamentary channels (Natsch, 1967, 557). In 1891, Switzerland had introduced the instrument of popular initiatives, which allowed political groups to put constitutional articles to popular vote. If supported at the ballot box, the new constitutional articles had to be implemented. The procedure remains similar in modern day Switzerland, too. Popular initiatives are always debated in parliament, but parliament and government cannot adapt the proposal. However, parliament and government typically offer vote recommendations. The Conservatives and Socialists launched their first joint popular initiative in the late 1890s, demanding the adoption of PR for elections to the lower chamber with the 25 cantons as the electoral districts.

In many ways, this cooperation is remarkable. Ideologically, the Conservatives and the Socialists had little in common. Contemporary observers called it an ‘unnatural alliance’ (Kölz, 2004, 697). However, the two parties did not compete against each other, because the Socialists rarely challenged the Conservatives in their rural strongholds. Moreover, the Conservatives and the Socialists shared an interest in breaking the Liberals’ political dominance. The Socialists had good reason to believe that electoral reform would improve their parliamentary representation. The situation was less clear for the Conservatives, although they hoped that a PR system would allow them to translate their diaspora votes into parliamentary seats.

Moreover, the Conservatives certainly understood that electoral system reform would put an end to the Liberals’ absolute majority in parliament, which in turn would force the Liberals to rely on conservative support in parliament (Wigger, 1997, 333–366). Strikingly, right after the first election under the new PR rules, on 26 October 1919, which had put an end to the Liberals’ absolute majority in parliament, a second Conservative was finally elected to the federal government with liberal support (on 11 December

1919)—a clear indication that the Liberals now increasingly relied on conservative support for a parliamentary majority. Before his election, the winning candidate, Jean-Marie Musy (Fribourg), had strongly denounced what he considered to be the Socialists' radical political demands, which was a clear signal to the Liberals that the Conservatives were now ready to abandon the coalition with the Socialists and enter into a coalition with the Liberals (Kölz, 2004, 726; Natsch, 1972, 129).⁹

The district map suggested in 1919 is equally remarkable. At first sight, it seems to simply follow subnational administrative structures (López-Pintor, 2000, 80). However, relying on cantons as districts was an important socialist concession because the Conservatives would benefit from small district magnitude in most of their cantonal strongholds (Szekendy, 2018, 54). The district map was probably the most contested aspect of the suggested PR system. Several times, the Liberals—with support from the federal government (Bundesrat, 1910, 1914)—tried to take advantage of this concession to drive a wedge into the conservative-socialist coalition, correctly arguing that only larger districts would guarantee a truly proportional representation of political groups. Due to their concentrated voter bases in urban areas, the Socialists did not benefit from the small magnitude of some of the rural districts. However, the Socialists understood that this (often repeated) criticism was primarily tactical and that the Liberals' interest in a more proportional system was not sincere. As a result, the Socialists never took the bait (Kölz, 2004, 692–720; Natsch, 1972, 126–169). The Liberals also used other tactics to drive a wedge into the conservative-socialist coalition. For example, in 1914, the federal government published model calculations to show that the Conservatives would not benefit from PR (Bundesrat, 1914). Concerned about the loyalty of their conservative allies, it was primarily the socialist press that pushed back against these model calculations, arguing that the Conservatives would greatly benefit from PR (Natsch, 1972, 168–169).¹⁰

In 1917, the Liberals launched a new attempt to split the conservative-socialist coalition. They argued that in large cantons, voters might struggle to make an informed selection among the numerous candidates. With cantons

⁹ By 1891, a first Conservative member had been elected to the federal council (Joseph Zemp, Luzern). This election was a clear signal that the ideological tensions between the Conservatives and the Liberals were fading (Bolliger & Zürcher, 2004). Instead, the Liberals' containment efforts were increasingly directed at the emerging Socialists. In 1891, however, the Liberals still controlled an absolute majority in parliament and were therefore not politically dependent on Conservative support.

¹⁰ Although the federal governments' calculations were far off the mark with regard to socialist gains, they were right in predicting limited conservative gains due to electoral reform. The Conservatives did not win a single additional seat in the first election under PR compared to the last election under MR.

as districts in the new PR system, district magnitude in the largest district was expected to be 32 (Bern). The Liberals thus suggested splitting districts with 10 or more seats into smaller districts of roughly five seats. This proposal accepted small district magnitude in the Conservatives' strongholds and was thus primarily aimed at the Conservatives. But it is doubtful that the Conservatives would have benefited from this district map. This change would have only affected the largest cantons (e.g., Zürich, Bern, and Vaud). In these cantons, however, the Conservatives were primarily interested in large districts (to turn their diaspora votes into seats). Consequently, like the Socialists before them, the Conservatives did not take the bait and insisted on the formula 'one canton—one district' (Kölz, 2004, 720–723; Natsch, 1972, 172–175).¹¹

The Liberals were clearly concerned about seat maximization. The aforementioned Carl Hilty, author of the report on PR commissioned by the federal government in 1883 but now a liberal MP, argued that electoral system choice was 'not a matter of justice or science, it is a matter of power' (Amtliches Stenographisches Bulletin der Schweizerischen Bundesversammlung, 1900, 270). The Liberals understood demands for PR as an attack on their party and their legitimate claim to political power (Natsch, 1972, 147). A Genève section of the Liberals argued that the goal of the conservative-socialist proposal was simply to break the Liberals' absolute majority in parliament (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 11 March 1909, second evening edition). This observation is probably true. Although proponents of PR typically framed their demands as being a matter of justice, they left no doubt about the desirable political consequences of electoral reform. In 1898, the Socialist Heinrich Scherrer (St. Gallen) argued that PR would not only improve the Socialists' parliamentary representation but also lead to the disbandment of the Liberals (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 26 September 1898, first evening edition).

The first popular initiative, launched in 1898, was voted upon in 1900. The proposal simply stated that elections to the lower chamber are direct, based on the principle of proportionality, and that the districts were to be the cantons. In November 1900, with a yes share of 40.9%, the proposal was soundly defeated, but the proposal found popular majorities in the eight former Special League cantons (and conservative strongholds) Luzern, Uri, Schwyz, Obwalden, Nidwalden, Zug, Fribourg, and Valais, the two predominantly Catholic cantons Appenzell Innerrhoden and Ticino, the canton Genève,

¹¹ Moreover, splitting large cantons into smaller districts would have required regular redistricting, which might have (re)opened the door to liberal gerrymandering (Natsch, 1972, 173).

where the Swiss PR movement had its origins, and, more surprisingly, the canton Glarus (Linder et al., 2010, 96–98). The liberal press cheered the result, but the outcome also encouraged the supporters of PR to continue their efforts. Moreover, cantons continued to adopt PR for cantonal elections (Basel-Stadt in 1905 and Luzern in 1909), whereas debates about electoral reform were heating up in large cantons such as St. Gallen and Zürich (Walter & Emmenegger, 2019, 68).

In January 1909, a second popular initiative to adopt PR was launched. Like the first popular initiative, this proposal simply stated that elections to the lower chamber are direct, based on the principle of proportionality, and that cantons are the districts. Once again, the Liberals rallied against the proposal (Natsch, 1972, 146–157), this time with considerable support from the federal government, which published a report strongly criticizing the proposal (Bundesrat, 1910). Their efforts were crowned with success. In October 1910, the second popular initiative was also rejected. However, this time, the result was narrower. Of the voting population, 47.5% supported the proposal. Moreover, four cantons with strong liberal constituencies (Solothurn, Basel-Stadt, St. Gallen, and Neuchâtel) had joined the traditionally conservative cantons in supporting electoral reform. All four cantons had adopted PR for cantonal elections or were about to do so (St. Gallen in 1911). In contrast, Glarus and, more surprisingly, Fribourg had joined the cantons opposing the reform (Linder et al., 2010, 112–114).¹² As a result, a narrow majority of cantons in fact supported the popular initiative.

Encouraged by this success, the conservative-socialist alliance submitted a parliamentary motion in the first week after the popular vote, demanding the adoption of PR by means of a new electoral law. The liberal majority in parliament rejected the motion, pointing to the recent popular vote. However, in many ways, this short episode set the tone for the coming years. The conservative-socialist alliance would continue to push for electoral reform. In spring 1913, the alliance launched the third popular initiative. Once again, the proposal simply stated that elections to the lower chamber are direct, based on the principle of proportionality, and that cantons are the districts. Already by September, enough signatures had been collected. The lower chamber debated the popular initiative in summer 1914, but due to the start of the First World War, the debate in the upper chamber was postponed. At

¹² The case of Fribourg is interesting because the Conservatives, as the dominant political force in the canton, worried that the adoption of PR might set a precedent for electoral reform at the cantonal level (Wigger, 1997, 168). However, at the national level, the Conservatives clearly supported the reform (Linder et al., 2010, 112–114) and other cantonal groups of the Conservatives strongly criticized Fribourg's egoism and 'backwardness' (Wigger, 1997, 169).

first, the conservative-socialist alliance accepted the postponement, but as the war dragged on, they started to accuse the Liberals of a delaying tactic. Pressure started to mount in 1916 and parliament finally resumed discussion in 1917 (Kölz, 2004, 712–720; Natsch, 1972, 164–171).

Sensing defeat in the popular vote, the Liberals made last-ditch efforts to win. At first, they tried to undermine conservative support for PR by once again demanding the merger of small districts. When their demands fell on deaf ears, the Liberals tried to undermine socialist support for PR by demanding the division of large districts. This was, again, to no avail. Finally, the Liberals tried to sway voters by having the parliament's and government's vote recommendation printed on the ballot paper. This was highly unusual and strongly criticized by the Conservatives and the Socialists (Natsch, 1972, 171–176). Ultimately, however, all of these measures did not move the needle. The time was ripe for PR.

In October 1918, 66.8% of the voting population supported the adoption of PR. The proposal found majorities in all but three cantons (Appenzell Auser-rhoden, Thurgau, and Vaud)—all of which were liberal strongholds and had not adopted PR for cantonal elections yet (Linder et al., 2010, 122–124). What explains the success of the third proposal? Clearly, support for electoral reform had been growing over the years, as voters had become more familiar with the electoral system thanks to the growing number of cantons that used PR for their elections. Especially the adoption of PR for cantonal elections in Zürich in 1916 was taken as a clear indication that the third national vote might find majority support (Linder et al., 2010, 123). Moreover, the electoral strength of the Conservatives and the Socialists should not be under-estimated. Their rather weak parliamentary representation was to a large extent the result of gerrymandering. In the first election under the new PR rules, in 1919, the two parties reached a combined vote share of almost 45%. Together with smaller parties that also supported electoral reform, the Conservatives and Socialists won a majority of seats in 1919. Finally, the growing social problems at the end of the First World War also created a window of opportunity for electoral reform, as PR was increasingly seen as a way to accommodate social and political conflicts (Lutz, 2004, 280).

Parliamentary roll calls allow us to analyse the relationship between electoral threats, liberal containment, and support for PR in more detail. In Chapter 2, we argued that as the electoral threat of insurgent parties increases, containment and, by implication, the MR system become more important for incumbents. Legislators' benefiting from disproportionalities are likely to be particularly opposed to the adoption of PR because, in the absence of MR and the potential it offers for containment, these legislators have little

chance to beat strong insurgent candidates. Empirically, we are thus particularly interested in the interaction between the insurgent party's electoral strength and the degree to which legislators are advantaged by partisan districting, which we capture by means of seat-vote distortions. Hence, if facing a strong electoral challenge, support for PR is likely to be low if legislators benefit from disproportionalities, because these legislators' election depends on the continued reliance on gerrymandering.

In our analysis, we take advantage of the fact that Swiss popular initiatives are also voted upon in parliament. Our dependent variable is the support for the adoption of PR by a legislator in the lower chamber in 1900, 1910, 1914, and 1918 (because of liberal attempts to delay the debate, parliament ultimately voted twice on the third popular initiative). In all four votes, parliamentary majorities rejected the proposal, with yes/no ratios of 33/79 in 1900, 45/100 in 1910, 62/105 in 1914, and 71/78 in 1918 (*Amtliches Stenographisches Bulletin der Schweizerischen Bundesversammlung*, 1900, 1910, 1914, 1918). To examine our theoretical propositions, we engaged in an extensive data collection on electoral outcomes in four elections for the national council in 1899, 1908, 1911, and 1917. We coded the results of 1,224 candidates, of which 624 were successfully elected in up to 52 districts (based on Gruner, 1978b). The data are matched with the voting results on the adoption of PR in the National Council in 1900, 1911, 1914, and 1918 from the 'Bulletin der Bundesversammlung.' Finally, we complement these data with characteristics of the individual legislators, their districts, and their cantons.

By the time of the first popular initiative on PR, liberal gerrymandering mainly focused on the Socialists, while the Conservatives were comparatively safe in their rural strongholds. In the analysis below, we therefore focus on the socialist electoral threat. We expect parties to evaluate the status quo against their vote-to-seat relation under PR. Multi-member districts with flexible district boundaries make the calculation of electoral disproportionalities and socialist electoral strength difficult. Since multi-member districts with runoffs incentivize the creation of district-level electoral alliances between parties (Sartori, 1994), the vote share of a party might over-estimate the actual electoral strength. This is because voter preferences are not necessarily expressed by party but by alliance (Gruner, 1978a, 58–71). In addition, due to strategic voting, redistricting for political reasons is likely to lead to an under-estimation of electoral strength for some parties if measured by effective vote shares at the district level (Cox, 1997).

We address these measurement problems by relying on an indicator of the parties' electoral strength at the cantonal level (based on Gruner, 1978b, 373–397). We expect parties to evaluate the status quo against their

seat-to-vote ratio under PR. Cantonal borders constituted legal barriers to redistricting under MR and were the expected districts under any PR system. Therefore, the parties' electoral strength at the cantonal level—and not their vote share at the district level—is a more valid indicator of the Socialists' electoral strength and thus the legislators' positions on PR. Gruner's electoral strength data have the additional advantage that they compensate for district-level electoral alliances and voters not using all of their votes for strategic or other reasons. Based on the electoral strength data, we also calculate the degree of disproportionality at the cantonal level by party (seat share minus electoral strength). We argue that a substantial part of this disproportionality is the result of partisan gerrymandering.

Table 8.1 provides evidence for our argument using the legislators' voting behaviour on the four proposals. Both estimators show that the interaction term of disproportionality and socialist electoral strength is highly significant when added to models 2 and 5. The result remains unaffected in models 3 and 6 with the most restrictive specification, additionally controlling for the most important competing approaches. More precisely, we control for the presence of co-specific assets (Cusack et al., 2007) and trade exposure (Rogowski, 1987), the vote margin of the two strongest non-socialist parties (Boix, 1999; Leemann & Mares, 2014), whether the legislator is a member of the party elite (Cox et al., 2019; Schröder & Manow, 2020), and socialist radicalization (Ahmed, 2013; Gjerløw & Rasmussen, 2022).¹³ Table 8.5 in the Appendix provides the summary statistics.

What does the interaction term tell us about how incumbents respond to an increasing electoral threat from the Left? In Figure 8.4, we plot the predicted probabilities for different levels of socialist electoral strength on support for PR, depending on whether legislators benefit from the MR system. In addition, we include a histogram of socialist electoral strength at the bottom of Figure 8.4 (see Figure 8.11 in the Appendix for a histogram of disproportionalities). We differentiate between two scenarios. A disproportionality score of 0.2 indicates that the legislator's party received 20 percentage points more seats than votes in a canton. As Figure 8.11 shows, this value is rather common among legislators, especially liberal ones, which were the primary beneficiaries of gerrymandering. In contrast, a disproportionality score of -0.2 indicates that the legislator's party received 20 percentage points more

¹³ We measure co-specific assets using the number of individuals attending vocational education as a fraction of the population (A. Huber, 1899–1918), trade exposure using the size of the workforce in export-oriented industries as a fraction of the total workforce (Bundesamt für Statistik, 1907, 1918, 1920), socialist radicalization using the number of strikes per 10,000 inhabitants (Hirter, 1988), and party elites using a dummy variable capturing whether a legislator is a leader of the party or the parliamentary group (Historical Dictionary of Switzerland, 2002–2014).

Table 8.1 Disproportionality, socialist electoral strength, and support for PR in Switzerland

	Linear (Outlier-Robust)			Firth		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Disproportionality	-1.48*** (0.42)	-0.64 (0.41)	-0.67 (0.39)	-7.78*** (0.91)	-2.08 (1.74)	-2.32 (1.52)
Socialist electoral strength	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.00 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)
Disproportionality x socialist electoral strength		-0.04*** (0.01)	-0.04*** (0.01)		-0.46*** (0.12)	-0.43*** (0.11)
Co-specific assets			-0.91 (2.84)			-7.76 (13.04)
Trade exposure			0.22 (0.29)			0.79 (1.10)
Right margin			0.01 (0.03)			-0.02 (0.29)
Party elite			0.14 (0.08)			0.48 (0.42)
Number of strikes			-0.00 (0.00)			-0.00 (0.00)
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Num. obs.	547	547	547	547	547	547
AIC				601.69	553.71	560.68
BIC				627.52	583.84	616.64
Log Likelihood				-294.85	-269.85	-267.34
Deviance				589.69	539.71	534.68

Notes: Cluster robust standard errors on the party level in parenthesis.

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

votes than seats in a canton. As Figure 8.11 shows, this is a realistic value, especially for non-liberal legislators, although there are fewer cases. This should not come as a surprise though, as parties are likely to struggle to get their candidates elected in such circumstances.

The dotted line in Figure 8.4 shows that if legislators benefited from electoral disproportionalities, higher socialist electoral strength is associated with stronger opposition to PR. This result supports our argument that if incumbents can influence vote-seat distortions in their favour, they cling to the MR systems despite increasing electoral challenges because the MR systems offer incumbents powerful containment strategies. In the Swiss case, the use of gerrymandering allowed the Liberals to contain the socialist electoral

threat and defend their absolute majority in parliament. A different picture emerges if legislators do not benefit from electoral disproportionalities. For this case, the solid line in Figure 8.4 shows that social electoral strength has a positive impact on legislators' support of PR. This is the familiar socialist electoral threat argument (Rokkan, 1970), according to which threatened legislators support the adoption of PR to increase their re-election chances. In the Swiss case, this scenario describes the situation of most Conservatives and a few liberal legislators that, for whatever reasons, could not benefit from vote-seat distortions.¹⁴ These findings demonstrate that partisan districting and the resulting disproportionalities decisively moderate whether electoral threats increase or decrease support for PR among legislators.

The first election under the new PR rules took place in October 1919. The Socialists managed to almost double their number of seats (from 22 in 1917 to 41 seats in 1919) despite a reduction in their electoral strength (from 30.8% to 23.5%). These gains primarily came at the expense of the Liberals whose parliamentary representation also suffered from the break away of their farmers' wing, which entered parliament with 27 seats and a vote share of 15.3%.

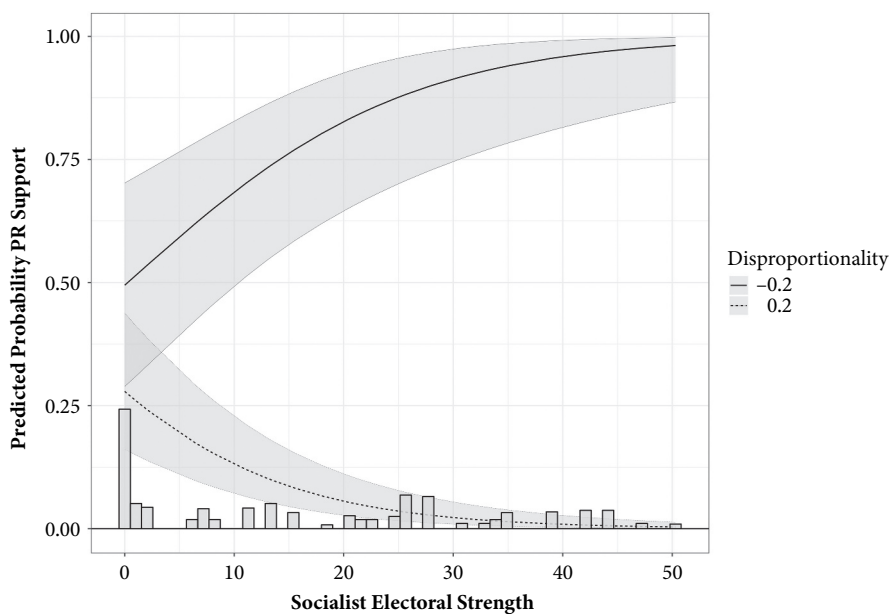


Fig. 8.4 Effect of socialist electoral strength on support for PR conditional on disproportionality

¹⁴ Table 8.6 in the Appendix shows that the interaction term of disproportionality and socialist electoral strength remains significant when excluding socialist legislators.

Without their farmers' wing, the Liberals lost 43 seats and saw their vote share decline from 40.8% to 28.9%. With 60 seats in the 189-seat parliament, the Liberals no longer controlled an absolute majority. The Conservatives, finally, managed to increase their vote share from 16.5% to 21.0%, but this increase did not result in any additional seats in the lower chamber (which stayed at 41 seats).

The election had been moved forward by one year as a concession to socialist demands (from October 1920 to October 1919). In November 1918, one month after the adoption of PR by popular vote, a general strike broke out in Switzerland. The strike was quickly crushed by the authorities, but several of the strikers' demands were subsequently taken up, including the call for elections to be brought forward under the new electoral law (Kölz, 2004, 725–730; Natsch, 1972, 180–182). This coinciding of electoral reform and general strike has tempted some scholars to conclude that the general strike triggered the electoral reform. However, as shown above, electoral reform had preceded the general strike, and socialist demands related only to the date of the next election, not the election system. There was no doubt that the next election would be under a PR system.

In fact, the Swiss case suggests that the direction of causality between electoral reform and socialist radicalization might be reversed (Senn & Straumann, 2022). Failure to adopt PR clearly contributed to the Socialists' growing radicalism. Visibly frustrated by their inadequate parliamentary representation and the Liberals' attempts to prevent any reform of the electoral system, the Socialists' rhetoric became increasingly aggressive, including the threat of a general strike (Natsch, 1972, 172). Non-socialist supporters of PR had long argued that denying the Socialists fair representation would contribute to their radicalization. The prominent MP Joseph Anton Scherrer (St. Gallen) repeatedly argued that there was no need to worry about the Socialists as long as they still demanded PR. There was only reason to worry when they stopped demanding it (Natsch, 1972, 146). Clearly the growing radicalization of the Socialists created a sense of urgency, but the Socialists' frustration was not least the result of the Liberals' resistance to any reform.¹⁵

In summary, this section has shown that partisan districting by the strong urban party (the Liberals) encouraged the rural party (the Conservatives) and the weak urban party (the Socialists) to join a coalition and push for electoral reform. Consistent with our theoretical expectations, the case study has demonstrated that if incumbent parties can successfully contain insurgent

¹⁵ Moreover, the growing radicalization of the Socialists did not prevent the Conservatives from cooperating with them on electoral reform, although once the reform was successful, the Conservatives switched sides and joined the Liberals in an anti-socialist bloc.

parties, they have little incentive to adopt PR in response to electoral threats. For this reason, the conservative-socialist coalition had to resort to extra-parliamentary means to push through electoral reform. Finally, this section has also shown the importance of district design in newly adopted PR systems. The agreement to push for cantons as districts was key to keeping the conservative-socialist coalition together.

8.2 Belgium: Fragile majorities and pre-emptive PR adoption

In this section, we discuss the process leading to the 1899 reform in Belgium. As the first country to adopt PR at a national level, Belgium is a prominent case in the literature. However, as we show below, existing explanations cannot account for the 1899 reform. Subsequently, we turn to our own argument. This discussion is organized in three parts. The first part focuses on the period up to the adoption of universal suffrage and plural voting in 1893. It explains why a large majority of the Conservatives opposed the adoption of PR in 1893/1894. The second part examines why only a few years later, in 1898, there was a consensus among the same Conservatives that electoral reform was necessary. Finally, the third part explores the different reform proposals discussed in 1899. It explains why the Conservatives ultimately decided to adopt PR. In this context, we also discuss how the Conservatives used district design to create favourable seat-vote distortions.

8.2.1 Literature review

The Belgian case has received considerable attention in the specialized literature on electoral system change. However, despite offering important insights, existing accounts of the 1899 reform are limited on a number of counts.

Most of the literature on electoral reform in Belgium emphasizes the capital-labour conflict. For example, the electoral threat thesis (Boix, 1999, 2010; Rokkan, 1970) explains the adoption of PR as a reaction of established parties to the rise of socialist parties. However, the Belgian Socialists were electorally weak and mainly challenged the Liberals. It thus remains unclear why the Conservatives considered the Socialists an electoral threat. In addition, there should have been no coordination problem between the non-socialist parties because the Conservatives were clearly dominant. After the

1898 election, the Conservatives had 112 of 152 seats in the lower chamber (74%), while the Liberals were left with 13 seats. The Liberals had been declining in popularity since 1884. By 1899, voters knew that they would have to vote for the Conservatives if they were primarily interested in preventing a socialist government. Nevertheless, the Conservatives pushed the adoption of PR through parliament—against the votes of the socialist legislators and with only limited support from the Liberals.¹⁶

In a recent reformulation of the electoral threat thesis, Boix (2010) correctly observes that the Socialists challenged the Conservatives only in urban districts. He therefore argues that urban Conservatives (unlike rural Conservatives) were in favour of PR. However, this observation does not resolve all inconsistencies for two reasons. First, only a minority of conservative legislators were challenged by Socialists. Among the conservative legislators supporting the adoption of PR in 1899, only one had faced a socialist list with a vote share exceeding 30% in the previous election (1898 in the Waremmes district). Second, the electoral threat thesis would expect liberal voters in urban districts to shift their allegiance to the Conservatives once recognizing them as the main non-socialist party. With the support of these liberal voters, conservative candidates would have been in a formidable position to fend off socialist challengers.

Observing no electoral threat, but maintaining the focus on the capital-labour conflict, Ahmed (2013) and Barzachka (2014) offer alternative explanations for the adoption of PR in Belgium. These authors emphasize extra-institutional rather than purely electoral challenges. Ahmed (2013) argues that it is not the Socialists' electoral strength that matters but rather the Socialists' ideological radicalization. Similarly, Barzachka (2014) points to extra-institutional threats, i.e. 'any action coming from outside the legitimate institutional framework' (Barzachka, 2014, 209), that prompted the Conservatives to adopt PR. In her account, powerful parties concerned about regime stability may be willing to shed legislative seats if they can expect, in exchange, to continue playing a key political role after the regime transition. Clearly, in 1899, the Socialists posed the main extra-institutional threat, similar to the 1893 general strike that contributed to the introduction of universal male suffrage.

¹⁶ The 1893 suffrage extension cannot resolve this contradiction. The Socialists won 28 seats in the first election after suffrage extension (1894). The next increase in their seat share came only in 1900—after the adoption of PR. Hence, there is little evidence that with universal suffrage, the Socialists became a serious electoral challenge for the Conservatives. In fact, the Conservatives benefited from suffrage extension, gaining 12 additional seats in 1894.

A core commonality among all of these contributions is that they portray the Belgian Socialists as politically radical. This is most visible in Ahmed (2013) who argues that the Belgian Socialists' radicalism was such that the non-socialist parties adopted PR to avoid a socialist victory under the MR system at any costs. Similarly, Barzachka (2014) emphasizes how socialist extra-institutional mobilization threatened to endanger the stability of the political regime, while Boix (1999) expects liberal voters to support conservative candidates primarily to avoid a socialist electoral victory. Finally, Calvo (2009) assumes a common interest of Belgium's non-socialist parties in recovering the seats lost to the Socialists. In his account, the Liberals and the Conservatives cooperated against the Socialists to maximize their joint seat share. All these accounts thus share the assumption that non-socialist parties have a common interest in keeping the Socialists at bay—even if these measures run counter to their own individual seat-maximization strategies.

However, around the turn of the century, not all socialist parties were radical. In fact, most researchers maintain a reformist orientation of the Belgian Socialists at that time (e.g., Bartolini, 2000; Kreuzer, 2010a; Penadés, 2008; Polosky, 1992; Trefs, 2010). Remarkably, this is also true for the source Ahmed (2013) uses. Marks et al. (2009, 630) describe the Belgian Socialists as representing a case of socialist reformism, comparable to that in the UK and the Netherlands, but unlike the more radical cases such as those in Germany and Italy.¹⁷ Similarly, Bartolini (2000, 85) argues that the Belgian Socialists 'formally adopted Marxist elements in their programmatic profile and yet demonstrated a total disjunction between [this profile] and moderate and reformist political practice' (see also Polosky, 1992, 450).

In addition, the Belgian Socialists were not particularly interested in PR (Penadés, 2008), which raises the question of how they could be pacified with its adoption. While it is certainly true that the Conservatives' proposals for electoral reform triggered widespread protests (Barzachka, 2014), the Socialists did not primarily mobilize for PR but rather for the abolition of the plural vote system, which awarded some voters up to three votes. In fact, large parts of the Belgian socialist movement were openly hostile towards PR (Barthélemy, 1912, 544; Delfosse, 2004, 169; Goblet D'Alviella, 1900, 113; Lachapelle, 1911, 167). Unsurprisingly, the 1899 reform introducing PR did little to dilute the Socialists' mobilization activities. After the 1900 election

¹⁷ While Ahmed (2013, 200–203) presents data on ideological radicalization in 1900 based on Marks et al. (2009, 633), she adapted the numbers for Belgium without providing any justification (see column 'dissenting factions'), thereby increasing Belgium's score on the radicalization indicator above the threshold set by Marks et al. (2009).

(now under PR), the Socialists restarted their extra-institutional mobilization for the abolition of the plural vote system (Deneckere, 2010, ch. 6), which was also their major demand in the 1902 general strike (Stengers, 2004, 254). In short, it is not plausible that the Conservatives adopted PR in response to the Socialists' extra-institutional mobilization. PR was not the Socialists' main demand, and the adoption of PR did not stop the Socialists' extra-institutional mobilization.

If not because of the Socialists, why did the Conservatives consider an electoral reform that was going to cost them 23% of their seats in the lower chamber—a loss the party clearly expected (Delfosse, 2004, 172)? Another strand of literature emphasizes the importance of seat-vote distortions and the resulting uncertainty and redistricting problems to account for the adoption of PR (Andrews & Jackman, 2005; Blais et al., 2005; Calvo, 2009; Rodden, 2009). As discussed in Chapter 2, electoral competition in MR systems can lead to large seat-vote distortions, thus advantaging some parties over others. Most notably, parties with inefficient geographic distributions of support—in Belgium primarily the Liberals—are the most vocal supporters of PR. In contrast, parties with concentrated voter bases—in Belgium the Conservatives in rural Flanders and the Socialists in the industrial cities in the Walloon region—benefit from seat-vote distortions and thus have little incentive to support electoral reform.

Before the adoption of PR in 1899, Belgium relied on a two-round majority runoff system with multi-member districts, in which only the two strongest lists advanced to the second round. Although an open list system was used, the results resembled a bloc vote system, which is why the system was also known as 'scrutin d'écrasement' (crush ballot), because opposition parties were crushed by the electorally strongest party (Stengers, 2004, 256). Such systems are indeed prone to lead to large distortions in seat-vote ratios because small differences in vote shares can result in landslide victories. In such systems, overwhelming majorities in parliament may be based on a plurality of votes (in the first round of voting). In Belgium, a first-round vote share in the 1896/1898 partial elections of 44% gave the Conservatives a seat share of 74% in the lower chamber. The electoral system thus greatly favoured the Conservatives and this advantage even increased throughout the 1890s (see Figure 8.5). It thus remains unclear why the Conservatives had an incentive to change such an advantageous system.

Alternatively, seat-vote distortions in combination with possibly unpredictable consequences of redistricting decisions or the entry of new parties can lead to high levels of uncertainty about electoral outcomes, which may induce risk-averse parties to support the adoption of more inclusive systems

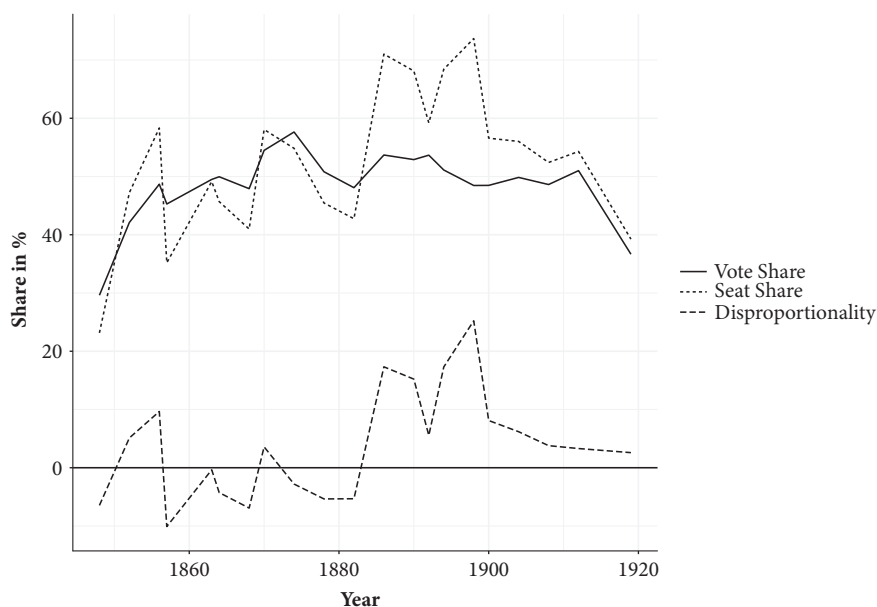


Fig. 8.5 Conservative vote and seat shares in elections to the Chamber of Representatives, Belgium, 1848–1919

Source: Mackie & Rose (1982).

such as PR (Andrews & Jackman, 2005; Blais et al., 2005; Colomer, 2005). Yet, in these accounts, increasing numbers of parties competing under MR make the outcome uncertain. The Belgian case, however, shows a different dynamic. The emerging Socialists primarily challenged the Liberals, which is exactly why the Conservatives were able to fortify their dominant position. Moreover, in the entire period from Belgian independence (1831) to the adoption of PR (1899), districts never changed.

In the following, we develop our own account of the process that led to the adoption of PR in Belgium. We argue that there was no impenetrable wall between Liberals and Socialists. In fact, over the 1890s, the two parties increasingly cooperated in electoral matters, although it took time to convince the more conservative Liberals of the benefits of collaboration.¹⁸ Hence, the Conservatives indeed faced an electoral threat, but this threat, we argue, was primarily the result of the liberal-socialist electoral alliance and the Conservatives' inability to contain the opposition parties by means of district

¹⁸ Paradoxically, several contributions correctly observe that the Liberals and the Socialists created electoral alliances but still maintain—at a theoretical level—that opposition to the Socialists informed the non-socialist parties' position on the desirability of PR (e.g., Ahmed, 2013, 181; Calvo, 2009, 282–283).

design.¹⁹ The Conservatives were concerned about the growing relevance of this liberal-socialist alliance, because the alliance could cost them the largest multi-member districts. Hence, it is not the entry of a new party that created uncertainty but the prospect of cooperation between the opposition parties. Moreover, if the liberal-socialist electoral alliance succeeded, the biases of the electoral system had the potential to turn against the Conservatives, which the Conservatives had no means of preventing. Aware of the fragility of their parliamentary dominance, the Conservatives agreed on the need for electoral reform. However, all of the reform proposals—and not least the district maps that they entailed—had important distributional consequences among the Conservatives themselves. In this context, extra-institutional mobilization by the opposition parties played an important role in helping the advocates of PR to win a majority among the Conservatives.

8.2.2 The constitutional debates in 1893/1894

The Belgian constitution of 1831 established a parliamentary democracy with suffrage restricted to about 10% of the adult male population (Delfosse, 2004, 184). The dividing line separating the two main parties, the Conservatives and the Liberals, concerned the role of the Catholic church. According to Gould (1999, 31), ‘anti-clericalism was the central unifying tenet for liberals in Belgium’, whereas the Liberals’ attack on the role of the Catholic church in the education system unified the Conservatives (Gould, 1999, 34–37; Kalyvas, 1996; Nohlen & Opiela, 1969, 81). A key advantage for the Conservatives was their dominant position in rural districts, which was also to bode well for the Conservatives in case of suffrage extension. The Liberals, by contrast, mainly represented middle-class voters in the large urban centres. For instance, Deneckere (2010, 1942) describes Belgium’s largest district, Brussels, as a ‘traditionally liberal bastion’.

Historically, the two parties were nearly of equal strength. Vauthier (1894, 708) writes that ‘their contests, which have grown more and more bitter, have resulted in their alternate succession to office’. Majorities were typically precarious because of the combination of bloc voting and large districts. Even in case of narrow vote margins, parties typically won all seats in a district (see Figure 8.6 below). Consequently, large districts, in particular the Brussels district (18 seats, 12% of all lower chamber seats), which

¹⁹ In terms of vote shares, the Liberals’ contribution to this electoral alliance was more important, which is why this electoral threat should not be confused with a socialist electoral threat. However, due to their dispersed voter base, the Liberals struggled to turn votes into seats.

had grown increasingly competitive after years of liberal dominance, could easily decide the outcome of an election. According to Barthélemy (1912, 523), ‘the electoral system made the government’s existence dependent on the vote of a single large district’. Due to this out-sized effect of a few large districts, electoral reform had been on the political agenda for years. The adoption of PR had been discussed since the 1860s (Barzachka, 2014, 216). The debate about the creation of single-member districts was even older (van den Heuvel, 1899, 11–15). Both PR and single-member districts were seen as ways to reduce the importance of single districts and increase the system’s overall proportionality.

From 1884 onward, however, the Conservatives gained control over Belgian politics. Thanks to a massive mobilization effort in the wake of conflicts over school reforms and renewed divisions among the Liberals, the Conservatives gained 27 additional seats and won control of the government in 1884 (Devresse, 1990, 50; Kalyvas, 1996, 189). Several factors cemented their political dominance thereafter. Next to suffrage restrictions, which kept the Socialists out of parliament, the Conservatives benefited from their control over the small districts in the countryside, while they were increasingly able to challenge the Liberals in large urban districts. For example, for the Brussels district, Auguste Beernaert was tasked with the creation of a list of moderate Conservatives and Independents, which were to compete with the Liberals in this large but historically liberal district (Demoulin, 1965, 76; Stengers, 2004, 258; Trefs, 2010, 270). Their ability to win Brussels and some other large urban districts proved crucial for the Conservatives’ success in the 1884 election. The moderate Conservative Beernaert himself became prime minister. Overall, the combination of MR with multi-member districts and electoral geography led to large seat-vote distortions favouring the Conservatives after 1884 (see Figure 8.5).

Unsurprisingly, with no representation in parliament, the Socialists demanded the introduction of male universal suffrage, organizing mass strikes in 1890, 1891, 1892, and 1893. Given this extra-parliamentary challenge but confronted with opposition to suffrage extension among most Conservatives and Liberals, Beernaert tried to find a compromise that would satisfy all sides (Barzachka, 2014, 216–217; Vauthier, 1894, 710–721). Hence, in the 1893 constitutional revision, the Belgian parliament introduced male universal suffrage, but it did so with electoral safeguards. Next to compulsory voting, the new system awarded up to two extra votes to specific societal groups based on ‘capacities’ linked to the voters’ family situation, tax payments, and education. In this new electoral system, 853,628 voters had one vote, 293,678 had two, and 223,381 had three (Pilet, 2007, 23). This plural

vote system was particularly relevant for the Liberals because they—unlike the Conservatives and the Socialists—could not, in the absence of liberal mass organizations, expect to see their numbers boosted by suffrage extension. Moreover, due to their comparatively dispersed voter base, the Liberals had good reasons to worry that they would struggle to win districts under male universal suffrage (Barthélemy, 1912, 518; Trefs, 2010, 273; Vauthier, 1894, 727).

Beernaert also used the suffrage reform to launch a discussion about the adoption of PR. Beernaert was a long-time advocate of PR and a founding member of the 'Association réformatrice belge pour l'adoption de la représentation proportionnelle'. The association had been created in response to the 1880 election, which had led to large seat-vote distortions (Goblet D'Alviella, 1900, 49–51). Beernaert stayed true to the association's reformist agenda, but he had initially joined under rather different circumstances. Before 1884, that is, before the Conservatives' massive mobilization efforts, the electoral system did not (yet) favour the Conservatives (see Figure 8.5). In fact, Beernaert himself had suffered from the system's majoritarian biases, when a liberal victory, greatly aided by the electoral system, ended his tenure as minister of public works in the 1878 election. Hence, Beernaert's socialization as a politician took place before the Conservatives became politically dominant. Moreover, as a moderate Conservative (Demoulin, 1965, 72), Beernaert was keenly interested in securing the Conservatives' representation in urban districts, which he believed was necessary to balance the more traditionalist delegation from the countryside (see also van den Heuvel, 1899, 49–53). Finally, although Beernaert knew that the adoption of PR would reduce the Conservatives' parliamentary majority, he clearly believed that a smaller majority under PR would be more stable (Mahaim, 1900, 390).

In late 1893, Beernaert suggested the adoption of PR for national elections. To appease the more critical members of his own party, he proposed keeping the district map intact, including the nine single-member districts, and to introduce an electoral quorum.²⁰ Moreover, he tied the reform proposal to his own political future by threatening to step down as prime minister if the party did not follow him (Carstairs, 1980, 53; Lachapelle, 1911, 143–149).

However, the conservative legislators did not receive Beernaert's proposal well. Most Conservatives were convinced that the current electoral system greatly advantaged them. Traditionalist Conservatives rejoiced at the prospect of the Liberals' demise and did not consider the Socialists a serious

²⁰ The quorum was primarily meant to prevent party splits. In case of the Conservatives, the main concern was the Christian Democratic Party (the 'Daensists'), which had been created in 1893 and promoted a form of Christian socialism (Nohlen & Opiela, 1969, 96).

electoral threat (Lachapelle, 1911, 150–151). Already in the decade before the suffrage extension in 1893, the Conservatives were emerging as the strongest non-socialist party. The 1893 suffrage extension, along with plural voting, further cemented the Conservatives' position as the main non-socialist party. In line with Rokkan's (1970) electoral threat thesis, most Conservatives were confident that liberal voters would prefer conservative candidates to socialist ones (Lachapelle, 1911, 150–151). Unsurprisingly, the conservative legislators rejected Beernaert's proposals already in the preparatory sessions in spring 1894. Among the 92 conservative legislators, 57 voted no, 27 voted yes, and eight abstained. Of the 60 Liberals, 18 voted no, 22 voted yes, and 20 abstained (Barthélemy, 1912, 538; Goblet D'Alviella, 1900, 76; Woeste, 1927, 518–519). After his defeat, Beernaert stepped down, while his successor, the Conservative Jules de Burlet, removed electoral reform from the parliamentary agenda (Nohlen & Opiela, 1969, 88). The 1894 election, the first since suffrage extension, was to take place under the old electoral system.

In this context, the Conservatives also discussed alternatives to PR. The leader of the traditionalist Conservatives, Charles Woeste, proposed to divide the large districts to reduce their influence on election outcomes, lower seat-vote distortions, and improve minority protection (Woeste, 1927, 508). Others recommended turning all districts into single-member districts. However, none of these proposals found majority support among the conservative legislators (van den Heuvel, 1899, 6). In this situation, Woeste (1927, 502–503) recommended withdrawing any reform proposal to prevent intra-party conflicts.²¹

The first election after suffrage extension took place in October 1894. Despite the plural vote system, the Liberals lost 40 seats (down to 13% of all seats), while the Socialists won 28 seats (up from zero) and the Conservatives gained 12 additional seats, now totalling 104 seats (out of 152). Thanks to higher levels of voter concentration, the Socialists topped the Liberals in terms of seat shares (28 to 20 seats) despite obtaining only about half of the Liberals' vote share (Stengers, 2004, 259). The main beneficiaries, however, were the Conservatives, which now controlled an overwhelming majority of seats in the lower chamber (68%) with a vote share of 50% (Nohlen & Opiela, 1969, 106). Admittedly, in some districts, especially urban ones, the vote margins were small, but thanks to bloc voting, small margins were sufficient to win all seats. For example, the Conservatives won all 18 seats in the large

²¹ However, in 1895, PR was introduced in case of runoffs in communal elections. Goblet D'Alviella (1900, 89–90) argues that the Conservatives supported the reform because they primarily expected runoffs in large urban districts and thus hoped to benefit from minority representation in otherwise mainly liberal districts.

Brussels districts with only 6,000 votes more than the Liberals (Deneckere, 2010, 1962). In short, suffrage extension allowed the Socialists to enter parliament, further accentuated the Conservatives' parliamentary dominance, and accelerated the Liberals' demise.

Hence, up until 1894, with no adoption of PR, political developments in Belgium are consistent with the literature's expectations. The MR system greatly advantaged the Conservatives, while suffrage extension brought the Liberals to the brink of collapse. Hence, from a perspective emphasizing seat-vote distortions or coordination problems among non-socialist parties, the Conservatives had no reason to push for PR. While extra-institutional threats had indeed forced their hand in case of suffrage expansion (Barzachka, 2014), the Conservatives' strong grass-roots mobilization allowed them to benefit from this reform. Other than the abolition of the plural vote system, the Socialists showed little interest in electoral reform (Barthélemy, 1912, 544). In addition, after 1893, moderates among the Socialists took control of party leadership (Barzachka, 2014, 217; Nohlen & Opiela, 1969, 87; Polosky, 1992, 454–455). In short, things looked good for the Conservatives.

8.2.3 A majority built on sand, 1894–1898

The years from 1894 to 1898 seem to indicate a period of conservative political dominance. After their decisive victory in the 1894 (general) election, the Conservatives also performed well in the 1896 and 1898 partial elections, increasing their seat share from 68% to 74% in 1898.²² Most of the Conservatives' gains came at the expense of the Liberals who saw their seat share reduced to 9% by 1898. In the words of contemporary observers, the once-dominant Liberals were on the brink of being 'annihilated' (Cameau, 1901, 58; Dupriez, 1901, 162; Mahaim, 1900, 388). In contrast, the Socialists were able to hold their seat share at 18%.

However, the Conservatives' parliamentary dominance turned out to be built on sand. In the 1896/1898 elections, the Conservatives benefited even more strongly from seat-vote distortions. Although they managed to increase their seat share from 68% in 1894 to 74% in 1898, the Conservatives saw their first-round vote share decline from 50% in 1894 to 44% in 1896/1898 (see Figure 8.5). These large distortions were the result of bloc voting in a majority runoff system with multi-member districts in which only the two strongest lists advance to the second round. District magnitude ranged from

²² The 1896 and 1898 elections were partial in the sense that elections were held only for five and four of the nine provinces, respectively.

one to 18. According to Stengers (2004, 256–257), most voters simply voted for the entire list of their preferred party.

In Figure 8.6, we plot the variance of the distribution of vote shares between (left-hand side) and within (right-hand side) all party lists. The figure shows that in most districts, the differences in vote shares of candidates of one party (within-list variance) is close to zero, whereas differences in vote shares of candidates of different parties (between-list variance) is considerably larger. Substantively, this implies that relatively small between-list differences led to landslide victories for the most popular party (however small this party's vote margin).

The Brussels district illustrates these dynamics. In both the 1894 and 1896 elections, the Conservatives won all 18 seats with a plurality of votes in the first round. Put differently, with vote shares of 46% (1894) and 42% (1896) in the first round, they won 100% of the seats.²³ However, the Brussels district also demonstrates why this majority was built on sand. Electoral systems like the Belgian one reward cooperation and punish divisions (Blais & Indriason, 2007; Schröder & Manow, 2020). At the time of the 1894 election,

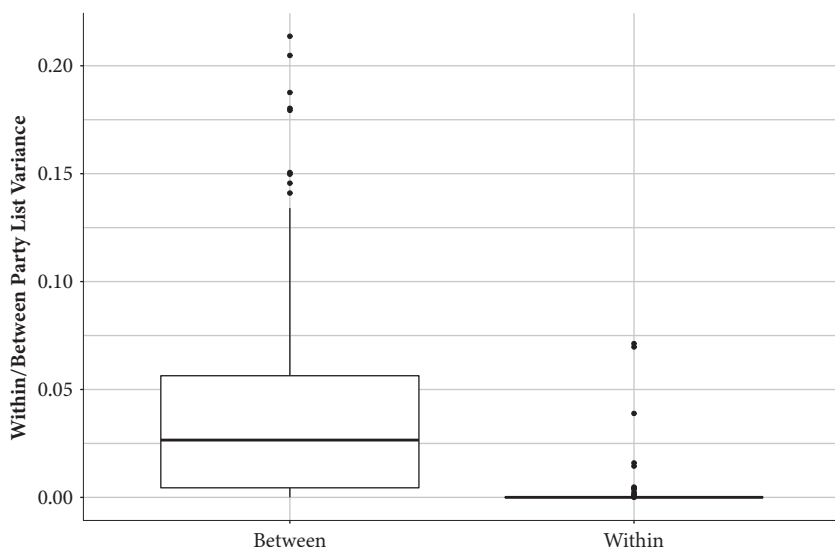


Fig. 8.6 Between-list and within-list variance of vote shares in districts in Belgium (1894, 1896, and 1898 elections)

Source: Own collection.

²³ Runoff systems with less than four parties lead, compared to plurality systems, to more sincere voting in the first round (Cox, 1997). Therefore, the first round presents a better picture of the electorate's party preferences. In the runoff, the Conservatives obtained 52% (1894) and 53% (1896) of the vote.

progressive Liberals and Socialists had submitted first joint lists (called a 'cartel') in the districts Liège and Namur, gaining all 14 seats in both districts (in 1892, the Conservatives had won Namur). In 1896, progressive Liberals and Socialists ran on a cartel list in Brussels, whereas the conservative Liberals still submitted their own list. According to Goblet D'Alviella (1900, 93), the Conservatives won some 89,000 votes in the first round with a list containing mostly moderate Conservatives and Independents, whereas the cartel won some 73,000 votes and the conservative ('doctrinaire') Liberals 40,000 votes. Put differently, together, the Liberals and the Socialists had a clear majority. Hence, if their opponents had cooperated, the Conservatives would have no longer had a majority of the votes in the runoff and would have lost all 18 seats in Brussels. However, as long as the opposition vote was divided and the more conservative liberal voters continued to support the Conservative Party in the runoff, the Conservatives would continue to benefit from seat-vote distortions (Mahaim, 1900, 80).²⁴ The cartel's struggles to get all liberal voters to support their liberal-socialist list explains why the Conservatives still won the runoff with a 7% margin over the cartel. Put differently, about half of the supporters of the conservative Liberals (eliminated in the first round) supported the cartel in the runoff, while the other half supported the Conservatives.

Even though the first cartel in Brussels in the 1896 election was not successful, the increasing number of cartel lists started to become a serious threat to Conservatives in urban districts. In the 1896/1898 elections, 26% of the liberal and 26% of the socialist candidates ran on cartel lists, up from 10% (Liberals) and 12% (Socialists) in 1894 and zero in 1892. The collaboration between the Liberals and Socialists was thus rapidly increasing. In addition, Liberals and Socialists, together, often obtained more votes in the first round than the Conservatives alone. Consequently, if the cartel were to become more effective, it would potentially endanger numerous conservative seats.

Figure 8.7 shows the difference between the vote shares of the Conservatives and the cartel in the first round of the 1896/1898 elections for all the seats the Conservatives won (actual numbers where the cartel existed and the sum of the two parties' vote shares where the cartel did not yet exist).²⁵ Negative values indicate that the Conservatives would have lost the seats if the cartel had existed or been more effective. Figure 8.7 shows that joint liberal-socialist lists would have had the potential to win up to 36 additional seats

²⁴ The Conservatives themselves struggled with divides. According to Woeste (1933, 87), the Christian Democrats were the reason why the Conservatives had to enter runoffs in districts such as Antwerp, Brussels, Nivelles, and Philippeville.

²⁵ For the Brussels district in 1896, we use the sum of the cartel list and the list of the conservative Liberals.

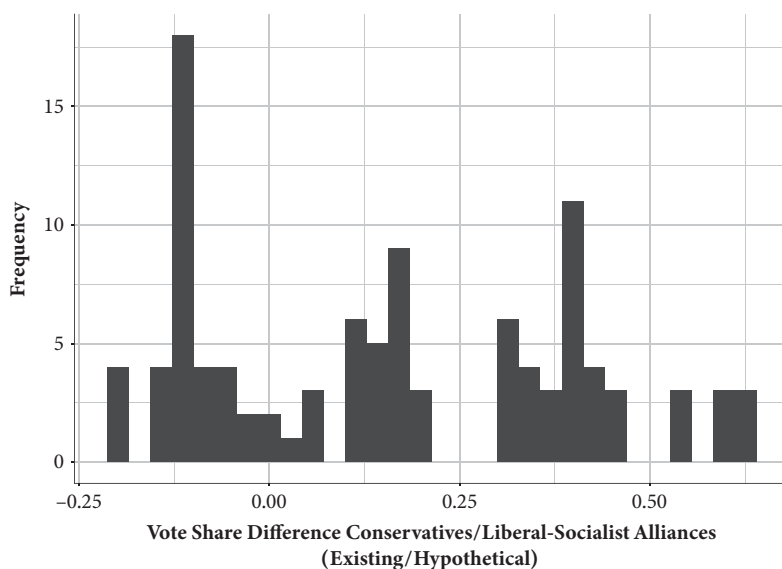


Fig. 8.7 Vote share difference of Conservatives and liberal-socialist alliance (existing or hypothetical), Belgium, 1896/1898

Source: Own collection.

in the 1896/1898 elections, thus reducing the Conservatives' seat share from 74% to 50%. If we focus on liberal-socialist electoral threats rather than the socialists alone, there were thus several challenged conservative seats. For example, among the Conservatives voting on the adoption of PR in 1899, 46% had a vote margin below 10% *vis-à-vis* the cartel (existing or hypothetical) in the previous election.

On average, conservative vote margins for seats they had won remained stable (27% in both the 1894 and the 1896/1898 elections). The aggregate numbers are misleading, however. Liberals increasingly withdrew from rural districts but joined forces with Socialists in urban districts. In Figure 8.8, we provide evidence for this pattern by displaying the Conservatives' first round vote margins relative to the share of the agriculture workforce in districts the Conservatives had won in 1894 (left panel) and 1896/1898 (right panel). The figure not only shows a positive association (i.e., conservative vote margins are larger in rural districts), but the correlation is also increasing. This change is due to declining conservative vote margins in urban districts and an increasing number of unchallenged conservative candidates in rural districts. For example, in the Antwerp (11 seats) and Leuven districts (six seats), the conservative vote margin had declined by eight and seven percentage

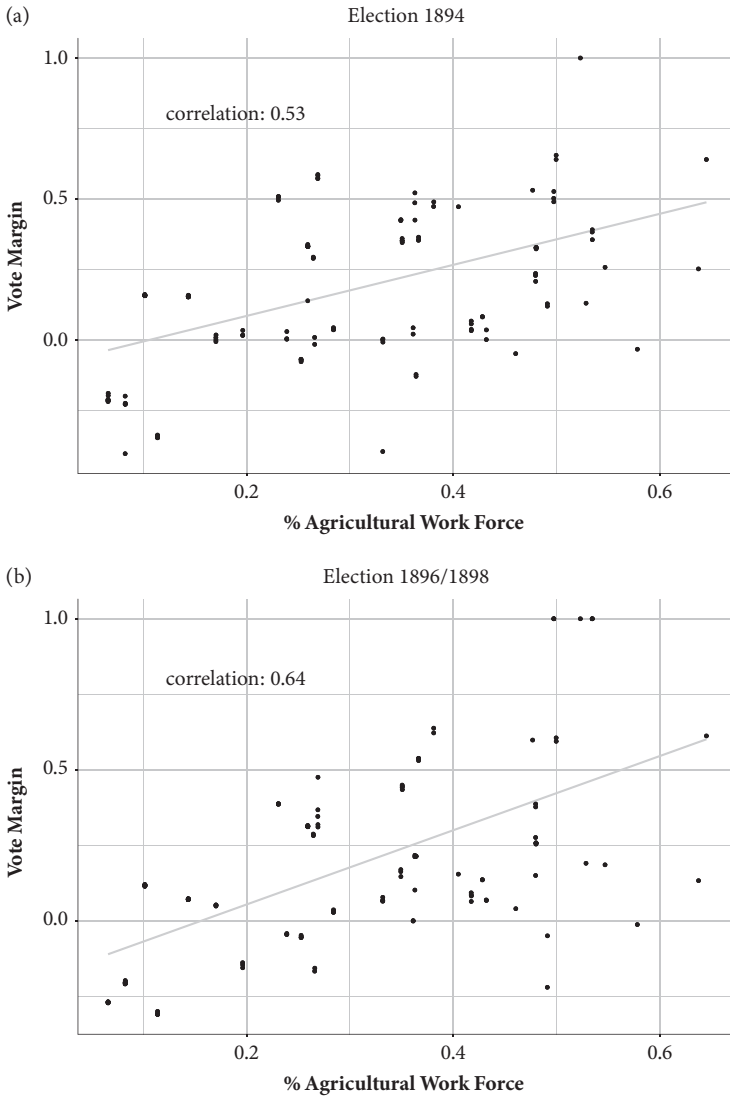


Fig. 8.8 Conservatives' vote margins and share of agricultural workforce, Belgium, 1894, 1896, and 1898

Source: Agricultural workforce data from historical census, accessed via http://www.lokstat.ugent.be/lokstat_start.php

points respectively. More generally, in districts with a share of the agricultural workforce below 20%, the conservative vote margins for seats they had won declined from 9% in the 1894 election to 7% in the 1896/1898 elections. Of course, urban districts are also typically large districts ($r = 0.67$). Losing them would have been costly.

Moreover, this problem was only getting worse. The Belgian constitution demands regular reapportionment to account for differences in population growth, which is a problem for parties with primarily rural strongholds that suffer from lower population growth rates (see Chapter 3), such as the Conservatives. For instance, the anticipated 1900 census promised to further increase the magnitude of urban districts (Woeste, 1933, 144). Hence, not only were the urban districts becoming more competitive (if not already won by other parties), they were also growing in relevance.

Containment through gerrymandering was not an option either. In principle, there were no restrictions against gerrymandering except the constitutional rule that districts may not cut across provinces. With their absolute majorities in both chambers, the situation for the Conservatives was thus comparable to the situation of the Swiss Liberals. However, Belgium has no history of redrawing districts. In fact, the boundaries of districts had not been changed since the creation of Belgium as an independent state in 1831 (Bouhon et al., 2018, 20–35). Boundaries were not even changed when there were good reasons for doing so. Instead, Bouhon et al. (2018, 23–24) report that, additional seats were alternated between districts rather than shifting the districts' boundaries. Hence, partisan districting would have signalled a break with a very long tradition of unaltered district boundaries. Such a massive intervention would have been politically costly.

In short, while the Conservatives were still politically dominant at the end of the 19th century, there were clear signs that the MR system's distributional dynamics could turn against them, which is why the Conservatives ultimately opted for electoral system change. Of course, the counterfactual is non-observable, and it is unclear exactly how many districts the Conservatives would have lost in the 1900 election without PR, or which parties would have joined cartel lists in various districts. In fact, some prominent Conservatives remained confident. Most notably, Woeste (1933, 155), the leader of the traditionalist Conservatives, acknowledged that conservative majorities were precarious in Antwerp, Brussels, Nivelles, and Philippeville (together 35 seats, 23% of all seats in the lower chamber). However, he believed it to be unlikely that they would lose all four districts in the 1900 election. Other contemporary observers were more pessimistic (or optimistic, depending on the point of view). For instance, Goblet D'Alviella (1900, 110) and Barthélemy (1912, 540) believed the conservative majority to be endangered in all of the large districts the party still held (Antwerp, Brussels, Gent, and Leuven, together 44 seats, 29% of all seats in the lower chamber). The other large districts, Charleroi, Liège, and Mons (together 25 seats, 16% of all seats in the lower chamber) had already been lost to the opposition.

In any case, most Conservatives were openly concerned about the fragility of their majority. Immediately after the 1898 election, which resulted in even larger seat-vote distortions, leading conservative politicians agreed that the status quo was untenable and started to emphasize the need for electoral reform (Dupriez, 1901, 164; Goblet D'Alviella, 1900, 96–97; Woeste, 1933, 142). This is true for the party's moderate and urban wing, represented by the former Prime Minister Beernaert, who had already pushed for electoral system change in 1893/1894. Mahaim (1900, 78) notes that 'as a sagacious statesman, [Beernaert] knew that the largest majorities are the not the most solid'. Beernaert's reform proposals should therefore be primarily understood as attempts to solidify the Conservatives' political dominance (Barthélemy, 1912, 547; Stengers, 2004, 261). However, it is equally true for the party's traditionalist and rural wing, most prominently represented by Woeste. Although often portrayed as the main opponent of PR, he clearly understood the need for reform. In a letter to the Belgian king on 3 December 1898, Woeste (1933, 154–156) not only described the current electoral system as 'intolerable' but also demanded a reform of the electoral system. Importantly, the Conservatives' agreement on the need for electoral reform was not triggered by any extra-parliamentary mobilization. Although the results of the 1898 election were widely criticized (Goblet D'Alviella, 1900, 96), extra-parliamentary mobilization did not start before spring 1899 (Barzachka, 2014, 217).²⁶ Rather, the Conservatives themselves understood that electoral reform was in their long-term interest.

In parallel, facing their 'annihilation' (Cameau, 1901, 58; Dupriez, 1901, 162; Mahaim, 1900, 388), the Liberals were getting desperate. In Mahaim's (1900, 392) colourful words, 'nothing remained for the Liberals except to choose the sauce with which they should be eaten'. Already in 1894, progressive Liberals expressed considerable support for the adoption of PR (Goblet D'Alviella, 1900, 78). By 1897, the conservative Liberals endorsed PR as well (Barthélemy, 1912, 539), although a few remained in opposition, most notably Jules Bara (van den Heuvel, 1899, 6). From 1894 onwards, progressive Liberals had sought to cooperate with the Socialists to challenge the dominant Conservatives with joint electoral lists, but conservative Liberals had refused to join these lists until this point.²⁷ After the 1898 election, the conservative Liberals had been reduced to three seats in parliament

²⁶ In fact, this mobilization was triggered by the Conservatives' reform proposals, and not the other way around.

²⁷ The conservative Liberals were reluctant to join the cartel for ideological reasons. However, the cartel was also problematic for the progressive Liberals. Most elected candidates from cartel lists joined the socialist parliamentary group. This is consistent with Blais and Indridason (2007) who show that electoral alliances favour the parties with higher electoral support in closely contested districts.

(Woeste, 1933, 142). Facing their extinction, the conservative Liberals finally reconsidered their position on the cartel (Barthélemy, 1912, 538–539). Most prominently expressed by the conservative Liberal Léon Vanderkindere in the meeting of the *Ligue libérale* on 8 December 1898, the Liberals were willing to ‘enter an alliance with the devil’ (i.e., the Socialists) to avoid yet another conservative government (Barthélemy, 1912, 547; Delfosse, 2004, 172; Mahaim, 1900, 393; Stengers, 2004, 260). This expression became the Liberals’ battle cry for discussions in 1899 (Goblet D’Alviella, 1900, 103), while the Conservatives were ‘shocked’ by the conservative Liberals’ publicly expressed willingness to cooperate with the Socialists (Delfosse, 2004, 172). Although the Conservatives had been convinced of the need for reform before, these developments certainly created a new sense of urgency.

Finally, the Socialists considered the debate about the adoption of PR an unnecessary distraction. Their main demand continued to be the abolition of the plural vote system, while they showed little interest in PR (Barthélemy, 1912; Goblet D’Alviella, 1900; Nohlen & Opiela, 1969; Penadés, 2008). In fact, some Socialists were openly hostile towards PR (*‘l’infâme proporz’*) because they were concerned that PR would break their hold on urban districts in Wallonia such as Liège and Charleroi (Stengers, 2004, 260). In addition, the Socialists clearly understood that the Liberals’ need to form electoral alliances with them would disappear with the adoption of PR. However, the Socialists also knew that the abolition of plural voting would be impossible without liberal support, given that any constitutional revision required the support of two-thirds of the legislators in both chambers (Barthélemy, 1912, 544; Polosky, 1992, 455). For these reasons, the Socialists, led by Emile Vandervelde, supported the adoption of PR in combination with the abolition of plural voting, although it was clearly understood that suffrage reform—not PR adoption—was their main priority (Carstairs, 1980, 54; Delfosse, 2004, 169; Deneckere, 2010, 2004; Goblet D’Alviella, 1900, 113; Polosky, 1992, 455–456).

In sum, by the end of 1898, the Conservatives accepted the need for reform—not least because the status quo was pushing the Liberals into the Socialists’ arms. Referring to the Liberal’s ‘alliance with the devil’, the Liberal Paul Janson jokingly observed that the Conservatives’ position on electoral reform may be best described as *‘vade retro satanas’* (*‘be gone, satan’*) (Stengers, 2004, 260). With a declining vote share and decreasing vote margins in the numerically important urban districts, the Conservatives faced the risk that the distributional effects of the MR system would turn against them. There can be no doubt that the Conservatives were aware of this problem, particularly in light of increasing cooperation between the Liberals and the

Socialists (Barthélemy, 1912, 547; Delfosse, 2004, 161–172; Pilet, 2007, 25; Stengers, 2004, 260). For instance, the conservative newspaper *Le Bien Public* (16 June 1898, 1, and 20 July 1899, 1, both cited in Delfosse, 2004, 171) lamented that the Conservatives were too dependent on the vagaries of the remaining Liberals who still had the courage to fight revolutionary socialism. In a similar vein, the prominent conservative Jules van den Heuvel (minister of justice, 1899–1907) observed that the MR system had forced the Liberals to abandon their independence in a coalition with the Socialists (Lachapelle, 1911, 180). Crucially, van den Heuvel was not feeling sorry for the Liberals. He simply understood that the electoral system's advantages were dependent on the fragmentation (i.e., the Liberals' independence) of the opposition parties. Of course, not all conservative legislators were equally challenged, especially in rural Flanders. Nevertheless, for the Conservatives as a whole, including the party's traditionalist wing, it was clear that electoral reform was needed to protect their political dominance.

8.2.4 The Conservatives' vote for PR, 1898–1899

In the previous section, we argued that there were good reasons for the Conservatives to consider electoral reform in the late 19th century. In the words of the traditionalist Conservative Woeste (1933, 93–94), 'despite our huge majority, many problems loomed on the horizon.' But why did the Conservatives end up adopting PR with this specific district map? As Ahmed (2013) correctly observes, in the late 1890s, alternatives to PR were available, most notably single-member districts. Moreover, as highlighted in Chapter 6, district maps in newly adopted PR systems can differ greatly. In fact, the Belgian Conservatives considered various reform proposals. Thus, not only the choice to conduct electoral reform, but also for the adoption of PR in particular, need further explanation.

We argue that the decisive divide over electoral system choice did not separate parties but ran through the Conservative Party itself. Given their overwhelming majority in parliament and their control over government (since 1884), the decision on the specifics of the new electoral system was one the Conservatives had to make. In the second half of the 1890s, they had increasingly come to recognize that the status quo was untenable because the party risked losing all seats in the large urban districts at one go. However, they struggled to decide what kind of electoral system they could best adopt. All of the discussed proposals shared a common promise to reduce the outsized influence of large multi-member districts on election outcomes.

Hence, all of the Conservative proposals were a response to the same, shared diagnosis: their electoral majority was built on sand. Moreover, all of the proposals were likely to cost the Conservatives—the main beneficiaries of the seat-vote distortions—some of their seats in parliament. Put differently, all of these proposals were meant to create a smaller but more stable parliamentary majority.

However, the Conservatives' main problem was that the different reform proposals had distributional effects *within* the party. Electoral geography can turn dominant parties into heterogeneous organizations. To occupy a majority position, dominant parties must make inroads into competitive electoral markets while maintaining dominance in segmented ones (Boix, 2010), which breeds the potential for intraparty conflict over electoral reform. In Belgium, PR promised to protect the often moderate Conservatives in urban districts and Wallonia. In contrast, MR with small districts was expected to benefit the mostly traditionalist Conservatives in rural Flanders, the Conservatives' traditional stronghold. No wonder that the debate about electoral reform in Belgium is often portrayed in the literature as one between the leaders of the Conservatives' moderate (Beernaert) and traditionalist (Woeste) wings.

In the following paragraphs, we recapitulate the events up to the adoption of PR on 24 November 1899. Subsequently, we discuss the reasons that made a majority of Conservatives prefer PR to its main alternatives, but we also explain why PR—thanks to small district magnitude in rural districts—protected the Conservatives' interests in their strongholds. Finally, we explain why the compromise proposal, PR in large districts only, launched by Prime Minister Jules Vandenpeereboom in April 1899, failed to unite the Conservatives.

In the aftermath of the 1898 election, there was a broad consensus among the Conservatives that electoral reform was necessary, but they were divided on the specifics. In 1896, Paul de Smet de Naeyer became the new prime minister after de Burlet had to step down for health reasons. De Smet de Naeyer had supported Beernaert's proposal to adopt PR with the old district map in 1894 (Woeste, 1927, 516). In late 1898, de Smet de Naeyer was working on a compromise proposal, which suggested that PR was to be used in runoffs only (Woeste, 1933, 155). Runoffs were most likely in large urban districts. The Conservatives had either already lost these districts or were in danger of losing them. The proposal thus clearly took the Conservatives' seat-maximization concerns into account.

However, in late 1898, the traditionalist Conservatives around Woeste, Vandenpeereboom, and François Schollaert believed that the opportunity

was rife for the introduction of single-member districts or at least smaller multi-member districts in the MR system (Dupriez, 1901, 164). In direct conversations, they had managed to obtain the support of King Léopold II for their reform proposal. With the king's support and believing themselves to have a majority among the legislators, the conservative supporters of single-member districts moved forward (Goblet D'Alviella, 1900, 105–106). De Smet de Naeyer tried to prevent an open conflict by seeking a compromise with Woeste, but with no success (Woeste, 1933, 155–158). Running out of options, de Smet de Naeyer and Albert Nyssens, minister of industry and labour, both stepped down, citing the attempt by the traditionalist Conservatives to introduce single-member districts against the government's will.

The new prime minister, Vandenpeereboom, immediately attempted to push the adoption of single-member districts through parliament (Cameau, 1901, 119–120; Goblet D'Alviella, 1900, 105; Woeste, 1933, 157). Yet, the proposal failed spectacularly. Moderate Conservatives, led by Beernaert, and conservative associations from endangered urban districts such as Antwerp, Brussels, and Gent openly rejected single-member districts (Barthélemy, 1912, 539–554; Dupriez, 1901, 165; Goblet D'Alviella, 1900, 107). In February 1899, Woeste spoke at the meeting of the conservative association in Brussels, hoping to convince its members of the merits of single-member districts, but he had no success (Goblet D'Alviella, 1900, 107). Three days later, on 8 February 1899, Woeste admitted defeat, calling single-member districts the 'the system of the future' but not 'the system of the present' (Chambre des Représentants, 1899, 8 February; see also Cameau, 1901, 120). Facing opposition from Liberals, Socialists, and moderate Conservatives, Vandenpeereboom withdrew the proposal before the vote in parliament.

In spring 1899, it seemed as if neither PR nor single-member districts had majority support among the Conservatives. Consequently, Vandenpeereboom developed what he believed to be a compromise proposal in April 1899. He suggested adopting PR in districts with at least six seats, while MR was to be maintained in smaller districts. In 1899, seven districts had at least six seats. Three were held by the opposition (Charleroi, Liège, Mons), whereas the four districts held by the Conservatives (Antwerp, Brussels, Gent, Leuven) were considered endangered (Delfosse, 2004, 163, Deneckere, 2010, 2004–2028; Goblet D'Alviella, 1900, 110). Hence, the proposal was clearly tailored to the Conservatives' specific needs: It would have maintained the MR system in the small rural strongholds but introduced PR in the competitive urban districts.

Yet, this proposal received an even worse reception. Outraged by this obvious attempt at electoral engineering, the Liberals and the Socialists fiercely opposed the proposal (Goblet D'Alviella, 1900, 106–108). They refused to debate the proposal in parliament and staged mass protests on the streets of Belgium's largest cities (Barthélemy, 1912, 541–542; Barzachka, 2014, 219; Carstairs, 1980, 54; Deneckere, 2010, 2049; Goblet D'Alviella, 1900, 112–116; Mahaim, 1900, 395–396). Worse, the traditionalist Conservatives, Vandennepeereboom's most likely allies, also rejected the proposal because they still favoured splitting larger districts (i.e., creating smaller multi-member districts in the MR system) and considered Vandennepeereboom's proposal too manipulative. In fact, Woeste publicly stated that the proposal was indefensible (Barthélemy, 1912, 541; Goblet D'Alviella, 1900, 112; Woeste, 1933, 163–167).²⁸

Once again, Vandennepeereboom was forced to withdraw the proposal. After the Conservatives' leading politicians could not agree on a reform in an internal meeting on 30 June 1899 (Barzachka, 2014, 220; Woeste, 1933, 167), Vandennepeereboom decided to task a cross-partisan commission to develop a reform proposal. However, the commission could not find majorities for any reform proposal, rejecting proposals to divide large districts in the MR system, the adoption of PR, and Vandennepeereboom's compromise proposal. Having failed at reforming the electoral system, Vandennepeereboom stepped down in August 1899 and was replaced by his predecessor de Smet de Naeyer who immediately produced a reform to adopt PR, which was accepted in unaltered form on 24 November 1899.

How can we explain these developments? Since the Conservatives controlled the vast majority of seats in parliament (74%), their position was decisive. In addition, in response to Vandennepeereboom's April proposal, the Liberals and the Socialists had made a pact, now refusing to support any reform proposal and demanding a public vote on the adoption of PR *and* the abolition of the plural vote system (Goblet D'Alviella, 1900, 124). Hence, if we want to understand why PR was adopted, we must examine why the Conservatives preferred PR to single-member districts (the January proposal) and PR in large districts only (the April proposal). We argue that there are four reasons why the Conservatives preferred PR.

²⁸ Importantly, the procedural votes on 23 and 27 June 1899 cannot be taken as evidence that Vandennepeereboom's April proposal had majority support among the Conservatives (Chambre des Représentants, 1899, 23 and 27 June). The procedural votes were simply about the question of whether there should be a parliamentary debate about it. Woeste agreed to have a parliamentary debate about it, but at the same time, he clearly stated his opposition to the project (Chambre des Représentants, 1899, 23 June). Accordingly, his full statement was, 'we can vote about it, but it cannot be defended' (cited in Goblet D'Alviella, 1900, 112).

First, from the point of view of seat maximization, single-member districts would have been beneficial only if conservative voters were geographically concentrated (Boix, 2010). This was certainly the case in many rural districts, especially in Flanders, but in the large urban districts, conservative voters were not concentrated at all. Table 8.2 shows the spatial concentration of party voters in urban districts for which we were able to find canton-level data in national elections (the level below the electoral districts). Table 8.2 shows that conservative voters were highly dispersed in Brussels and Charleroi. Yet, even in Liège, where we find their highest concentration, the dispersion was comparatively high. Hence, there was a considerable risk that single-member districts would not have solved any of the Conservatives' problems. In urban districts, the conservative candidates would have faced a liberal-socialist cartel and, ultimately, lost.

Therefore, single-member districts would have threatened the Conservatives' dominant position. In the 1896/1898 elections, among the large urban districts, the Conservatives were still able to win Antwerp (11 seats), Brussels (18), Gent (nine), and Leuven (six), while they had already lost Liège (11), Charleroi (eight), and Mons (six) to the liberal-socialist alliance. However, the Conservatives' vote share was declining by three to seven percentage points in these four districts as well, forcing the Conservatives into runoffs in Antwerp and Brussels. In contrast, PR would allow the Conservatives to win seats in urban districts despite low levels of voter concentration. Admittedly, single-member districts would have to be regularly adopted to shifts in population shares, thus allowing the Conservatives to redraw districts to achieve partisan advantages. However, as mentioned, Belgium has no history of gerrymandering (Bouhon et al., 2018, 20–35), and traditionalist Conservatives were immediately confronted with the accusation thereof when suggesting single-member districts. For example, the liberal Senator Alfred Magis argued that the Cour de Cassation would have to take care of district design to ensure impartiality (Barthélemy, 1912, 529). This criticism was also

Table 8.2 Spatial concentration of party voters in Belgium

District (Magnitude)	Year	Catholics	Liberals	Socialists
Liège (11)	1894	0.35	0.36	0.32
Charleroi (8)	1898	0.07	0.04	0.02
Brussel (18)	1896	0.18	0.14	0.22

Sources: Electoral data from Belgian newspapers such as *Le Peuple*, *Le Soir*, *La Meuse*, *Journal de Charleroi*; accessed via <http://www.belgicapress.be/index.php>

voiced by conservative advocates of PR (van den Heuvel, 1899), and therefore it seems that the likely political costs associated with single-member districts rendered it an unlikely option.

Second, single-member districts—with or without gerrymandering—would have done little to break up the liberal-socialist alliance. In contrast, PR provided a lifeline to the Liberals, thus ending their need to cooperate with the Socialists to survive (Barthélemy, 1912, 544–548; Dupriez, 1901, 206; Lachapelle, 1911, 179–189; Stengers, 2004, 259–261). From the Conservatives' point of view, the main electoral threat was the liberal-socialist alliance, which was about to jeopardize the Conservatives' presence in urban districts. Hence, their main goal was to end the alliance. In fact, despite their pact with the Socialists, the first Liberals had already fallen during the parliamentary debate. Although they had agreed with the Socialists to oppose any government proposal unless it also contained the abolition of the plural vote system, five Liberals voted for the government's PR proposal (Lachapelle, 1911, 158). Having been abandoned by their ally, the Socialists considered a general strike (Goblet D'Alviella, 1900, 129). Yet, since their main demand was the abolition of the plural vote system, they had no interest in using their resources to prevent PR. The next general strike came in 1902 and demanded the abolition of the plural vote system, albeit to no avail. The Liberals, in turn, abandoned their coalition partner and did not submit a joint cartel list in the 1900, 1902, and 1904 elections.

Importantly, the Conservatives' concern was not so much the survival of the Liberals or the worry that they might have to face the Socialists alone. Rather, as expressed by van den Heuvel, minister of justice in the second de Smet de Naeyer cabinet, the Conservatives understood that their advantages in the MR system were dependent on the opposition being divided (Cameau, 1901, 126; Lachapelle, 1911, 180). In the words of Barthélemy (1912, 547–548), 'we can follow the Conservatives' position on PR and show that their position depends on the relationship between the anti-clerical parties: Is there discord between Liberals and Socialists? The Conservatives prefer the MR system. Are they threatened by the cartel? The Conservatives support PR.'

Third, single-member districts would have pushed the Conservatives to the right, because losing the urban districts would have made the party more rural, more traditionalist, and more Flemish. Vote margins of conservative legislators were typically larger in rural and Flemish districts. Given the strength of the centre-periphery cleavage and the salience of the Flemish question, the Conservatives ran the risk of becoming the party of rural Flanders (Ahmed, 2013, 172; Barthélemy, 1912, 615; Delfosse, 2004, 161–171;

Dupriez, 1901, 164; van den Heuvel, 1899, 49–53). In the long term, this was not a recipe for success, because the regular reapportionment of seats constantly reduced the rural districts' weight. For example, in 1902, most of the 14 additional seats went to large urban districts such as Brussels, Antwerp, Liège, Gent-Eeklo, and Charleroi. Hence, as shown in Chapter 5, in the context of regular reapportionment, rural parties tend to favour PR.

In contrast, although the adoption of PR would certainly cost the Conservatives several seats in the short term, PR promised to allow the Conservatives to keep a sizable representation in (the politically more moderate) urban districts and even regain some seats in Wallonia. Thus, PR would allow the Conservatives to continue benefiting from reapportionment and remain the politically dominant party. Moreover, PR would protect the balance between the moderate and traditionalist wings, urban and rural districts, as well as Wallonia and Flanders within the party, which was clearly in the interest of the Conservatives' more urban and moderate wing.

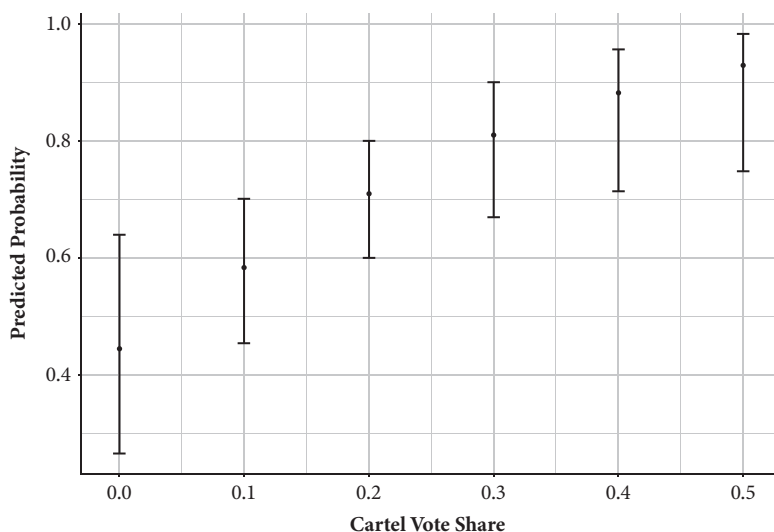
The analysis of the voting behaviour of conservative legislators on the adoption of PR in parliament supports the conclusion that divisions over electoral reform ran along these lines. In Table 8.3, we regress the Conservatives' vote on PR in parliament in 1899 on the cartel vote share, a Flanders dummy, and a variable capturing party elites. We employ Firth's penalized logistic estimator to account for the small sample size. The results show that mainly those conservative legislators who were sheltered from the competition of cartel candidates, often in rural Flanders, opposed PR.²⁹ In contrast, conservative legislators facing a cartel list with a vote share of 40% in the previous election had a 90% probability of supporting the adoption of PR in 1899 (see Figure 8.9). This result suggests that conservative legislators were primarily concerned about the liberal-socialist cartel. Moreover, because the more traditionalist legislators from rural Flanders were less likely to face a cartel list, the choice between PR and single-member districts also mattered for the intraparty balance of power. While both the moderate and the traditionalist wings wanted to preserve the party's majority position, the two wings also understood that the new electoral system would influence the intraparty balance of power by altering the geographical focus of the party's voter base. Indeed, in the 1900 election under PR rules, the Conservatives lost 25% of their seats in Flanders (in the 1896/1898 election, they had won all the seats in Flanders). In return, however, they managed to hold 44% of their seats in the large Brussels district and win three additional seats in Wallonia (now 36% of all seats, 31% in the 1896/1898 election).

²⁹ The correlation of the cartel vote share and the Flanders dummy variable is -0.55 .

Table 8.3 Penalized Logit models on PR votes

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Cartel Vote Share	4.97** (2.02)		5.81*** (2.12)	
Flanders Dummy		-1.24** (0.51)		-1.39*** (0.52)
Party Elite			17.28 (1665.45)	17.14 (1702.96)
AIC	116.97	116.87	113.51	113.86
BIC	122.08	121.98	121.17	121.52
Log Likelihood	-56.49	-56.44	-53.75	-53.93
Deviance	112.97	112.87	107.51	107.86
Num. obs.	95	95	95	95

*** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.1$

**Fig. 8.9** Predicted probabilities of cartel vote share on conservative support for PR

Fourth, although the Conservatives expected seat losses under PR, they nonetheless had reasons to be optimistic about future elections. Contemporary estimates projected the Conservatives to be able to hold on to an absolute majority (Delfosse, 2004, 172). Hence, the Conservatives moved from an over-sized but volatile majority in a MR system to a smaller but more stable majority in a PR system (Barthélemy, 1912, 547; Mahaim, 1900, 390; Stengers, 2004, 261).

The Conservative's optimism regarding holding on to their absolute majority under PR was under-girded by district design. This is because the introduction of PR did not lead to a large-scale redesign of districts. Rather the new PR system maintained the old districts, except where the original district had a magnitude of two or less (Bouhon et al., 2018, 28–29).³⁰ Overall, district magnitude changed only a little with PR, from a mean of 3.7 (median 4) in 1896/1898 to 5.1 (median 4) in 1900.³¹

The Conservatives' new district map is perfectly consistent with the expectations formulated in Chapter 6. The Conservatives kept district magnitude low in their rural strongholds but designed large districts in the more competitive urban districts.³² Thanks to their strong position in rural Flanders, these small rural districts allowed the Conservatives to gain 57% of the seats with a vote share of 49% in the 1900 election. The Conservatives maintained this advantage well into the 20th century (see Figure 8.5).³³ Hence, under PR, the Conservatives had to give up seats but not their control over government.

Contemporary observers were well aware of the implications of district design. Barthélemy (1912, 575–576) argued that the small districts in rural Flanders benefited the Conservatives. In fact, the Conservatives forcefully opposed the creation of larger districts (Carstairs, 1980, 54–55; Dupriez, 1901, 168–169). During the parliamentary debate, demands for larger districts were repeatedly made, but the new de Smet de Naeyer cabinet rejected all of them (Goblet D'Alviella, 1900, 128, 135; Lachapelle, 1911, 167). It is likely that the Conservatives understood the effects of district design. All their PR proposals were designed to keep magnitude low in their rural strongholds. This is true for Beernaert's 1894 proposal, which wanted to leave the district map untouched, de Smet de Naeyer's (first cabinet) plan to use PR in runoffs only, Vandenpeereboom's compromise proposal with PR in large districts only, and the proposal of the second de Smet de Naeyer cabinet, which was ultimately adopted in 1899. The combination of a PR system with small rural districts became to be known as the 'Belgian solution'.

District design also explains the reappearance of liberal-socialist cartel lists from 1906 onwards. Before 1899, liberal-socialist cooperation was focused on large districts to take advantage of the disproportional features of MR

³⁰ With one exception: The district Neufchâteau-Virton had a magnitude of two after the adoption of PR in 1899.

³¹ This district map does not lend support to arguments emphasizing intraparty conflicts between the party elite and backbenchers (cf. Cox et al., 2019; Schröder & Manow, 2020). If party leaders wanted to concentrate their resources on the nomination process, it is implausible that they would have maintained numerous small districts.

³² In 1902, due to reapportionment, the Brussels district had a magnitude of 21.

³³ Belgium also opted for the D'Hondt formula for vote-to-seat allocation, which favours large parties in small magnitude districts.

with multi-member districts. Hence, in the elections between 1894 and 1898, cartel lists were primarily submitted to large districts. From 1906 onward, the liberal-socialist alliance experienced a renewal. However, under PR, the liberal-socialist cartel now focused on the small districts which had allowed the Conservatives to win a disproportionate share of seats in rural Flanders. Cartels were rediscovered as a possibility to neutralize the Conservatives' advantage in these small rural districts. As a result, we observe a negative relationship between district magnitude and the likelihood of joint liberal-socialist lists under PR. Cooperation between the Liberals and Socialists even intensified, such that, between 1906 and 1912, 57% of socialist and liberal candidates ran on joint lists, up from 26% in the 1896/1898 elections.

To provide evidence for this, we use information on party lists and district magnitude for all elections between 1894–1898 and 1906–1912. To estimate the effect of district magnitude on the occurrence of cartel lists conditional on the electoral formula, we employ Firth's penalized logistic estimator along with cluster robust standard errors on the district level. The estimation results are shown in Table 8.4. The coefficient plot on the left-hand side of Figure 8.10 displays the point estimates with 95% confidence intervals. The estimates for district magnitude, a PR dummy, and their joint interaction are significant at the 1% level. To interpret the effects, we plot the predicted probabilities for district magnitude conditional on the electoral system (see right-hand side of Figure 8.10). As expected, the results show that in the PR system, cartel lists were more likely in small districts. In contrast, in the MR system, cartel lists were more likely in large districts, although the confidence intervals overlap due to the low number of observations as shown in the histogram below the predicted probability plot. This renewed liberal-socialist cooperation from 1906 onward supports our argument that the Conservatives' position on electoral system choice was strongly driven by long-term seat-maximization concerns.

In sum, the Conservatives had good reasons to prefer PR to MR with smaller districts. But in light of the party's division over this question, it remains unclear why Vandenpeereboom's compromise proposal, PR in large districts only, was rejected. In the words of Goblet D'Alviella (1900, 111), 'Vandenpeereboom had wanted to please everybody [within the Conservative Party]. Little surprise that he did not please anybody'. Why was nobody pleased?

Vandenpeereboom's proposal failed for two reasons. On the one hand, the Vandenpeereboom proposal, so obviously tailored to the Conservatives' needs, triggered a hostile reaction from the opposition parties. There were wild scenes in parliament. Opposition legislators played musical instruments,

Table 8.4 Cartel entry under MR (1894–1898) and PR (1906–1912) in Belgium

	Model 1
District Magnitude (MAG)	0.17*** (0.04)
Proportional Representation (PR)	4.80*** (0.72)
MAG x PR	-0.38*** (0.08)
AIC	140.99
BIC	153.26
Log Likelihood	-66.49
Deviance	132.99
Num. obs.	159

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

chanted satirical songs, threw paper balls at speakers, and accused the government of an attempted coup (Goblet D'Alviella, 1900, 116–117). On the streets of Belgium's largest cities, angry voters engaged in street fights with the police. Therefore in terms of democratic legitimacy, the Vandenpeereboom proposal was costly. Moreover, the proposal even achieved further fortification of the liberal-socialist cooperation, who now increased their efforts to expand the cartel to include all non-conservative legislators, most notably the conservative Liberals but also the Christian Democrats (Deneckere, 2010, 2049–2073; Dupriez, 1901, 166). If the Conservatives' goal was to split the opposition parties, the Vandenpeereboom proposal certainly achieved the opposite. In fact, in response to the Vandenpeereboom proposal, all opposition parties joined the 'ligue de la representation proportionnelle et du suffrage universel' (Barthélemy, 1912, 540), although the socialist leader Vandervelde had to work hard to convince his party to support PR (Goblet D'Alviella, 1900, 113). This league, which consisted of the Socialists, the Liberals, and the Christian Democrats, pledged to disband only once the government had adopted PR and removed the system of plural voting.

On the other hand, Vandenpeereboom's compromise proposal failed because, at this point, both the moderate and the traditionalist wings of the Conservatives still believed their preferred option to be possible (Goblet D'Alviella, 1900, 113). For the moderate Conservatives in the embattled large districts with six or more seats, Vandenpeereboom's compromise proposal offered no advantages over regular PR. In fact, because the proposal triggered such a hostile reaction among the opposition parties, they now risked facing

even stronger opponents, as the league was likely to translate into electoral alliances. As a result, prominent conservative politicians such as Beernaert and van den Heuvel openly lobbied for PR (Goblet D'Alviella, 1900, 99–107; van den Heuvel, 1899; Woeste, 1933, 169–170). By 'riding the tiger' of protests, they hoped to win majorities within their own party.³⁴ Unsurprisingly, the moderate Conservatives did not come to Vandenpeereboom's aid.

Similarly, Woeste felt betrayed by Vandenpeereboom and openly fought the compromise proposal (Woeste, 1933, 163). In early August 1899, after the commission appointed by Vandenpeereboom had failed to agree on any reform proposal, including the adoption of PR and Vandenpeereboom's compromise proposal, Woeste (1933, 171) believed that PR was finally off the table. However, Woeste was misreading the signs, as opposition to PR among conservative legislators was getting weaker. After the failure of Vandenpeereboom's compromise proposal and especially after de Smet de Naeyer had replaced Vandenpeereboom in August 1899 and submitted a proposal to adopt PR with small districts in the countryside, an increasing number of traditionalist Conservatives began to endorse PR. These legislators understood that electoral reform was necessary and that all reform proposals other than PR would fortify the cooperation between the opposition parties. Clearly, for some of them, smaller districts in the MR system would have been preferable, but they did not have the numbers to push their preferred option through parliament. Moreover, none of the opposition parties was willing to support the traditionalist Conservatives' proposal. Seeing no alternative to PR, several conservative legislators accepted the inevitable (Goblet D'Alviella, 1900, 139). Woeste (1933, 174), who opposed PR to the very end, called them 'the resigned ones'. Hence, PR in Belgium was, among others, adopted by conservative legislators such as Théophile de Lantsheere, the former president of the lower chamber (1884–1896) and single MP of the rural Diksmuide district in West Flanders, elected with a vote share of 80% in 1896, who argued that while he still opposed PR, he accepted it as a 'necessary evil' (Woeste, 1933, 170). Nevertheless, a third of the conservative legislators still opposed PR in the final vote, which indicates that resistance remained strong.

In sum, the Conservatives understood that their majority was built on sand and that electoral reform was necessary to protect it. Controlling a large majority of seats in parliament, the choice of electoral system was theirs, but the Conservatives disagreed on the merits of the various proposals. The

³⁴ According to Lachapelle (1911, 158), de Smet de Naeyer met with the Liberal Lorand before starting his second tenure in office. Expecting a majority for PR to be narrow among conservative legislators, de Smet de Naeyer wanted to know whether he could count on liberal votes in parliament—despite the league. Lorand promised to get five liberal legislators to vote in support of a PR proposal.

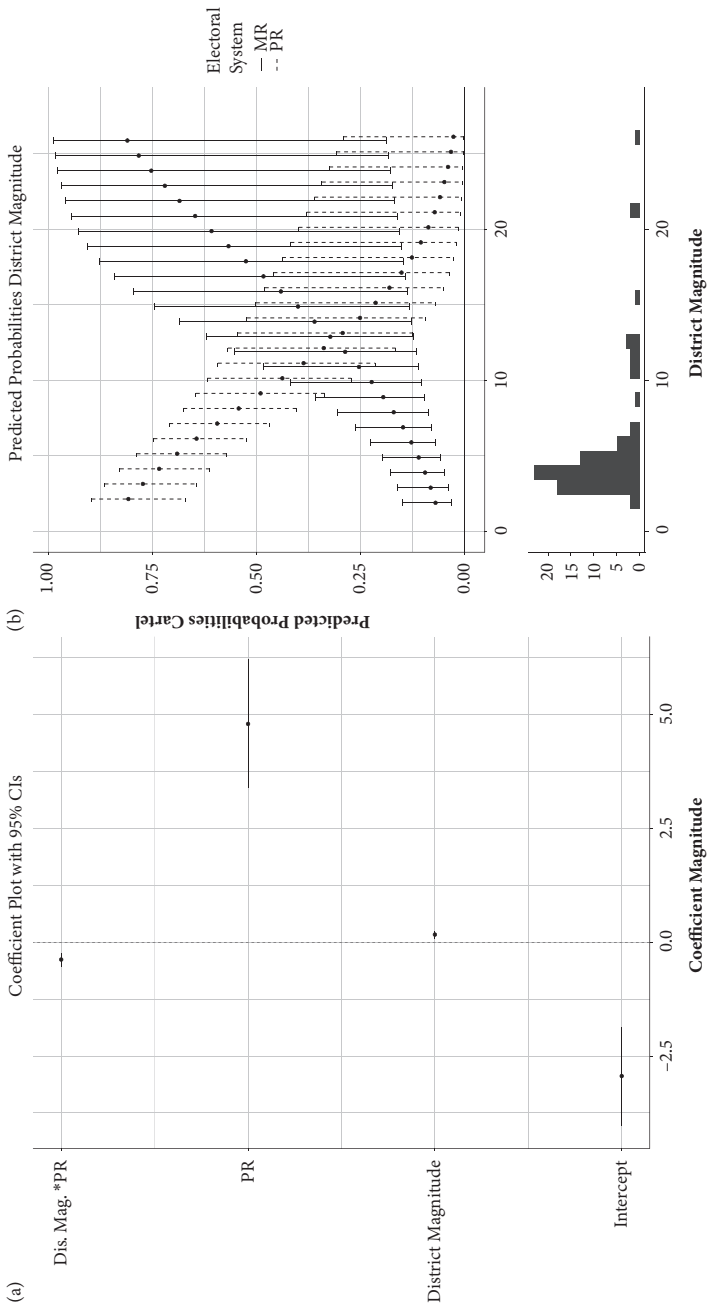


Fig. 8.10 District magnitude and cartel lists under MR and PR in Belgium

diverse proposals suggest that the Conservatives were well aware of their implications for parliamentary representation. Yet, the proposals had implications for within-party power dynamics. Ultimately, the moderate wing prevailed over the traditionalist one. However, the continued insistence on small rural districts (from Beernaert's first proposal in 1893 to the one ultimately adopted in 1899) demonstrates that seat-maximization concerns were always at the centre of the Conservatives' strategic considerations. The pre-emptive adoption of PR in 1899 allowed the Conservatives to adopt the PR system on their terms. A few elections later, the Conservatives might have needed liberal support for electoral reform. Yet, in this case, the Liberals would have certainly insisted on larger district magnitude due to their dispersed voter base. Instead, the pre-emptive adoption of PR allowed the Conservatives to cement their political dominance for years to come.

8.3 Comparative discussion

Belgium and Switzerland were pioneers in the field of electoral system choice. Their reforms were a regular point of reference in political debates in other first-wave democracies. Their successes, failures, and solutions informed electoral reforms in many other countries. The two countries also share a similar starting point in that they were both politically dominated by one party. At the time of PR adoption, the Belgian Conservatives controlled 74% of the seats in the lower chamber, while the Swiss Liberals (and their allies) controlled 61% of the seats in the lower chamber.³⁵ However, the two countries adopted PR in very different ways. Whereas the Belgian Conservatives adopted PR proactively and against the resistance of the other two main parties, the Swiss Liberals fought PR until the very end and had to be forced to accept PR by means of direct democracy.

The two case studies offer several insights that are consistent with our theoretical expectations and the quantitative empirical evidence presented in the previous chapters. First, in both countries, the MR systems with multi-member districts led to large seat-vote distortions that consistently favoured the incumbent parties. In Belgium, the Conservatives' parliamentary representation was much better than their vote share would have suggested. The

³⁵ This share includes the legislators of the Free Democratic Party and the remaining Liberals who had not yet joined the Free Democratic Party (in 2008, the last Liberals finally joined the Free Democratic Party). The share does not include the legislators of the emerging Farmers' Party and the independent Democrats who had not joined the Free Democratic Party.

same is true for the Swiss Liberals that constantly enjoyed higher seat than vote shares.

Second, electoral geography and district maps played key roles in the politics of electoral reform. The Belgian Liberals, in particular, suffered from an unfortunate electoral geography because their dispersed voter base made it difficult for them to turn votes into seats. Consequently, the Belgian Liberals were the strongest supporters of PR, although for political reasons, they did not openly support the Conservatives' electoral reforms. In Switzerland, the Socialists competed with the politically dominant Liberals in urban districts, which resulted in a weak parliamentary representation, whereas the Conservatives benefited from segmented electoral markets in their rural strongholds. Consequently, in Switzerland, the Socialists were the main driving force behind the adoption of PR, although they understood that any successful electoral reform would also require the Conservatives' backing.

Third, redistricting strongly influenced party positions on electoral system choice. In both countries, the constitution mandated regular reapportionment. The Swiss Liberals, with their strongholds in urban cantons, benefited from this rule, while the rural areas controlled by the Conservatives steadily lost weight. The Socialists could have also benefited from regular reapportionment, but the Liberals had the means to prevent a strong Socialist parliamentary delegation. In the early years of the Swiss federal state, the Liberals had resorted to gerrymandering to contain the conservative electoral threat. Towards the end of the 19th century, the Liberals' attention increasingly turned to the Socialists. In Belgium, regular reapportionment proved to be a problem for the Conservatives because their rural strongholds declined in weight relative to the politically more competitive urban districts. The Conservatives increasingly faced the prospect of losing these districts—if they had not lost them already. The Conservatives could not resort to gerrymandering, because Belgium had no tradition of changing district boundaries. In the entire period from 1831 to 1899, district boundaries were not adapted.

Fourth, the two case studies show that parties advantaged by the electoral system defend it against its critics. In Switzerland, the Liberals defended the MR system until the very end—sometimes even resorting to illegitimate means such as delaying tactics or attempts to manipulate public opinion. In the Swiss case, the parties' instrumental motives were on full display. Despite their opposition to electoral reform at the national level, the Liberals had no problem advocating PR for subnational elections if they expected to benefit. The Conservatives, on the other hand, favoured PR for national elections, but in their cantonal strongholds, they typically showed much less interest in

electoral reform. With some qualifications, this also applies to the Belgian case. In 1893 and 1894, the Conservatives were still strongly in favour of the MR system, which they believed to be of great benefit to them. It was only in the following years that most Conservatives began to realize that the advantages of the MR system might turn against them. Facing the prospect of losing the increasingly important urban districts and thus their parliamentary majority, the Conservatives started a debate on electoral reform, discussing a wide variety of possible electoral systems. The various proposals clearly show that seat-maximization concerns were always at the centre of these discussions.

Fifth, parties disadvantaged by the electoral system demand reforms and, over time, start to join forces. In Belgium, the Liberals and the Socialists created electoral alliances to challenge the dominant Conservatives in elections. In 1899, the two parties, together with some minor parties, even formed a pact against the Conservatives. It was the electoral threat posed by this alliance that made the Conservatives realize the fragility of their absolute majority in parliament. In Switzerland, Conservatives and Socialists also joined a reform coalition—in what contemporary observers called an unnatural alliance. Yet, despite liberal attempts to drive a wedge between the two parties, the alliance held for two decades, although once the goal, the adoption of PR, had been achieved, the Conservatives did not hesitate to abandon their socialist partners and to join their erstwhile opponents, the Liberals, in an anti-socialist coalition.

Sixth, electoral geography and seat-maximization concerns clearly informed the district maps in the new PR systems. In Switzerland, conservative support for electoral reform was conditional on the agreed district map, which promised to greatly benefit them. Both the Liberals and the Socialists understood this, which explains why the Socialists never challenged the district map (which was not necessarily in their interest), whereas the Liberals made the district map their main point of attack. In Belgium, the district map played a key role in all conservative proposals for electoral reform. A closer examination of the proposals shows that the Conservatives (supporters of PR or not) never questioned the small districts in the Conservatives' rural strongholds, although the Liberals and Socialists rightly noted the disproportional consequences of these small districts. Unsurprisingly, from 1906 onward, both parties started to submit joint cartel lists again, however this time targeting the low magnitude districts under PR.

The two cases also allow us to add nuance to our argument. In terms of reform coalitions, the Swiss case is consistent with the theoretical expectations developed in Chapter 4. In the presence of regular reapportionment,

the rural party (the Conservatives) and the weak urban party (the Socialists) jointly pushed for the adoption of PR against the resistance of the strong urban party (the Liberals). In contrast, at first sight, the Belgian case seems to be at odds with this argument. In Belgium, the rural party adopted PR against the votes of the Socialists and most of the Liberals. However, a closer inspection of the Belgian case reveals that the political dynamics were more complex than this simple depiction suggests.

For starters, the Liberals, as the weak urban party, were probably the staunchest supporters of PR. Their opposition to the Conservatives' reform proposals was tactical—and not out of principle. Moreover, despite their pact with the Socialists, some Liberals supported the Conservatives' 1899 PR proposal. Although they had agreed with the Socialists to oppose any reform proposal unless it promised the introduction of PR *and* the abolition of the system of plural voting, the Liberals' main concern was PR, not plural voting. The situation was exactly the opposite for the Socialists, the strong urban party. Their support for PR was at best lukewarm. Their main concern was the system of plural voting. Not surprisingly, no Socialists supported the 1899 PR proposal. Moreover, the Socialists had already staged a new general strike in 1902 (demanding the abolition of the system of plural voting). Finally, the Conservatives, the rural party, understood that their majority was built on sand, with their rural strongholds losing weight due to regular reapportionment, while the liberal-socialist alliance threatened their hold on the increasingly important urban districts. Hence, in many ways, the Conservatives' reform pre-empted the emergence of a rural-urban coalition (consisting of the Conservatives and the Liberals) in favour of PR. One big advantage of the Conservatives' proactive approach was their ability to determine the district map unilaterally.

The two cases also demonstrate that dominant parties tend to grow increasingly heterogeneous. This heterogeneity was most visible in the Belgian case, where the Conservatives, prompted to engage in electoral reform, struggled to agree on the specifics, as the various reforms promised to primarily benefit different wings of the party. Similarly, the Swiss Liberals struggled to keep their group together. The containment of the Conservatives and later the Socialists was one of the few things on which they could agree (Altermatt, 2020, 81; Jorio, 1998, 102–103). Moreover, the prospect of possibly losing their absolute majority in parliament made the Liberals prioritize organization building to develop a more effective political machine, which proved to be successful (Altermatt, 2021, 29).

In contrast, developments in Belgium and Switzerland provide little support for arguments that emphasize socialist radicalization to explain electoral

reform. Despite their status as PR pioneers, both countries featured comparatively reformist Socialists. What is more, in both countries, the politics of electoral reform was decisively shaped by coalitions between socialist and non-socialist parties. In Belgium, the Conservatives clearly reacted to the electoral threat resulting from the liberal-socialist alliance, whereas in Switzerland, the Conservatives and the Socialists openly cooperated towards the goal of electoral reform. Such cooperation is difficult to bring into line with arguments that emphasize how the Socialists' radicalization made non-socialist parties engage in defensive electoral reforms. Tellingly, in Belgium, the 1899 PR reform did little to reduce the Socialists' extra-parliamentary mobilization.

In fact, the two case studies suggest that the relationship between socialist radicalization and electoral reform might be reversed. In Switzerland, partisan biases visibly frustrated the Socialists who felt betrayed by the lack of adequate parliamentary representation (Senn & Straumann, 2022). Liberal attempts to delay discussions in parliament resulted in an increasingly aggressive political discourse, including the threat of a general strike (Kölz, 2004, 720; Natsch, 1972, 124–125, 146). Non-socialist supporters of electoral reform regularly pointed to this problem, arguing that there was no need to worry about the Socialists as long as they still demanded PR. There was only reason to worry when they stopped demanding it (Natsch, 1972, 146). Hence, the Socialists' radicalization (limited as it might have been in comparative perspective) was seen by many as the result of the *absence* of electoral reform. In Belgium, the widespread protests in 1899 were triggered by Vandenpeereboom's highly engineered reform proposal, and not the other way around.

This is not to deny the role of extra-parliamentary mobilization. In Switzerland, the Liberals successfully resisted any reform attempts in the parliamentary arena. Thanks to gerrymandering and regular reapportionment, the minority parties had little chance of winning a majority in parliament. Consequently, the Conservatives and the Socialists had to resort to direct democracy to bypass parliament. In Belgium, the Liberals and the Socialists relied on protests to increase pressure on the Conservatives. As shown, the Conservatives understood the need for electoral reform. However, extra-parliamentary mobilization was certainly helpful in getting the Conservatives to agree on a specific reform proposal. The growing cooperation between the Liberals and the Socialists, on full display in the mass protests of the summer of 1899, was undoubtedly bad news for Conservatives, because it suggested that in the next election, they might face the cartel in an even larger number of districts. Moreover, extra-parliamentary mobilization certainly helped prevent the most egregious forms of electoral manipulation

(notably the proposal to use PR only for large districts), because it made the Conservatives' machinations publicly visible and thus increased possible legitimacy costs (Quintal, 1970). Within these constraints, however, the Conservatives' reform activities were clearly driven by their desire to secure their parliamentary majority in the long term.

Appendix

Table 8.5 Summary statistics for analysis of Swiss roll-call data

Variable	Mean	SD	Min	Max
PR vote	0.37	0.48	0.00	1.00
Right margin	0.55	0.39	0.00	1.00
Number of strikes	115.11	119.71	0.00	425.00
Trade sector	0.21	0.13	0.01	0.55
Electoral disproportionality	0.10	0.13	-0.33	0.50
Socialist electoral strength	16.52	15.26	0.00	50.30
Co-specific assets	0.02	0.02	0.00	0.07
Party Elite	0.04	0.20	0	1

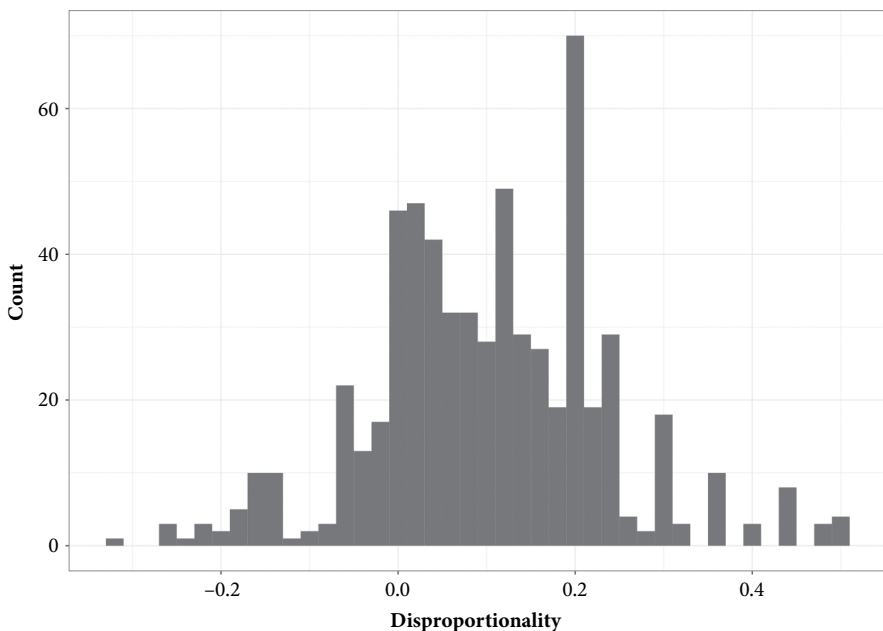


Fig. 8.11 Histogram of vote-seat distortions in Switzerland, 1900-1918

Table 8.6 Disproportionality, socialist electoral strength, and support for PR in Switzerland: Without socialist MPs

	Linear (Outlier-Robust)			Firth		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Disproportionality	-1.12 (0.60)	-0.79 (0.48)	-0.79 (0.46)	-6.34*** (1.37)	-3.23* (1.55)	-3.22* (1.55)
Socialist electoral strength	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.05** (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)
Disproportionality x socialist electoral strength		-0.03** (0.01)	-0.02** (0.01)		-0.37*** (0.10)	-0.35** (0.12)
Co-specific assets			-1.96 (2.66)			-12.61 (15.77)
Trade exposure			0.17 (0.26)			0.45 (1.15)
Right margin			-0.01 (0.05)			-0.08 (0.33)
Party elite			0.13 (0.09)			0.53 (0.44)
Number of strikes			-0.00 (0.00)			-0.00 (0.00)
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Num. obs.	504	504	504	504	504	504
AIC				533.95	517.87	527.08
BIC				559.29	547.43	581.98
Log Likelihood				-260.98	-251.93	-250.54
Deviance				521.95	503.87	501.08

Notes: Cluster robust standard errors on the party level in parenthesis.

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

Conclusion

‘Among the most important—and, arguably, *the* most important—of all constitutional choices that have to be made in democracies is the choice of electoral system, especially majoritarian election methods vs proportional representation’ (Lijphart, 1992, 207; emphasis in the original). There can be no doubt about the importance of electoral systems. Empirical research suggests that they affect a wide range of variables, from the composition of governments to various public policies. Yet, despite their importance, there was surprisingly little research on the politics of electoral system choice for a long time. This has changed in recent years, as several new theories have been proposed. However, there is little agreement in the literature as to the explanations for differences in electoral system choice (Emmenegger & Petersen, 2017). For example, in the case of first-wave democracies, there is little agreement about whether established parties adopted proportional representation (PR) to contain the newly popular socialist parties (e.g., Boix, 1999, 2010; Rokkan, 1970) or whether it was the socialists themselves who adopted PR to improve their electoral position (e.g., Alesina & Glaeser, 2004; Rodden, 2009). Similarly, academic opinion diverges on the question of whether electoral system change was largely consensual (e.g., Blais et al., 2005; Cusack et al., 2007) or highly contentious (e.g., Ahmed, 2013; Leemann & Mares, 2014). To recycle an old joke: If you ask three political scientists about electoral system choice, you get four different answers. While there is an abundance of theories on electoral system choice, there is a clear need for theory synthesis (Kreuzer & Neely, 2025).

9.1 A neo-Rokkanian account of electoral system choice

This book offers a novel explanation for the politics of electoral system choice. We are, however, not trying to reinvent the wheel. Instead, our account builds on existing theories but tries to combine them in new ways, thereby offering several new insights that help explain why none of the existing theories finds strong empirical support.

Our starting points are Rokkan's (1970) two roads to electoral reform. In line with Rokkan's first road, the electoral threat thesis, we argue that the emergence of a new and popular party provokes a response by the established parties. The presence of such a 'third' party is usually a necessary (although not sufficient) condition for electoral system reform. However, in contrast to Rokkan's first road, we argue that established parties have alternatives to the adoption of PR. Most notably, majoritarian representation (MR) systems can provide established parties with the means to neutralize electoral threats. In the empirical analysis, we have shown how district design and electoral alliances can be mobilized to contain insurgent parties. Whether these containment strategies are available is a function of party systems, electoral geography, and the rules shaping the (non-)adaptation of districts. In our account, established parties support PR only when they cannot resort to these containment strategies. Put differently, in our account, Rokkan's first road to electoral reform is a special case of a more general phenomenon. It is the option established parties pursue if they *cannot* contain the new electoral threat.

However, containment strategies do not only neutralize electoral threats, but they also produce seat-vote distortions. Rokkan's (1970) second road to electoral reform emphasizes how persistent seat-vote distortions make parties demand electoral reform. Parties suffering from such distortions hope that a PR system would allow them to translate their votes into seats in more efficient ways. We add to this perspective by emphasizing that seat-vote distortions are often the result of established parties' attempts to contain electoral threats. Parties suffering from seat-vote distortions are not simply unfortunate in the sense of having an inefficient electoral geography or suddenly facing a strong local challenger. Instead, they are often the target of the containment measures that produce these distortions. Put differently, seat-vote distortions are not a simple fact of life. Instead, they are often the result of purposive political action.

For the same reasons, insurgent parties typically struggle to convert votes into seats. These struggles are why insurgent parties often—but not always—support the adoption of PR. Moreover, there are sometimes also established parties that suffer from seat-vote distortions. These established parties may not be able to resort to containment measures, find the available containment measures too politically costly, or have become the target of containment measures themselves. The presence of such established parties explains why there is usually a coalition of parties demanding electoral system reform (often including both insurgent *and* established parties).

Finally, electoral rules are redistributive institutions: Whenever someone loses, someone else wins. There are thus not only parties suffering from seat-vote distortions. Instead, some parties, typically established ones, benefit from these distortions. Frequently, these parties' actions were instrumental in creating the distortions in the first place, and the distortions are one of the very reasons why they are the incumbents. Hence, any attempt at electoral system reform must overcome these parties' resistance. In some countries, this is an almost impossible task, which is why electoral system reform often follows an external event that reduces the incumbent party's political power. As argued by Grofman and Lijphart (2002, 8), reform advocates must 'go outside normal channels to institute change' because in the parliamentary arena, the deck is stacked against them.

The adoption of PR reduces these distortions, which is why parties suffering from seat-vote distortions demand electoral system change. However, we have also shown that the adoption of PR does not necessarily remove all distortions. Rather, as McGann (2006, 5) argues that while electoral institutions should be 'constructed so as not to be biased in favor of any voter (or group of voters) [. . .] this situation is the exception rather than the rule among countries that are commonly referred to as democracies.' This statement applies not only to MR systems, but also to PR systems.

Most of the literature on electoral system choice has focused on the binary choice between PR and MR systems. In this way, the literature has overlooked that there are important differences not only between MR systems but also between PR systems, not least with regard to their effective degree of proportionality (Bochsler et al., 2024). Once again electoral geography and district design are key to explain differences between PR systems, because any district map is potentially subject to partisan bias (Grofman et al., 1997, 457). Most notably, parties designing districts in newly adopted PR systems try to create small districts in their electoral strongholds, while they create large districts in other parties' electoral strongholds. In this way, the designing parties can engineer favourable seat-vote distortions in PR systems too (Carey & Hix, 2011; Taagepera & Shugart, 1989). District design is thus a contentious issue in both MR *and* PR systems.

The explanation for the politics of containment and electoral system choice offered in this book builds on Rokkan's two roads to electoral reform. In many ways, this is a neo-Rokkanian account of electoral system choice. However, unlike Rokkan, we argue that there are not two separate roads to electoral reform. Instead, they are combined as any response to an electoral threat has implications for seat-vote distortions, and any attempt to reduce seat-vote distortions may affect electoral threats.

We argue that endogenous electoral markets are the bridge that connects Rokkan's two roads to electoral reform. Electoral markets do not simply exist. They have to be organized. A key organizing element are the districts that divide national electoral markets. As shown in this book, there are large differences in district magnitude between and within countries in both MR and PR systems. Another organizing element are the groups that compete for seats, as parties can join forces in districts to improve their chances to win. Especially in MR systems, electoral alliances are common and have a strong influence on election results.

Our key point is: The actors who compete for voters in electoral markets are also the very actors who organize these electoral markets. By (re)organizing districts and creating alliances, they can change the competitive dynamics in electoral markets, with implications for electoral threats and seat-vote distortions. Thus, electoral threats and seat-vote distortions do not simply exist. Instead, they are often the result of attempts to engineer the electoral market, although there is of course never a guarantee that these engineering attempts will deliver the expected result, as R. S. Katz (2005) correctly notes. Yet, as Engstrom (2013, 194) writes about partisan gerrymandering in the USA, '19th-century politicians had little trouble engineering effective partisan gerrymanders despite their technological limitations'. We argue that this statement applies to electoral engineering more generally, although there are, admittedly, plenty of examples of failed engineering attempts. Nevertheless, more often than not, electoral engineers understand how to work the engine room of democracy (Blais & Shugart, 2008; Penadés & Pavía, 2024).

9.2 Alternative accounts of electoral system choice

How does our neo-Rokkanian account compare with existing theories of electoral system choice? In what follows, we discuss the main alternative accounts of the politics of PR adoption. We argue that our neo-Rokkanian perspective offers a more convincing explanation of the politics of PR adoption in democratic countries than existing alternatives.

Our neo-Rokkanian explanation of electoral system choice emphasizes political parties and their motivation to participate in elections to win. Of course, once in power, political parties pursue policies that are in line with their political preferences. However, unlike economic accounts of electoral system choice (e.g., Becher & González, 2025; Cusack et al., 2007, 2010a; Rogowski, 1987), we argue that parties do not push for electoral system change *in order to* pursue specific policies (e.g., the protection of

co-specific assets). Instead, we argue that political parties are primarily motivated to participate in elections to maximize the number of seats in the legislative body and gain control over the government (Benoit, 2007; Boix, 1999; Grofman & Lijphart, 2002; Mares, 2022). Their position on the question of electoral system choice is a function of whether the existing electoral system gives them a good chance of doing so. The ability to enact certain public policies is of course an important goal that parties pursue, but such policy goals are not necessary to motivate parties to seek electoral reform.¹

Several important contributions have argued that electoral system reforms are often the result of a broad political consensus (e.g., Blais et al., 2005; Blais & Shugart, 2008; Cusack et al., 2007, 2010a). In contrast, our approach emphasizes political conflict over electoral system choice. We have found that ‘the distributive nature of electoral institutions’ (Benoit, 2007, 372) often leads to protracted and bitterly contested conflicts between parties. Our account thus supports Sartori’s (1994, 27) observation that ‘if electoral systems were of little consequences why on earth would politicians fight so bitterly about them? And why would reformers fight so persistently to have them changed?’

Admittedly, in some of the first-wave democracies examined in this book, the adoption of PR *appeared* almost consensual. For example, in countries such as Austria, Denmark, Germany, and Norway, most parties ultimately supported the adoption of PR. However, this perspective overlooks the fact that in all of these cases, several decades of bitter divisions over electoral system change typically preceded the adoption of PR (Kreuzer, 2023, 83, 112). Some of these parties were at best reluctant supporters of PR. Before its adoption, these parties had opposed any move in the direction of more proportionality. However, realizing that electoral system change was unavoidable, they joined the reform coalition to put themselves in a position to influence the specifics of the reform. For example, after *decades* of delaying electoral reform, the Danish Liberals finally endorsed PR in 1915, but they did so primarily to prevent a conservative-socialist reform coalition. They were rewarded with a district map under the new PR system, which protected their seat-maximizing interests. In our eyes, this is not consensus but conflict.

This book finds that insurgent parties are key players in the politics of electoral system choice. In first-wave democracies, it was typically the emergence of socialist parties as an electoral threat that forced established parties

¹ In an important recent contribution, Becher and González (2025) try to reconcile economic and political accounts of electoral system choice by highlighting how divisions over trade policy pre-structure electoral markets and thus inform parties’ seat-maximization strategies.

to respond to the new situation.² However, the adoption of PR is not simply an attempt by established parties to minimize seat losses in the face of a strong competitor, as the electoral threat thesis would have it. Rather, insurgent parties often favour the adoption of PR themselves, because they are among the parties most likely to suffer from seat-vote distortions in MR systems. This also explains why, in terms of parliamentary representation, insurgent parties usually benefit from electoral system change—in the short run *and* in the long term (Alesina & Glaeser, 2004; Becher, 2016; Döring & Manow, 2017; Iversen & Soskice, 2006). In the context of first-wave democracies, Rodden (2009, 2) argues that ‘as a bulwark against the left’, PR was ‘a colossal failure’. We argue that PR was rarely imposed on a reluctant left in first-wave democracies. In most of the cases examined in this book, the socialists supported the adoption of PR because they had good reason to hope that PR would reduce seat-vote distortions and strengthen their parliamentary representation.

Similarly, there is only limited evidence for the existential threat thesis which posits that established parties adopted PR to pacify a radicalized left (e.g., Ahmed, 2013; Barzachka, 2014). In many first-wave democracies that adopted PR, socialist parties were not ideologically radical (Marks et al., 2009). In fact, as we have shown in this book, socialist and non-socialist parties often joined forces, either in the form of electoral alliances (e.g., Belgium, Germany, and the Netherlands) or in the form of political coalitions pushing for electoral system change (e.g., Denmark, France, and Switzerland). It is simply implausible to argue that non-socialist parties were concerned about radicalized socialists while some of the very same non-socialist parties formed electoral alliances with these socialist parties or joined forces to demand electoral system reform.

Building on this existential threat thesis, Gjerløw and Rasmussen (2022) argue that non-socialist parties primarily support PR in order to strengthen the reformist wings within socialist parties. Indeed, there is ample evidence to suggest that containment measures and distortions of the electoral process contributed to the socialists’ ideological radicalization and raised doubts in their ranks about the merits of parliamentary democracy. Levelling the playing field through electoral system change was a way of demonstrating that parliamentary democracy would allow socialist parties to pursue their policies (if enough voters supported them in an election). However, the relationship between containment measures, socialist radicalization, and

² Importantly, there is no necessity for electoral threats to come from socialist parties (Lijphart, 1992), although in the first-wave democracies, it was typically the rise of the socialists that gave a new urgency to the debate about electoral system choice (Boix, 1999).

electoral system choice is complex. This is because containment measures and the absence of electoral reform contributed to the socialists' radicalization, which in turn is supposed to explain the non-socialist parties' agreement to electoral system change. In short, the socialists' radicalization is endogenous to electoral system change. Moreover, the non-socialist parties had no guarantee that electoral system change would strengthen the reformist wing rather than simply bring more radicalized socialists into parliament, as in Italy. From the point of view of the non-socialist parties, this was, at the very least, a risky strategy.

In light of our findings related to socialist parties, we argue that the literature on electoral system choice in first-wave democracies is too concerned with the capital-labour conflict, thereby overlooking that other cleavages were just as important. Most notably, the state-church cleavage strongly influenced politics in first-wave democracies on the European continent (Kalyvas, 1996), while the rural-urban cleavage shaped politics in the Nordic countries (Baldwin, 1990). In both Belgium and Switzerland, politics was long organized around the bitter divide between Conservatives and Liberals regarding the proper role of the Catholic church in society. The strength of these cleavages also explains why non-socialist parties did not simply merge in the face of socialist electoral challenges. On the contrary, it was the enduring enmity between Conservatives and Liberals because of the state-church conflict that allowed the Belgian Liberals to join forces with the Socialists to break the Conservatives' hold on power. In a similar vein, it was the bitter experience of decades of political repression that led the Swiss Conservatives to join forces with the Socialists to break the Liberals' monopoly on power. In short, the socialists' emergence mattered greatly, but the politics of electoral system choice are considerably more complicated than a narrow focus on the capital-labour cleavage would suggest.

In recent years, several contributions have highlighted the important role of within-party power dynamics to explain electoral system change, emphasizing how PR enables party leaders to discipline their followers and build more cohesive parties by affecting the leaders' control over nominations (Cox et al., 2019; Høyland & Søyland, 2019; Schröder & Manow, 2020). In contrast, we have focused on the role of between-party power dynamics because political parties are the primary units of legislative representation and because they are chiefly affected by the distributive implications of electoral system change (Benoit, 2007, 372). To be clear, we are not denying the role of intraparty power dynamics. In particular, our analysis of the Belgian case has shown that intraparty conflicts matter. We therefore consider such accounts as complementary to our own.

We argue, however, that there are limits to how far a sole focus on intra-party conflicts can take us. First, party elites are likely to face difficulties overcoming resistance to electoral reform from party backbenchers, as the latter outnumber party elites by a wide margin (e.g., Belgium and Germany). Put differently, intraparty power dynamics can explain preferences for reform, but they struggle to explain why reforms happen (Schröder & Manow, 2014). Second, several countries adopted single-member districts only a few years before they adopted PR (e.g., Italy and Norway), which is difficult to align with arguments emphasizing the interests of party elites. Finally, although PR is supposed to strengthen the hands of party elites, this control may be limited in contexts with small district magnitude (e.g., Sweden and Switzerland) or in presence of smaller nomination districts, which do not overlap with electoral districts (e.g., Denmark and the Netherlands). These features of the newly adopted PR systems raise the question as to why the reform was pursued in the first place if the new electoral systems were meant to strengthen the party elites (Becher & González, 2025; Carey, 2007; Carey & Shugart, 1995).

Our neo-Rokkanian account of electoral system choice assumes that political parties are primarily interested in seat maximization. This assumption is made in most research on electoral system choice in first-wave democracies, and the evidence presented in this book suggests that this assumption is warranted. But what about the pursuit of good government, democratic norms, and concerns about legitimacy? Several important contributions have emphasized that such concerns have *also* mattered in more recent electoral reforms (e.g., Blais & Massicotte, 1997; Bol, 2016; Bol, et al., 2015; R. S. Katz, 2005; Norris, 2017; Pilon, 2013; Renwick, 2010). For example, Reynolds (1999) shows that in South Africa, the ANC would have fared better under an MR system. Yet, ANC leaders chose to adopt PR because a more proportional system was considered more desirable in the light of South Africa's history.³

However, such democratic norms also play an important role in our neo-Rokkanian account of the politics of containment and electoral system choice. This is not because of any inherent normative superiority of PR systems over MR systems. While PR systems may be considered the more democratic system today, it is important to emphasize that in first-wave democracies, MR systems were generally considered valid and fully democratic options. Moreover, by the end of the First World War, PR had

³ To be clear, this literature does not deny the central role of parties' self-interest. Instead, as Blais and Shugart (2008, 186) write, 'the debate [. . .] is between those who think that the choice of an electoral system hinges "almost" entirely on interests and those who believe that ideas or values count "almost" as much.'

only been adopted by comparatively few countries. Although there was no shortage of PR advocates, there were still doubts about whether the PR systems could deliver on their promises. Majority rules, on the other hand, had a long history and followed a simple and intuitive logic (Colomer, 2007; Kreuzer & Neely, 2025). Furthermore, PR systems had already lost some of their luster by the 1920s, as party system fragmentation made some countries increasingly ungovernable, while extreme parties gained a strong foothold in parliament (Blais et al., 2005). There was pressure to make the electoral system more inclusive and proportional, but this pressure was certainly not irresistible.

Instead, we argue that norms of electoral integrity influence the politics of containment and electoral system choice. Most notably, open and visible forms of electoral manipulation often trigger an electoral backlash, because voters are likely to question the democratic legitimacy of the procedures that brought the majority to power and by implication the incumbents themselves (R. S. Katz, 2005; Mares, 2022; Norris, 2017; Quintal, 1970; Renwick, 2010; Shugart, 2008; Spencer, 1970).

The importance of such democratic norms is why, in this book, we have emphasized the role of district design and electoral alliances. These containment strategies have the advantage that their manipulative nature is difficult to prove. This is still the case for gerrymandering today, as the US case shows. As stated in *Vieth v. Jubelirer* (2004), the Supreme Court considers ‘political gerrymandering claims [. . .] inherently non-justiciable because there are no appropriate standards to decide such claims’ (McGann et al., 2016, 47). In other words, while many districts may look suspicious, it is difficult to prove that they are actually the result of gerrymandering.

A similar argument can also be made about malapportionment. Although malapportionment is easy to prove numerically, at least today, there is no consensus on whether other criteria—most notably the need to protect natural communities—might justify some over-representation of regions (Courtney, 2001; Golosov, 2016; Urbinati & Warren, 2008). Still today, there are numerous examples of established democracies that have rules that guarantee regions a fixed number of seats through minimum seat thresholds or other mechanisms that create malapportionment (e.g., Canada, France, Norway, Spain, Switzerland, USA). While some political actors may criticize these rules, they are not generally considered undemocratic.

Finally, electoral alliances are in principle possible for all parties, even though their lopsided use might result in large seat-vote distortions. It is precisely this credible deniability of illegitimate partisan advantage that makes district design and electoral alliances interesting strategies for electoral

engineers. Following (Shugart, 2008), they could be described as more ‘acceptable’ reasons for seat-vote distortions than other forms of electoral manipulation.

Undoubtedly, norms change and thus redefine the boundaries of legitimate practices. It is possible that the high levels of malapportionment observed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries might no longer be tolerated today, at least in advanced democracies. Higher quality and quantity of data may make it easier to identify manipulative district maps in modern democratic contexts. Furthermore, compared to first-wave democracies, advanced democracies are characterized by a more active civil society, and the role of international organizations and courts in assessing illegitimate electoral engineering has certainly increased as well (Norris, 2017; Renwick, 2010). For these reasons, the electoral engineering we have documented in this book may attract more attention and more criticism in advanced democracies.

For these reasons, it may be that our findings—based on first-wave democracies—are more readily applicable to electoral autocracies and transitioning democracies in other parts of the world. Indeed, a substantial body of research highlights the widespread use of malapportionment in democracies across the Global South (e.g., Ardanaz & Scartascini, 2013; Bhavnani, 2018; Boone & Wahman, 2015; Kamahara et al., 2021; Samuels & Snyder, 2001; Snyder & Samuels, 2004). Although harder to quantify, there is growing recognition that gerrymandering is also a concern in these contexts (e.g., Bickerstaff, 2020; Martinez i Coma & Lago, 2018; Tan & Grofman, 2018; Wong, 2017; Ziblatt & Levitsky, 2018). This evidence has led some scholars to argue that partisan districting is integral to the democratization process. More precisely, autocratic elites are argued to only cease resisting democratization when they can establish mechanisms—such as malapportionment or gerrymandering—to maintain influence over policy and secure their political survival in competitive elections (e.g., Albertus & Menaldo, 2018; Bruhn et al., 2010; Ong et al., 2017; Riera & Lago, 2023). These ideas align well with the theoretical framework developed in this book.

However, we should not jump to the conclusion that advanced democracies do not allow for electoral engineering and that parties’ seat-maximization concerns are largely constrained by strong norms of electoral integrity. The lively US debate on gerrymandering is a good example. Alleged gerrymanders regularly make the news, and in modern democracies, the news is available to all citizens. Some districts may simply look too odd not to be the result of partisan considerations (Seabrook, 2022). However, there is usually no conclusive evidence of partisan gerrymandering because

in order to identify gerrymanders, researchers (and courts) have to make several difficult assumptions about voter identities and turnout patterns, which can be challenged. Moreover, better data and more sophisticated algorithms also help would-be manipulators to conceal gerrymanders. In a sense, we may be witnessing an arms race in the manipulation of district maps and the detection of such manipulation. Similar arguments could be made for malapportionment. For this reason, McGann's (2006, 5) observation still rings true: Unbiased electoral systems seem to be the exception rather than the rule—even in advanced democracies.

Against this background, it is not surprising that even today, numerous democracies have high levels of malapportionment and suffer from widespread gerrymandering (Martinez i Coma & Lago, 2018; Riera & Lago, 2023). Moreover, the specialized literature is full of examples of electoral manipulation (Birch, 2011; Norris, 2017; Schedler, 2002), although we hasten to acknowledge that examples are somewhat less abundant in the case of advanced democracies (but see, for example, Abou-Chadi & Krause, 2020; Bickerstaff, 2020; Sauger & Grofman, 2016). We argue that in all political systems based on elections, parties seek to tweak the rules in their favour, but, admittedly, some may have to resort to more subtle forms of manipulation than others in order to avoid public outrage and keep political costs low.

9.3 Democratization as a game of manipulation

Electoral system choice is an integral part of the democratization process. In first-wave democracies, the adoption of PR typically removed biases favouring incumbent parties and led to the more adequate representation of political minorities. But such democratization is a deeply political process (Ahmed, 2013; Kreuzer, 2023; Mares, 2022; Ziblatt, 2006). Electoral reform always creates winners and losers. As much as the likely winners may yearn for reform, the likely losers will not give up their advantages. In short, democratization and electoral system reform mean political conflict, typically over long periods of time.

In first-wave democracies, most political parties understood whether the adoption of PR would benefit them. This is certainly the case for the insurgent and established parties suffering from large seat-vote distortions. These parties had valid reasons to believe that they would be better off under PR. In some cases, parties even anticipated such distortions and decided to adopt PR as long as they could still set the terms. The Belgian Conservatives understood that the combination of rural depopulation, a fixed map with

multi-member districts, and the emerging liberal-socialist alliance was about to doom their electoral hopes—however bright the current parliamentary situation might have looked. As shown in Chapter 8, there was no disagreement among the Belgian Conservatives about the need to reform, there was only disagreement about the specifics of the reform. The Conservatives ultimately adopted PR with a district map that greatly advantaged them.

Yet, it is not just the advocates of PR who understood the benefits of reform. The opponents often correctly anticipated that they would fare worse under the new electoral system, and they resorted, unsurprisingly, to defensive measures. Where possible, they relied on district design and electoral alliances to neutralize electoral threats, and as long as these containment measures proved effective, they fought against the adoption of PR. In general, we find that incumbent parties often had the means to resist electoral system change while keeping the political costs of electoral manipulation low enough. In many countries, external events and extra-parliamentary channels were needed to overcome their resistance.

This is not to suggest that electoral engineering always works. In recent years, scholars have emphasized the limits of electoral engineering (Renwick, 2018, 125). For example, exploring the effects of a variety of electoral reforms, Bowler and Donovan (2013, 5) argue that ‘our assessment demonstrates that expectations about the effects of electoral reforms are generally not met. [. . .] For all the discussion of institutional engineering and manipulation and all the effort involved, institutional changes may not actually change very much.’ We respectfully disagree. As far as the politics of containment and electoral system choice is concerned, electoral engineers were, more often than not, up to the task. While they may not have had precise information, they had ‘sufficient awareness’ of electoral interdependencies to develop strategic responses to electoral threats (Penadés & Pavía, 2024, 7). As argued by Blais and Shugart (2008, 196), ‘in the great majority of cases in established democracies politicians perfectly understand where their interest lies and they stake a position accordingly.’

In first-wave democracies, conservative parties, as the political representatives of the old elites, were often critical of democratization (Boix, 2003; Rueschemeyer et al., 1992; Ziblatt, 2017), although there are of course important differences between countries. Given this critical stance, it is perhaps not surprising that conservative parties engaged in electoral engineering to protect their political position. Stacking the deck in one’s favour is easier to justify if one rejects the game in the first place. In recent years, the literature has shown that in many countries, democratic institutions are often elite biased. Albertus and Menaldo (2018) argue that old elites try to use their

strong political position during the democratization process to design institutions that give them an unfair advantage in politics. Electoral systems and district maps are prime examples of institutions that can suffer from such biases. Albertus and Menaldo's (2018) research thus suggests that the more old elites are involved in the design of electoral rules, the more elite biased those rules will be.

The empirical evidence in this book is consistent with the elite-bias argument. Like Albertus and Menaldo (2018), we argue that electoral reform is a game of designing for partisan advantage. However, we propose an important amendment to the literature on elite-biased democratic institutions. Electoral system reform is not simply a story of conservative containment and pro-democratic forces demanding fairer electoral systems (Mares, 2022). As we have shown in this book, liberal parties were just as likely to rely on electoral engineering to protect their partisan advantage. In first-wave democracies, liberal parties typically favoured democratization, but they often advocated a rather elitist understanding of democracy (Ansell & Lindvall, 2021). For them, the masses were not ready for democracy yet, hence the necessity of liberal leadership, which had to be (temporarily at least) protected with such exclusionary strategies.

The Swiss case, discussed in Chapter 8, illustrates this liberal dilemma with great clarity. In the Swiss civil war of 1847, the liberal proponents of a federal state and modern democracy fought the conservative defenders of cantonal sovereignty and traditional authorities. The Liberals prevailed and installed a modern democracy in the heart of Europe. Also after the war, the Liberals continued to push for further democratization, for example by attempting to remove the remaining sub-national restrictions on universal male suffrage (Emmenegger et al., 2024). However, the Liberals remained suspicious of the Conservatives' commitment to democracy, which is why measures to limit their political influence were considered justified—even if the Conservatives enjoyed considerable popular support. As shown in Chapters 3 and 8, the Liberals relied on gerrymandering to limit the Conservatives' political influence. The Liberals spoke openly about the goal of their electoral engineering: the exclusion of the Conservatives from political power. Put differently, the Liberals considered illiberal means necessary *and* legitimate to protect democracy against its enemies.

In the early years of the Swiss federal state, the Liberals may have been right about the need to protect democracy, but over time this goal clearly took a back seat. More than 40 years after the creation of modern Switzerland, they still defended their gerrymandering by pointing to the need to protect democracy against the Conservatives. In the late 19th century, few

still believed this argument, however, arguing instead that the Liberals simply could not resist the temptations of power. Even political allies accused the Liberals of violating norms of electoral integrity for the sake of seat maximization (Gruner, 1978a, 364–365). What once might have started as an attempt to protect democracy turned into a simple defence of political privilege.

The Swiss case is by no means exceptional. The liberal parties in Scandinavia advocated suffrage extension and the removal of non-democratic chambers but kept finding excuses for high levels of malapportionment and actively resisted the reapportionment of seats. In a similar vein, the French Radicals defended democracy against the Monarchists, including by means of electoral system reform, but this did not stop them from relying on electoral engineering to contain the emerging Socialists and benefit from favourable seat-vote distortions. In short, incumbent parties, independent of their political colour, face strong incentives to create partisan biases if they are in the position to do so (Mares, 2022). Pro-democratic parties are no exception to this rule. Often, the only thing that differs is the justification. Some want to maintain social order, others want to protect democracy.

Hence, in our understanding, democratization is a deeply political and protracted process. Democracies do not appear all of sudden. Instead, democracies emerge gradually (Ziblatt, 2006, 332). The politics of containment and electoral system choice demonstrates this with great clarity. Ours is thus *not* an account of the rational design of institutions, although we do emphasize political actors' strategic behaviour. Instead, we think of electoral institutions, and institutions more generally, as the historical legacies of political struggles (Mahoney & Thelen, 2010). There is considerable conflict over electoral rules, and powerful actors try to impose their preferred rules, although they are not necessarily successful in achieving the desired (electoral) outcomes. In any case, once created, electoral institutions become 'weapons of coercion and redistribution' (Moe, 1990, 213), as some groups benefit from the redistributive effects of the institutions, whereas others lose out. As a result, electoral institutions have real power implications because they shape how votes are translated into seats.

Given their redistributive effects, it should not come as a surprise that electoral rules are constantly the object of political conflict. As mentioned, for a long time, electoral systems were considered prime examples of the stickiness of institutions, with institutional change arising only in extraordinary historical situations (R. S. Katz, 2005; Nohlen, 1984; Shugart, 2001). Yet, while electoral institutions may appear sticky, they are in fact constantly changing. For example, in case of MR systems, district boundaries have to be regularly redrawn, and even if they are not, population movements ensure that the

electoral geographies are changing with important implications for electoral outcomes. Similarly, PR systems are constantly changing, as seats are reapportioned, electoral formulas changed, or electoral thresholds adapted (Bol et al., 2015).

Often these changes are simply meant to stop institutions from ‘drifting’, as historical institutionalists call the neglect of institutional maintenance in spite of external change, which results in the slippage of institutional practice on the ground (Streeck & Thelen, 2005, 31). If seats are not regularly reapportioned, institutional practice changes as areas with below-average population growth benefit from over-representation, i.e. malapportionment. For this reason, political actors constantly engage in institutional work, which refers to purposive action aimed at creating, maintaining, and changing institutions (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). Institutional work is thus necessary to maintain institutions. Crucially, however, institutional work also offers possibilities for electoral engineering. In response to changing circumstances, for example regional differences in population growth, incumbent parties may decide to adapt district boundaries (reapportionment), while in other cases, they tolerate changes in the effect of electoral institutions, which result from these institutions *not* being formally changed—presumably because incumbent parties benefit from such non-intervention.

Parties disadvantaged by the institutional status quo most likely understand the redistributive effects of electoral institutions as well. For the British Liberal Democrats, for example, it is clear that they would be better off under a PR system. In the 2019 election, the Liberal Democrats turned a vote share of 11.6% into only 11 seats in the House of Commons (1.7% of the seats). In contrast, the Scottish National Party is more critical of electoral system change. In 2019, they turned a vote share of 3.9% into a seat share of 7.4%. This is not rocket science. Disadvantaged parties also understand that incumbent parties’ actions (or the lack thereof) may aim to manipulate these redistributive effects. When democratic members of parliament (MPs) fled to Oklahoma to prevent the Republican majority in the Texan legislature from enacting a new district map in 2003, they did this because they understood its likely redistributive implications (Engstrom, 2013, 59–60).

For this reason, parties disadvantaged by the redistributive effects of electoral institutions try to build a coalition for reform, which requires resources, skills, and opportunities (Emmenegger, 2021). In the Swiss case, Conservatives and Socialists had to agree on an alternative to the institutional status quo, which in this case meant, not least, finding a compromise on the district map (a fact that the incumbent Liberals tried to exploit by pointing to

the proportionality-inhibiting effects of this district map). The Conservatives and the Socialists were not natural allies, and it took considerable social skill to keep the reform coalition together. Three popular initiatives were necessary to reach a popular majority, which required considerable resources, because of the cost of multiple large national campaigns. In this process, the conservative-socialist coalition certainly benefited from strong party organizations, support from newspapers, and their links with large grass-roots organizations. Growing popular discontent with the incumbent Liberals, fuelled by the economic hardships of First World War, finally created an opportunity for reform.

In short, trying to build a coalition in favour of reform, which is sufficiently strong to challenge the institutional status quo, might take years. Even strong reform coalitions need to wait for the right opportunity to strike, because incumbents often have means at their disposal that may help to prevent institutional change (Capoccia, 2016). For this reason, electoral system choice cannot be solely analysed at the moment of reform, but should be understood in the context of the preceding decades of conflict (Kreuzer, 2023). These conflicts inform subsequent events as well as actors' interests and strategies. The adoption of PR is therefore often simply the culmination and conclusion of a long and protracted process. To understand why countries ultimately adopted PR, we also need to understand why some actors began to demand PR in the first place. Electoral reform is a game of manipulation, and this game can last a long time before the cards are finally dealt.

9.4 Avenues for future research

This book is not without limitations, which we hope future research will address. Empirically, by zooming in on the politics of containment and electoral system choice in first-wave democracies, this book has adopted a narrow geographic and temporal focus. As noted above, we expect our arguments to apply to all democracies and electoral autocracies, but we suspect that the politics of containment may look different depending on context. In particular, in advanced democracies, the presence of an active civil society, free media, and strong courts requires would-be manipulators to rely on ever more subtle strategies of containment, as some of the traditional strategies may cross the boundaries of legitimate practice. Where these boundaries lie is hard to say. The US case does not suggest that the practice of gerrymandering must lead to an electoral backlash, although in the USA, the situation may be complicated by the fact that both parties engage in gerrymandering. In any

case, we would expect incumbent parties to show less restraint and manipulate more openly in flawed democracies and electoral autocracies (Wong, 2017).

Another important weakness is the limited availability of data. In this book, we have provided new empirical evidence on electoral alliances, gerrymandering, and malapportionment. We have also analysed several roll-call votes, examined district maps, and provided rich qualitative-historical evidence on the politics of containment and electoral system choice. However, issues of data availability have limited what is possible in this book. The obvious example is the analysis of gerrymandering, which is difficult to prove conclusively, let alone with historical data. Moreover, issues of limited data availability also affect roll-call votes on the adoption of PR or the design of districts in newly adopted PR systems. In all these cases we have provided new empirical evidence, but we had to make do with the data we could find. Future research may be able to access new sources of data and thus further test the arguments put forward in this book.

The same should be said of qualitative historical work on the politics of containment and electoral system choice. Qualitative research is important for improving our understanding of causal processes and actors' motives. In this book, we have offered several short case studies and two detailed case studies of Belgium and Switzerland. The Swiss case is a typical one that exemplifies the cross-case relationship and thus allowed us to explore the causal mechanisms (Seawright & Gerring, 2008). The Belgian case, by contrast, looks at first sight like a deviant one. On closer inspection, however, the Belgian case demonstrates the validity of our arguments. In any case, research would benefit greatly from more such historical case studies. There is no lack of interesting cases. This is true for first-wave democracies, but it is of course also true for other countries and other periods.

In this book, we have focused on district design and electoral alliances as primary strategies for containing insurgent party threats. There are good reasons for this. As noted above, district design and electoral alliances are intimately linked to the choice between MR and PR systems. Their manipulative use is hard to prove, which makes them—compared to more open and visible forms of electoral manipulation—less costly in terms of voters' affect. Finally, as demonstrated in this book, these strategies can be highly effective in neutralizing electoral threats. However, there are undoubtedly also other electoral rules that can be used to the same end. For example, most new PR systems relied on the D'Hondt formula for vote-to-seat allocation (Bormann & Golder, 2013). The D'Hondt formula benefits electorally strong parties. Over time, some countries switched to the Sainte-Laguë formula, which is

less biased (Balinski & Young, 2001; Lijphart, 1994; Schuster et al., 2003). Our account suggests that the choice of electoral formula may also follow partisan considerations. Alternatively, parties may try to influence electoral thresholds, which can make it difficult for small parties to gain representation in parliament (Bol et al., 2015; Walter & Emmenegger, 2019). In short, there are alternatives to the containment strategies examined in this book. Future research may be able to shed more light on their strategic use and how they are related to the politics of electoral system choice.

A major oversight in this book is the lack of focus on the international dimension. In this book, we have focused on the domestic politics of containment and electoral system choice. However, electoral reform movements are organized and communicated internationally. It is well known that early experiences with PR were widely observed and served as inspiration to other countries (Blais et al., 2005; Bol et al., 2015). Reform efforts have also been documented and discussed in academia, for example in the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. Such international networks and the diffusion of ideas are likely to have mattered for the politics of electoral system choice. This book, and the scholarly literature more generally, has paid even less attention to how incumbent parties have learned from the experiences of other countries. How did incumbents learn to design an effective gerrymander? Did they develop their strategy for justifying excessive malapportionment by copying approaches used by incumbents in other countries? Did other countries serve as models for the creation of electoral alliances?

Finally, the empirical analysis presented in this book ends with the adoption of PR and the design of new district maps for the newly adopted electoral systems. This endpoint leaves unanswered the question of the extent to which the initial partisan advantages persisted. To be clear, a lot has happened in the last 100 years. Some parties such as the Italian Christian Democrats have disappeared. In fact, some of the countries examined in this book have temporarily ceased to be democracies and have abolished elections altogether. Nevertheless, electoral rules and district maps have a habit of staying in place. In many countries, conservative parties still enjoy a higher share of seats than votes because of small rural districts (Monroe & Rose, 2002) and socialist parties continue to do better under PR than MR systems (Döring & Manow, 2017). It seems as if the long shadow of early institutional choices can still be seen today, but more research is needed to identify causal relationships.

More than 60 years ago, Eckstein (1963, 249) argued that it is easy to become inextricably entangled in the complexities of electoral systems. This statement is still true today. Electoral systems have important distributional consequences, but their politics and their detailed workings are often poorly understood. Electoral reform does not boil down to a choice between MR and PR systems. Both MR and PR systems have important small print that has significant implications for how electoral systems work. Yet, the small print is not the same for MR and PR systems. District magnitude is perhaps the best example, as proportionality typically increases with district magnitude in PR systems and decreases with district magnitude in MR systems. For this reason, political parties' positions on electoral system reform, the choice between MR and PR, are strongly influenced by their ability to exploit this small print. It is unlikely that the amount of small print has diminished over the last 100 years, nor has the ability of political parties to exploit it. We can expect electoral reform to remain a game of manipulation in the 21st century.

Bibliography

- Aardal, B. (2002). Electoral Systems in Norway. In B. Grofman & A. Lijphart (Eds.), *The Evolution of Electoral and Party Systems in the Nordic Countries* (pp. 167–224). Agathon Press.
- Aardal, B. (2010). Den norske stortingsvalgordningen og dens politiske konsekvenser. *Norsk Statsvitenskapelig Tidsskrift*, 26(2), 75–104.
- Abou-Chadi, T., & Krause, W. (2020). The Causal Effect of Radical Right Success on Mainstream Parties' Policy Positions: A Regression Discontinuity Approach. *British Journal of Political Science*, 50(3), 829–847.
- Acemoglu, D., & Robinson, J. A. (2000). Why Did the West Extend the Franchise? Democracy, Inequality, and Growth in Historical Perspective. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 115(4), 1167–1199.
- Ahmed, A. (2013). *Democracy and the Politics of Electoral System Choice: Engineering Electoral Dominance*. Cambridge University Press.
- Albertus, M., & Menaldo, V. (2018). *Authoritarianism and the Elite Origins of Democracy*. Cambridge University Press.
- Alesina, A., & Glaeser, E. (2004). *Fighting Poverty in the US and Europe: A World of Difference*. Oxford University Press.
- Alexander, G. (2004). France: Reform-Mongering between Majority Runoff and Proportionality. In J. M. Colomer (Ed.), *The Handbook of Electoral System Design* (pp. 209–221). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Altermatt, U. (2020). *Vom Unruheherd zur stabilen Republik. Der schweizerische Bundesrat 1848–1875*. NZZ Libro.
- Altermatt, U. (2021). *Der lange Weg zum historischen Kompromiss. Der schweizerische Bundesrat 1874–1900: Referendumstürme, Ministeranarchie, Unglücksfälle*. NZZ Libro.
- Amtliches Stenographisches Bulletin der Schweizerischen Bundesversammlung. (1900). Initiativbegehren für die Proportionalwahl des Nationalrates und die Wahl des Bundesrates durch das Volk, 259–286.
- Amtliches Stenographisches Bulletin der Schweizerischen Bundesversammlung. (1902). Bundesgesetz betreffend die Nationalratswahlkreise, 1–22.
- Amtliches Stenographisches Bulletin der Schweizerischen Bundesversammlung. (1910). Initiativbegehren um Einführung des Verhältniswahlsystems für den schweizerischen Nationalrat, 95–112.
- Amtliches Stenographisches Bulletin der Schweizerischen Bundesversammlung. (1911a). Bundesgesetz betreffend die Nationalratswahlkreise, 95–120.
- Amtliches Stenographisches Bulletin der Schweizerischen Bundesversammlung. (1911b). Bundesgesetz betreffend die Nationalratswahlkreise, 121–138.
- Amtliches Stenographisches Bulletin der Schweizerischen Bundesversammlung. (1914). Volksbegehren um Einführung der Verhältniswahl für die Wahlen in den schweizerischen Nationalrat, 487–488.
- Amtliches Stenographisches Bulletin der Schweizerischen Bundesversammlung. (1918). Verhältniswahl für die Nationalratswahlen. Volksbegehren, 198–199.
- Anckar, D., & Anckar, C. (2010). Finland. In D. Nohlen & P. Stöver (Eds.), *Elections in Europe* (pp. 593–638). Nomos.

- Andeweg, R. B. (2005). The Netherlands: The Sanctity of Proportionality. In M. Gallagher & P. Mitchell (Eds.), *The Politics of Electoral Systems* (pp. 491–510). Oxford University Press.
- Andeweg, R. B., Ridder, J. D., & Irwin, A., G. (2010). Netherlands. In D. Nohlen & P. Stöver (Eds.), *Elections in Europe* (pp. 1379–1420). Nomos.
- Andrews, J. T., & Jackman, R. W. (2005). Strategic Fools: Electoral Rule Choice under Extreme Uncertainty. *Electoral Studies*, 24(1), 65–84.
- Ansell, B., & Lindvall, J. (2021). *Inward Conquest: The Political Origins of Modern Public Services*. Cambridge University Press.
- Ansell, B., & Samuels, D. (2014). *Inequality and Democratization: An Elite-Competition Approach*. Cambridge University Press.
- Ansolabehere, S., Gerber, A., & Snyder, J. (2002). Equal Votes, Equal Money: Court-Ordered Redistricting and Public Expenditures in the American States. *American Political Science Review*, 96(4), 767–777.
- Ardanaz, M., & Scartascini, C. (2013). Inequality and Personal Income Taxation: The Origins and Effects of Legislative Malapportionment. *Comparative Political Studies*, 46(12), 1636–1663.
- Bairoch, P., & Goertz, G. (1986). Factors of Urbanisation in the Nineteenth Century Developed Countries: A Descriptive and Econometric Analysis. *Urban Studies*, 23(4), 285–305.
- Baldwin, P. (1990). *The Politics of Social Solidarity: Class Bases of the European Welfare State 1875-1975*. Cambridge University Press.
- Balinski, M. L. (2008). Redistricting in France under Changing Electoral Rules. In L. Handley & B. Grofman (Eds.), *Redistricting in Comparative Perspective* (pp. 173–190). Oxford University Press.
- Balinski, M. L., & Young, H. P. (2001). *Fair Representation: Meeting the Ideal of One Man, One Vote*. Brookings Institution Press.
- Barber, K. L. (2000). *A Right to Representation: Proportional Election Systems for the Twenty-First Century*. Ohio State University Press.
- Barthélemy, J. (1912). *L'organisation du suffrage et l'expérience belge*. M. Giard et E. Brière.
- Bartolini, S. (2000). *The Political Mobilization of the European Left, 1860-1980: The Class Cleavage*. Cambridge University Press.
- Bartolini, S., & Mair, P. (1990). *Identity, Competition, and Electoral Availability: The Stabilisation of European Electorates 1885–1985*. Cambridge University Press.
- Barzachka, N. (2014). When Winning Seats Is Not Everything: Tactical Seat-Loss during Democratization. *Comparative Politics*, 46(2), 209–229.
- Bawn, K. (1993). The Logic of Institutional Preferences: German Electoral Law as a Social Choice Outcome. *American Journal of Political Science*, 37(4), 965.
- Becher, M. (2016). Endogenous Credible Commitment and Party Competition over Redistribution under Alternative Electoral Institutions. *American Journal of Political Science*, 60(3), 768–782.
- Becher, M., & González, I. M. (2019). Electoral Reform and Trade-Offs in Representation. *American Political Science Review*, 113(3), 694–709.
- Becher, M., & González, I. M. (2025). Trade and the Politics of Electoral Reform. *International Organization*, 79(2), 358–379.
- Benedetto, G., Hix, S., & Mastrococco, N. (2020). The Rise and Fall of Social Democracy, 1918–2017. *American Political Science Review*, 114(3), 928–939.
- Benoit, K. (2000). Which Electoral Formula Is the Most Proportional? A New Look with New Evidence. *Political Analysis*, 8(4), 381–388.
- Benoit, K. (2001). District Magnitude, Electoral Formula, and the Number of Parties. *European Journal of Political Research*, 39(2), 203–224.
- Benoit, K. (2004). Models of Electoral System Change. *Electoral Studies*, 23(3), 363–389.

- Benoit, K. (2007). Electoral Laws as Political Consequences: Explaining the Origins and Change of Electoral Institutions. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 10, 363–390.
- Bhavnani, R. R. (2018). The Effects of Malapportionment on Cabinet Inclusion: Subnational Evidence from India. *British Journal of Political Science*, 48(1), 69–89.
- Bickerstaff, S. (2020). *Election Systems and Gerrymandering Worldwide*. Springer International Publishing.
- Birch, S. (2011). *Electoral Malpractice*. Oxford University Press.
- Birch, S., Millard, F., Popescu, M., & Williams, K. (2002). *Embodying Democracy: Electoral System Design in Post-Communist Europe*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Blais, A. (1991). The Debate over Electoral Systems. *International Political Science Review*, 12(3), 239–260.
- Blais, A. (2008). *To Keep or to Change First Past the Post? The Politics of Electoral Reform*. Oxford University Press.
- Blais, A., & Carty, R. K. (1991). The Psychological Impact of Electoral Laws: Measuring Duverger's Elusive Factor. *British Journal of Political Science*, 21(1), 79–93.
- Blais, A., Dobrzynska, A., & Indridason, I. (2005). To Adopt or Not to Adopt Proportional Representation: The Politics of Institutional Choice. *British Journal of Political Science*, 35(1), 182–190.
- Blais, A., & Indridason, I. (2007). Making Candidates Count: The Logic of Electoral Alliances in Two-Round Legislative Elections. *Journal of Politics*, 69(1), 193–205.
- Blais, A., & Massicotte, L. (1997). Electoral Formulas: A Macroscopic Perspective. *European Journal of Political Research*, 32(1), 107–129.
- Blais, A., & Shugart, M. (2008). Conclusions. In A. Blais (Ed.), *To Keep or to Change First Past the Post? The Politics of Electoral Reform* (pp. 184–207). Oxford University Press.
- Bochsler, D. (2019). Electoral Systems in the Making. In R. D. Congleton, B. Grofman, & S. Voigt (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Public Choice, Volume 2* (pp. 193–218). Oxford University Press.
- Bochsler, D., Hänni, M., & Grofman, B. (2024). How Proportional Are Electoral Systems? A Universal Measure of Electoral Rules. *Electoral Studies*, 87, 102713.
- Boix, C. (1999). Setting the Rules of the Game: The Choice of Electoral Systems in Advanced Democracies. *American Political Science Review*, 93(3), 609–624.
- Boix, C. (2003). *Democracy and Redistribution*. Cambridge University Press.
- Boix, C. (2010). Electoral Markets, Party Strategies, and Proportional Representation. *American Political Science Review*, 104(2), 404–413.
- Bol, D. (2016). Electoral Reform, Values and Party Self-Interest. *Party Politics*, 22(1), 93–104.
- Bol, D., Pilet, J.-B., & Riera, P. (2015). The International Diffusion of Electoral Systems: The Spread of Mechanisms Tempering Proportional Representation across Europe. *European Journal of Political Research*, 54(2), 384–410.
- Bolliger, C., & Zürcher, R. (2004). Deblockierung durch Kooptation? Eine Fallstudie zur Aufnahme der Katholisch-Konservativen in die schweizerische Landesregierung 1891. *Swiss Political Science Review*, 10(4), 59–92.
- Boone, C., & Wahman, M. (2015). Rural bias in African Electoral Systems: Legacies of Unequal Representation in African Democracies. *Electoral Studies*, 40, 335–346.
- Bordignon, M., Nannicini, T., & Tabellini, G. (2016). Moderating Political Extremism: Single Round versus Runoff Elections under Plurality Rule. *American Economic Review*, 106(8), 2349–2370.
- Bormann, N.-C., & Golder, M. (2013). Democratic Electoral Systems around the world, 1946–2011. *Electoral Studies*, 32(2), 360–369.
- Bouhon, F., Jousten, A., & Vrolix, Z. (2018). Les circonscriptions électorales du Parlement wallon. *Courrier hebdomadaire du CRISP*, 2401–2402(36), 5–100.

- Bowler, S., & Donovan, T. (2013). *The Limits of Electoral Reform*. Oxford University Press.
- Brady, D., & Mo, J. (1992). Electoral Systems and Institutional Choice: A Case Study of the 1988 Korean Elections. *Comparative Political Studies*, 24(4), 405–429.
- Braunias, K. (1932). *Das parlamentarische Wahlrecht. Ein Handbuch über die Bildung der gesetzgebenden Körperschaften in Europa* (Vol. 2). De Gruyter.
- Bruhn, M., Gallego, F., & Onorato, M. (2010). Legislative Malapportionment and Institutional Persistence. *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 5467*, 33.
- Bucher, E. (1977). Die Bundesverfassung von 1848. In H. Helbing (Ed.), *Handbuch der Schweizer Geschichte* (pp. 987–1018). Berichthaus.
- Bundesamt für Statistik. (1907). *Die Ergebnisse der Eidgenössischen Volkszählung vom 1. Dezember 1900. Dritter Band. Die Unterscheidung der Bevölkerung nach dem Berufe*.
- Bundesamt für Statistik. (1918). *Die Ergebnisse der Eidgenössischen Volkszählung vom 1. Dezember 1910. Dritter Band Berufsstatistik. I. Teil: Hauptberuf*.
- Bundesamt für Statistik. (1920). *Eidgenössische Volkszählung vom 1. Dezember 1920. Kantonsweise Ergebnisse*.
- Bundesrat. (1910). Botschaft des Bundesrates an die Bundesversammlung betreffend das Initiativbegehren um Einführung des Verhältniswahlsystems für den schweizerischen Nationalrat. *Bundesblatt*, 10(1), 477–509.
- Bundesrat. (1914). Botschaft des Bundesrates an die Bundesversammlung betreffend das Volksbegehren um Einführung der Verhältniswahl für die Wahlen in den schweizerischen Nationalrat. *Bundesblatt*, 2(12), 119–155.
- Caciagli, M. (2010). Italy. In D. Nohlen & P. Stöver (Eds.), *Elections in Europe* (pp. 1027–1100). Nomos.
- Calvo, E. (2009). The Competitive Road to Proportional Representation: Partisan Biases and Electoral Regime Change under Increasing Party Competition. *World Politics*, 61(2), 254–295.
- Calvo, E., & Micozzi, J. P. (2005). The Governor's Backyard: A Seat-Vote Model of Electoral Reforms for Subnational Multiparty Races. *Journal of Politics*, 67(4), 1050–1074.
- Calvo, E., & Rodden, J. (2015). The Achilles Heel of Plurality Systems: Geography and Representation in Multiparty Democracies. *American Journal of Political Science*, 59(4), 789–805.
- Cameau, P. (1901). *La représentation proportionnelle en Belgique*. Arthur Rousseau.
- Cameron, A. C., & Trivedi, P. K. (1990). Regression-Based Tests for Overdispersion in the Poisson Model. *Journal of Econometrics*, 46(3), 347–364.
- Capoccia, G. (2016). When Do Institutions 'Bite'? Historical Institutionalism and the Politics of Institutional Change. *Comparative Political Studies*, 49(8), 1095–1127.
- Caramani, D. (2004). *The Nationalization of Politics: The Formation of National Electorates and Party Systems in Western Europe*. Cambridge University Press.
- Carey, J. M. (2007). Competing Principals, Political Institutions, and Party Unity in Legislative Voting. *American Journal of Political Science*, 51(1), 92–107.
- Carey, J. M. (2018). Electoral System Design in New Democracies. In E. S. Herron, R. J. Pekkanen, & M. S. Shugart (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Electoral Systems* (pp. 84–112). Oxford University Press.
- Carey, J. M., & Hix, S. (2011). The Electoral Sweet Spot: Low-Magnitude Proportional Electoral Systems. *American Journal of Political Science*, 55(2), 383–397.
- Carey, J. M., & Shugart, M. S. (1995). Incentives to Cultivate a Personal Vote: A Rank Ordering of Electoral Formulas. *Electoral Studies*, 14(4), 417–439.
- Carstairs, A. M. (1980). *A Short History of Electoral Systems in Western Europe*. George Allen & Unwin.

312 Bibliography

- Carty, R. K. (1985). The Electoral Boundary Revolution in Canada. *American Review of Canadian Studies*, 15(3), 273–287.
- Chambre des Répresentants. (1899). *Annales Parlementaires*.
- Chen, J., & Rodden, J. (2013). Unintentional Gerrymandering: Political Geography and Electoral Bias in Legislatures. *Quarterly Journal of Political Science*, 8(3), 239–269.
- Chen, J., & Rodden, J. (2015). Cutting Through the Thicket: Redistricting Simulations and the Detection of Partisan Gerrymanders. *Election Law Journal: Rules, Politics, and Policy*, 14(4), 331–345.
- Chiozza, G., & Goemans, H. E. (2004). International Conflict and the Tenure of Leaders: Is War Still *Ex Post* Inefficient? *American Journal of Political Science*, 48(3), 604–619.
- Christian, A. (2004). Australian Federal Redistributions 1901–2003. *AEC Research*, 1–45.
- Coakley, J. (2008). Electoral Redistricting in Ireland. In L. Handley & B. Grofman (Eds.), *Redistricting in Comparative Perspective* (pp. 155–172). Oxford University Press.
- Colomer, J. M. (2004). *Handbook of Electoral Systems Choice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Colomer, J. M. (2005). It's Parties That Choose Electoral Systems (or, Duverger's Laws Upside Down). *Political Studies*, 53(1), 1–21.
- Colomer, J. M. (2007). On the Origins of Electoral Systems and Political Parties: The Role of Elections in Multi-Member Districts. *Electoral Studies*, 26(2), 262–273.
- Courtney, J. C. (1999). Electoral Reform and Canada's Parties. In H. Milner (Ed.), *Making Every Vote Count: Reassessing Canada's Electoral System* (pp. 91–100). Broadview Press.
- Courtney, J. C. (2001). *Commissioned Ridings: Designing Canada's Electoral Districts*. McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Courtney, J. C. (2008). From Gerrymanders to Independence: District Boundary Readjustments in Canada. In B. Grofman & L. Handley (Eds.), *Redistricting in Comparative Perspective* (pp. 11–26). Oxford University Press.
- Cox, G. (1997). *Making Votes Count: Strategic Coordination in the World's Electoral Systems*. Cambridge University Press.
- Cox, G., Fiva, J. H., & Smith, D. M. (2019). Parties, Legislators, and the Origins of Proportional Representation. *Comparative Political Studies*, 52(1), 102–132.
- Cox, G., & Katz, J. (2002). *Elbridge Gerry's Salamander: The Electoral Consequences of the Reapportionment Revolution*. Cambridge University Press.
- Criddle, B. (1992). Electoral System in France. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 45(1), 108–116.
- Croco, S. E., & Weeks, J. L. P. (2016). War Outcomes and Leader Tenure. *World Politics*, 68(4), 577–607.
- Cusack, T., Iversen, T., & Soskice, D. (2007). Economic Interests and the Origins of Electoral Systems. *American Political Science Review*, 101(3), 373–391.
- Cusack, T., Iversen, T., & Soskice, D. (2010a). Coevolution of Capitalism and Political Representation: The Choice of Electoral Systems. *American Political Science Review*, 104(2), 393–403.
- Cusack, T., Iversen, T., & Soskice, D. (2010b). Web Appendix for 'Coevolution of Capitalism and Political Representation: The Choice of Electoral Systems'. 1–17.
- Dalton, R. J. (1985). Political Parties and Political Representation: Party Supporters and Party Elites in Nine Nations. *Comparative Political Studies*, 18(3), 267–299.
- Danmarks Statistik. (1913). *Folketingsvalgene den 20. Maj 1913 med Suppleringsvalg I Tiden 1910-13*. Bianco Lunos Bogtrykkeri.
- Danmarks Statistik. (1919). *Folketingsvalgene of Valgjzandsvalgene 1918. Afstemningen i de Enkelte Kommuner*. Trykt Hos J. H. Schultz.
- Dawson, R. M. (1935). The Gerrymander of 1882. *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, 1(2), 197–221.

- De Mesquita, B. B., & Siverson, R. M. (1995). War and the Survival of Political Leaders: A Comparative Study of Regime Types and Political Accountability. *American Political Science Review*, 89(4), 841–855.
- de Rooy, P. (2023). De Pacificatie van 1917. *Historisch Nieuwsblad*. <https://www.historischnieuwsblad.nl/de-pacificatie-van-1917/>
- Debs, A., & Goemans, H. (2010). Regime Type, the Fate of Leaders, and War. *American Political Science Review*, 104(3), 430–445.
- DeFord, D., Dhamankar, N., Duchin, M., Gupta, V., McPike, M., Schoenbach, G., & Sim, K. W. (2023). Implementing Partisan Symmetry: Problems and Paradoxes. *Political Analysis*, 31(3), 305–324.
- Degen, B. (1998). Wer darf mitregieren? Die Integration der Opposition als Gnadenakt. In B. Studer (Ed.), *Etappen des Bundesstaates. Staats- und Nationsbildung der Schweiz, 1848-1998* (pp. 145–158). Chronos.
- Delfosse, P. (2004). Les changements de mode de scrutin en Belgique. In A. Laurent, P. Delfosse, & A.-P. Frogner (Eds.), *Les systèmes électoraux. Permanence et innovations* (pp. 151–184). l'Harmattan.
- Demoulin, R. (1965). Beernaert. In L'Académie royale des sciences, des lettres et des beaux-arts de Belgique (Ed.), *Biographie nationale* (pp. 69–103). Établissements Émile Bruylant.
- Deneckere, G. (2010). *Les turbulences de la Belle époque*. Le Cri.
- Department of Justice. (1986). *Report of the Royal Commission on the Electoral System: Towards a Better Democracy*.
- Devresse, D. (1990). Belgium. In M. van der Linden & J. Rojahn (Eds.), *The Formation of Labour Movements, 1870–1914: An International Perspective* (pp. 25–55). Brill.
- Donovan, T. (2018). *Changing How America Votes*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Döring, H., & Manow, P. (2017). Is Proportional Representation More Favourable to the Left? Electoral Rules and Their Impact on Elections, Parliaments and the Formation of Cabinets. *British Journal of Political Science*, 47(1), 149–164.
- Dupriez, L. (1901). *L'organisation de suffrage en Belgique*. Librairie de la société du recueil général des lois et des arrêts.
- Duverger, M. (1951). *Political Parties: Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State*. Wiley.
- Eagles, C. (1990). *Democracy Delayed: Congressional Reapportionment and Urban-Rural Conflict in the 1920s*. University of Georgia Press.
- Eagleton-Pierce, M. (2013). *Symbolic Power in the World Trade Organization*. Oxford University Press.
- Eckstein, H. (1963). The Impact of Electoral Systems on Representative Government. In H. Eckstein & D. Apter (Eds.), *Comparative Politics. A Reader* (pp. 247–254). Free Press.
- Eggers, A. C., & Fourinaies, A. B. (2014). Representation and District Magnitude in Plurality Systems. *Electoral Studies*, 33, 267–277.
- Eggers, A. C., & Spirling, A. (2014). Electoral Security as a Determinant of Legislator Activity, 1832–1918: New Data and Methods for Analyzing British Political Development. *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 39(4), 593–620.
- Ehrhard, T., & Passard, C. (2020). The Politics of Electoral System Choice in a Context of Democratization: Electoral Reform and Institutional Change in the French Third Republic (1870–1940). *Parliaments, Estates and Representation*, 40(1), 59–77.
- Elklit, J. (1988). Den laveste partiegoismes allerbrutalste fjaes? In H. C. Johansen & J. Thomsen (Eds.), *Om danmarks historie 1900-1920* (pp. 61–96). Odense Universitetsforlag.
- Elklit, J. (1992). The Best of Both Worlds? The Danish Electoral System 1915–20 in a Comparative Perspective. *Electoral Studies*, 11(3), 189–205.

- Elklit, J. (2002). The Politics of Electoral System Development and Change: The Danish Case. In B. Grofman & A. Lijphart (Eds.), *The Evolution of Electoral and Party Systems in the Nordic Countries* (pp. 15–66). Agathon Press.
- Elklit, J. (2005). Denmark: Simplicity Embedded in Complexity (or Is It the Other Way Round)? In M. Gallagher & P. Mitchell (Eds.), *The Politics of Electoral Systems* (pp. 453–472). Oxford University Press.
- Elklit, J. (2010). Denmark. In D. Nohlen & P. Stöver (Eds.), *Elections in Europe* (pp. 501–564). Nomos.
- Emery, G. N. (2016). *Principles and Gerrymanders: Parliamentary Redistribution of Ridings in Ontario, 1840-1954*. McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Emmenegger, P. (2021). Agency in Historical Institutionalism: Coalitional Work in the Creation, Maintenance, and Change of Institutions. *Theory and Society*, 50(4), 607–626.
- Emmenegger, P., & Petersen, K. (2017). Taking History Seriously in Comparative Research: The Case of Electoral System Choice, 1890–1939. *Comparative European Politics*, 15(6), 897–918.
- Emmenegger, P., Thoma, A., & Walter, A. (2024). Landholding Inequality, Social Control, and Mass Opposition to Suffrage Extension. *British Journal of Political Science*, 54(2), 437–455.
- Emmenegger, P., & Walter, A. (2019). When Dominant Parties Adopt PR: The Mysterious Case of Belgium. *European Political Science Review*, 11(4), 433–450.
- Emmenegger, P., & Walter, A. (2021a). Disproportional Threat: Redistricting as an Alternative to Proportional Representation. *Journal of Politics*, 83(3), 917–933.
- Emmenegger, P., & Walter, A. (2021b). The Father of All Things or Rather an Obsession? The Effect of War on the Politics of Taxation. In L. Seelkopf & L. Hakelberg (Eds.), *Handbook on the Politics of Taxation* (pp. 32–46). Edward Elgar.
- Emmenegger, P., & Walter, A. (2024). Partisan Districting and the Adoption of Proportional Representation: Gerrymandering and Its Discontents. *European Political Science Review*, 16(2), 187–206.
- Engstrom, E. J. (2013). *Partisan Gerrymandering and the Construction of American Democracy*. University of Michigan Press.
- Fantino, G., & Erismann, J. (2011). Vector Data for French Cantons 1884-1925. *Laboratoire de Recherche Historique Rhône-Alpes - LARHRA UMR 5190*.
- Farrell, D. M., & McAllister, I. (2005a). 1902 and the Origins of Preferential Electoral Systems in Australia. *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 51(2), 155–167.
- Farrell, D. M., & McAllister, I. (2005b). Australia: The Alternative Vote in a Compliant Political Culture. In M. Gallagher & P. Mitchell (Eds.), *The Politics of Electoral Systems* (pp. 79–98). Oxford University Press.
- Firth, D. (1993). Bias Reduction of Maximum Likelihood Estimates. *Biometrika*, 80(1), 27–38.
- Fiva, J. H., & Hix, S. (2021). Electoral Reform and Strategic Coordination. *British Journal of Political Science*, 51(4), 1782–1791.
- Fiva, J. H., & Smith, D. M. (2017a). Local Candidates and Voter Mobilization: Evidence from Historical Two-Round Elections in Norway. *Electoral Studies*, 45, 130–140.
- Fiva, J. H., & Smith, D. M. (2017b). Norwegian Parliamentary Elections, 1906–2013: Representation and Turnout across Four Electoral Systems. *West European Politics*, 40(6), 1373–1391.
- Flora, P. (Ed.). (1986). *Growth to Limits: The Western European Welfare States since World War II*. W. de Gruyter.
- Franke, L. (1969). Schweden. In D. Sternberger & B. Vogel (Eds.), *Die Wahl der Parlamente und anderer Staatsorgane. Band I. Europa* (pp. 1083–1110). De Gruyter.
- Gagel, W. (1958). *Die Wahlrechtsfrage in der Geschichte der deutschen liberalen Parteien. 1848-1918*. Droste Verlag.

- Gagliardi, E. (1919). *Alfred Escher: Vier Jahrzehnte neuerer Schweizergeschichte*. Huber.
- Gallagher, M. (1991). Proportionality, Disproportionality and Electoral Systems. *Electoral Studies*, 10(1), 33–51.
- Gallagher, M. (2005). Ireland: The Discreet Charm of PR-STV. In M. Gallagher & P. Mitchell (Eds.), *The Politics of Electoral Systems* (pp. 511–532). Oxford University Press.
- Gallagher, M., Laver, M., & Mair, P. (1995). *Representative Government in Modern Europe*. McGraw-Hill.
- Gallagher, M., & Mitchell, P. (Eds.). (2005). *The Politics of Electoral Systems*. Oxford University Press.
- Gallagher, M., & Mitchell, P. (2018). Dimensions of Variation in Electoral Systems. In E. S. Herron, R. J. Pekkanen, & M. S. Shugart (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Electoral Systems* (pp. 22–40). Oxford University Press.
- Gambetta, D., & Warner, S. (2004). Italy: Lofty Ambitions and Unintended Consequences. In J. M. Colomer (Ed.), *The Handbook of Electoral System Choice* (pp. 237–252). Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- Garner, J. (1913). Electoral Reform in France. *American Political Science Review*, 7(4), 610–613.
- Garnett, H. A., James, T. S., MacGregor, M., & Caal-Lam, S. (2023). *Codebook: The Expert Survey of Perceptions of Electoral Integrity* (Version 9.0).
- Gaudillere, B. (1995). *Atlas historique des circonscriptions électorales françaises*. Droz.
- Gay, V. (2021). Mapping the Third Republic: A Geographic Information System of France (1870–1940). *Historical Methods: A Journal of Quantitative and Interdisciplinary History*, 54(4), 189–207.
- Gelman, A., & King, G. (1994a). Enhancing Democracy through Legislative Redistricting. *American Political Science Review*, 88(3), 541–559.
- Gelman, A., & King, G. (1994b). A Unified Method of Evaluating Electoral Systems and Redistricting Plans. *American Journal of Political Science*, 38(2), 514.
- Ghiringhelli, A. (1988). *IL Ticino della transizione 1889-1922. Verso l'affermazione del multipartitismo e dei prerequisiti della democrazia consociativa*. A. Dadò.
- Giannetti, D., & Grofman, B. (Eds.). (2011). *A Natural Experiment on Electoral Law Reform*. Springer.
- Giugăl, A., Johnston, R., Chiru, M., Ciobanu, I., & Gavriș, A. (2017). Gerrymandering and Malapportionment, Romanian Style: The 2008 Electoral System. *East European Politics and Societies: and Cultures*, 31(4), 683–703.
- Gjerløw, H., & Rasmussen, M. (2022). Revolution, Elite Fear and Electoral Institutions. *Comparative Politics*, 54(4), 595–619.
- Goblet D'Alviella, E. (1900). *La représentation proportionnelle en Belgique. Histoire d'une réforme*. Weissenbruch.
- Golosov, G. V. (2016). Electoral Systems and Territorial Representation. *Representation*, 52(2–3), 119–134.
- Gould, A. (1999). *Origins of Liberal Dominance. State, Church, and Party in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. University of Michigan Press.
- Grass, K.-M. (1969). Österreich. In D. Sternberger & B. Vogel (Eds.), *Die Wahl der Parlamente und anderer Staatsorgane. Band I. Europa* (pp. 921–972). De Gruyter.
- Grofman, B. (2016). Perspectives on the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 19, 523–540.
- Grofman, B., & Brunnell, T. (2005). The Art of the Dummymander: The Impact of Recent Redistrictings on the Partisan Makeup of Southern House Seats. In P. Galderisi (Ed.), *Redistricting in the New Millennium* (pp. 183–99). Lexington Books.

- Grofman, B., Koetzle, W., & Brunell, T. (1997). An Integrated Perspective on the Three Potential Sources of Partisan Bias: Malapportionment, Turnout Differences, and the Geographic Distribution of Party Vote Shares. *Electoral Studies*, 16(4), 457–470.
- Grofman, B., Lee, S.-C., Winckler, E., & Woodall, B. (Eds.). (1999). *Elections in Japan, Korea, and Taiwan under the Single Non-Transferable Vote: The Comparative Study of an Embedded Institution*. University of Michigan Press.
- Grofman, B., & Lijphart, A. (Eds.). (2002). *The Evolution of Electoral and Party Systems in the Nordic Countries*. Agathon Press.
- Gruner, E. (1978a). *Die Wahlen in den schweizerischen Nationalrat, 1848-1919. Wahlrecht, Wahlsystem, Wahlbeteiligung, Verhalten von Wählern und Parteien, Wahlthemen und Wahlkämpfe. Band 1*. Francke.
- Gruner, E. (1978b). *Die Wahlen in den schweizerischen Nationalrat, 1848-1919. Wahlrecht, Wahlsystem, Wahlbeteiligung, Verhalten von Wählern und Parteien, Wahlthemen und Wahlkämpfe. Band 3*. Francke.
- Hagel, J. (2004). New Zealand: Reform by (Nearly) Immaculate Design. In J. M. Colomer (Ed.), *The Handbook of Electoral System Design* (pp. 530–543). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hagen, J. (1971). *Valgkretsloven 1906*. University of Bergen.
- Handley, L. (2008). A Comparative Survey of Structures and Criteria for Boundary Delimitation. In L. Handley & B. Grofman (Eds.), *Redistricting in Comparative Perspective* (pp. 265–283). Oxford University Press.
- Handley, L. (2018). Electoral Systems and Redistricting. In E. Herron, R. Pekkanen, & M. Shugart (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Electoral Systems* (pp. 513–532). Oxford University Press.
- Handley, L., & Grofman, B. (Eds.). (2008). *Redistricting in Comparative Perspective*. Oxford University Press.
- Hart, J. (1992). *Proportional Representation: Critics of the British Electoral System 1820-1945*. Clarendon Press.
- Helland, L., & Saglie, J. (2003). Candidate Competition and Strategic Coordination: Evidence from Four Early Norwegian Elections. *Electoral Studies*, 22(4), 581–602.
- Hirter, H. (1988). Die Streiks in der Schweiz in den Jahren 1880-1914: Quantitative Streikanalyse. In E. Gruner (Ed.), *Arbeiterschaft und Wirtschaft in der Schweiz 1880-1914. Soziale Lage, Organisation und Kämpfe von Arbeitern und Unternehmern, politische Organisation und Sozialpolitik*. Chronos.
- Historical Dictionary of Switzerland. (2002–2014). *Historical Dictionary of Switzerland*. <https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/>.
- Hoffman, C. P. (2005). The Gerrymander and the Commission: Drawing Electoral Districts in the United States and Canada. *Manitoba Law Journal*, 31(2), 331–359.
- Höhmman, D., & Tober, T. (2018). Electoral Rules and Partisan Control of Government: A Replication Study. *Journal of Politics*, 80(1), 342–347.
- Holenstein, R. (2018). *Die Stunde Null. Die Neuerfindung der Schweiz 1848*. Echtzeit.
- Hooghe, M., Maddens, B., & Noppe, J. (2006). Why Parties Adapt: Electoral Reform, Party Finance and Party Strategy in Belgium. *Electoral Studies*, 25(2), 351–368.
- Høyland, B., & Søyland, M. G. (2019). Electoral Reform and Parliamentary Debates. *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 44(4), 593–615.
- Huber, A. (1899–1918). *Jahrbuch des Unterrichtswesens in der Schweiz*. Orell Füssli.
- Huber, E. R. (1978). *Deutsche Verfassungsgeschichte seit 1789. Weltkrieg, Revolution und Reichserneuerung 1914-1919*. Kohlhammer.
- Hunter, T. R. (2011). The First Gerrymander? Patrick Henry, James Madison, James Monroe, and Virginia's 1788 Congressional Districting. *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 9(3), 781–820.

- Huntington, S. P. (1991). Democracy's Third Wave. *Journal of Democracy*, 2(2), 12–34.
- Indridason, I. (2008). Competition & Turnout: The Majority Run-Off as a Natural Experiment. *Electoral Studies*, 27(4), 699–710.
- Ingesson, T., Lindberg, M., Lindvall, J., & Teorell, J. (2018). The Martial Origins of Democracy: A Global Study of Military Conscription and Suffrage Extensions since the Napoleonic Wars. *Democratization*, 25(4), 633–651.
- Iversen, T., & Soskice, D. (2006). Electoral Institutions and the Politics of Coalitions: Why Some Democracies Redistribute More Than Others. *American Political Science Review*, 100(2), 165–181.
- Jenkins, J., & Napolio. (2023). Conflict over Congressional Reapportionment: The Deadlock of the 1920s. *Journal of Policy History*, 35(1), 91–117.
- Johnson, R., & Miller, L. L. (2023). The Conservative Policy Bias of US Senate Malapportionment. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 56(1), 10–17.
- Jorio, M. (1998). Zwischen Rückzug und Integration. Die Katholisch-Konservativen und der junge Bundesstaat. In B. Studer (Ed.), *Etappen des Bundesstaates. Staats- und Nationsbildung der Schweiz, 1848-1998* (pp. 89–143). Chronos.
- Juriansz, J., & Opeskin, B. (2012). Electoral Redistribution in Australia: Accommodating 150 Years of Demographic Change. *Australian Journal of Politics & History*, 58(4), 557–579.
- Kalyvas, S. N. (1996). *The Rise of Christian Democracy in Europe*. Cornell University Press.
- Kamahara, Y., Wada, J., & Kasuya, Y. (2021). Malapportionment in Space and Time: Decompose It! *Electoral Studies*, 71, 102301.
- Katz, J. N., King, G., & Rosenblatt, E. (2020). Theoretical Foundations and Empirical Evaluations of Partisan Fairness in District-Based Democracies. *American Political Science Review*, 114(1), 164–178.
- Katz, R. S. (2005). Why Are There So Many (or So Few) Electoral Reforms? In M. Gallagher & P. Mitchell (Eds.), *The Politics of Electoral Systems* (pp. 57–77). Oxford University Press.
- Katz, R. S., & Mair, P. (2018). *Democracy and the Cartelization of Political Parties*. Oxford University Press.
- Kedar, O., Harsgor, L., & Sheinerman, R. A. (2016). Are Voters Equal under Proportional Representation? *American Journal of Political Science*, 60(3), 676–691.
- Keena, A., Latner, M., McGann, A. J. M., & Smith, C. A. (2021). *Gerrymandering the States: Partisanship, Race, and the Transformation of American Federalism*. Cambridge University Press.
- Kielmansegg, E. (1966). *Kaiserhaus, Staatsmänner und Politiker*. De Gruyter.
- Kölz, A. (1992). *Neuere Schweizerische Verfassungsgeschichte. Ihre Grundlinien vom Ende der Alten Eidgenossenschaft bis 1848*. Stämpfli.
- Kölz, A. (2004). *Neuere schweizerische Verfassungsgeschichte. Ihre Grundlinien in Bund und Kantonen seit 1848*. Stämpfli.
- Kovács, Z., & Vida, G. (2015). Geography of the New Electoral System and Changing Voting Patterns in Hungary. *Acta Geobalcanica*, 1(2), 55–64.
- Kreuzer, M. (2010a). Historical Knowledge and Quantitative Analysis: The Case of the Origins of Proportional Representation. *American Political Science Review*, 104(2), 369–392.
- Kreuzer, M. (2010b). Response to Cusack, Iversen and Sokice's 2010 APSR Article and Web Appendix.
- Kreuzer, M. (2023). *The Grammar of Time: A Toolbox for Comparative Historical Analysis*. Cambridge University Press.
- Kreuzer, M., & Neely, R. (2025). Sweden's Peculiar Adoption of Proportional Representation: The Overlooked Effects of Time and History. *Perspectives on Politics*, 23(1), 35–54.
- Kristvik, B., & Rokkan, S. (1966). 'Valgordningen'. *Politiske valg i Norge (The Electoral System: Political Elections in Norway)*. Universitetsforlaget.

- Kuo, D., & Teorell, J. (2016). Illicit Tactics as Substitutes Election Fraud, Ballot Reform, and Contested Congressional Elections in the United States, 1860–1930. *Comparative Political Studies*, 50(5), 665–696.
- Lachapelle, G. (1911). *La représentation proportionnelle en France et en Belgique*. Félix Alcan.
- Lachapelle, G. (1914). *élections Législatives des 26 Avril et 10 Mai 1914. Résultats Officiels*. Librairie des Publications Officielles et des Sciences économiques et Sociales.
- Lachat, R. (2015). Assessing the Mechanical and Psychological Effects of District Magnitude. *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*, 25(3), 284–299.
- Larsen Cadoret, C. (2010). Norway. In D. Nohlen & P. Stöver (Eds.), *Elections in Europe* (pp. 1421–1470). Nomos.
- Lawrence, T. B., & Suddaby, R. (2006). Institutions and Institutional Work. In S. Clegg, C. Hardy, T. B. Lawrence, & W. Nord (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Organization Studies* (pp. 215–254). SAGE.
- Leemann, L., Emmenegger, P., & Walter, A. (2025). Vox Populi: Popular Support for the Popular Initiative. *American Political Science Review*. Published online, 1–15. doi:10.1017/S0003055424001400.
- Leemann, L., & Mares, I. (2014). The Adoption of Proportional Representation. *Journal of Politics*, 76(2), 461–478.
- Levi, M., Calvert, R. L., & Eggertsson, T. (1997). *Consent, Dissent, and Patriotism*. Cambridge University Press.
- Lewin, L. (1988). *Ideology and Strategy: A Century of Swedish Politics*. Cambridge University Press.
- Lewin, L. (2004). Sweden: Introducing Proportional Representation from Above. In J. M. Colomer (Ed.), *The Handbook of Electoral System Choice* (pp. 265–278). Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- Lijphart, A. (1985). The Field of Electoral Systems Research: A Critical Survey. *Electoral Studies*, 4(1), 3–14.
- Lijphart, A. (1992). Democratization and Constitutional Choices in Czecho-Slovakia, Hungary and Poland 1989–91. *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 4(2), 207–223.
- Lijphart, A. (1994). *Electoral Systems and Party Systems: A Study of Twenty-Seven Democracies, 1945–1990*. Oxford University Press.
- Lijphart, A. (2012). *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries* (2nd ed). Yale University Press.
- Linder, W., Bollinger, C., & Rielle, Y. (2010). *Handbuch der eidgenössischen Volksabstimmungen 1848 bis 2007*. Haupt.
- Lindner, R., & Schultze, R.-O. (2010). Germany. In D. Nohlen & P. Stöver (Eds.), *Elections in Europe* (pp. 723–806). Nomos.
- Lipset, S. M., & Rokkan, S. (1967). Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments: An Introduction. In S. M. Lipset & S. Rokkan (Eds.), *Party Systems and Voter Alignments* (pp. 1–64). Free.
- Lipson, L. (1956). Le système des partis politiques en Suisse. *Revue Française de Science Politique*, 6(4), 813–832.
- Loots, J. (2004). *Voor het volk, van het volk. Van districtenstelsel naar evenredige vertegenwoordiging*. Wereldbibliotheek.
- López-Pintor, R. (2000). *Electoral Management Bodies as Institutions of Governance*. UNDP Bureau for Development Policy.
- Lucardi, A. (2019). The Effect of District Magnitude on Electoral Outcomes: Evidence from Two Natural Experiments in Argentina. *British Journal of Political Science*, 49(2), 557–577.
- Luebbert, G. M. (1991). *Liberalism, Fascism, or Social Democracy: Social Classes and the Political Origins of Regimes in Interwar Europe*. Oxford University Press.

- Lutz, G. (2004). Switzerland. Electoral Reform from Below: The Introduction of Proportional Representation in Switzerland 1918. In J. M. Colomer (Ed.), *The Handbook of Electoral System Design* (pp. 279–293). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Mackie, T. T., & Rose, R. (1982). *The International Almanac of Electoral History*. MacMillan.
- Madigan, D., Raftery, A. E., & Volinsky, C. T. (1999). Bayesian Model Averaging: A Tutorial. *Statistical Science*, 14(4), 382–401.
- Magar, E., Trelles, A., Altman, M., & McDonald, M. P. (2017). Components of Partisan Bias Originating from Single-Member Districts in Multi-Party Systems: An Application to Mexico. *Political Geography*, 57, 1–12.
- Magyar, Z. (2022). Marriage of Love or Marriage of Convenience? The Determinants of Pre-Electoral Coalition Formation during the French Fifth Republic 1962–2012. *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*, 32(1), 88–106.
- Mahaim, E. (1900). Proportional Representation and the Debates upon the Electoral Question in Belgium. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 15, 69–92.
- Mahoney, J., & Thelen, K. (2010). *Explaining Institutional Change: Ambiguity, Agency, and Power*. Cambridge University Press.
- Mainwaring, S., & Drutman, L. (2023). The Case for Multiparty Presidentialism in the US: Why the House Should Adopt Proportional Representation. *Protect Democracy and New America*.
- Mares, I. (2015). *From Open Secrets to Secret Voting: Democratic Electoral Reforms and Aoter Autonomy*. Cambridge University Press.
- Mares, I. (2022). *Protecting the Ballot: How First-Wave Democracies Ended Electoral Corruption*. Princeton University Press.
- Marks, G., Mbaye, H. A., & Kim, H. M. (2009). Radicalism or Reformism? Socialist Parties Before World War I. *American Sociological Review*, 74(4), 615–635.
- Martinez i Coma, F., & Lago, I. (2018). Gerrymandering in Comparative Perspective. *Party Politics*, 24(2), 99–104.
- Marty, T. (2013). De l'espace électoral à son 'découpage': Circonscriptions uninominales et circonscriptions de listes sous la Troisième République française. *Noréis*, 226, 91–106.
- Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research, Chair for, & Geodesy and Geoinformatics, University of Rostock. (2012). MPIDR Population History GIS Collection (slightly modified version of a GIS-File by Rumpler and Seger 2010).
- McGann, A. J. (2006). *The Logic of Democracy: Reconciling Equality, Deliberation, and Minority Protection*. University of Michigan Press.
- McGann, A. J., Smith, C. A., Latner, M., & Keena, A. (2016). *Gerrymandering in America: The House of Representatives, the Supreme Court, and the Future of Popular Sovereignty*. Cambridge University Press.
- McGhee, E. (2020). Partisan Gerrymandering and Political Science. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 23, 171–185.
- McLean, I. (1996). E. J. Nanson, Social Choice and Electoral Reform. *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 31(3), 369–386.
- McRobie, A. (2008). An Independent Commission with Political Input: New Zealand's Electoral Redistribution Practices. In L. Handley & B. Grofman (Eds.), *Redistricting in Comparative Perspective* (pp. 27–42). Oxford University Press.
- Medzeg, G., & Nohlen, D. (1969). Frankreich. In D. Sternberger & B. Vogel (Eds.), *Die Wahl der Parlamente und anderer Staatsorgane. Band I. Europa* (pp. 441–554). De Gruyter.
- Melik, V. (1997). *Wahlen im alten Österreich. Am Beispiel der Kronländer mit slowenischsprachiger Bevölkerung*. Böhlau.
- Milatz, A. (1974). Reichstagswahlen und Mandatsverteilung 1871 bis 1918. Ein Beitrag zu Problemen des absoluten Mehrheitswahlrechts. In G. Ritter (Ed.), *Gesellschaft, Parlament*

- und Regierung. *Zur Geschichte des Parlamentarismus in Deutschland* (pp. 207–223). Droste Verlag.
- Moe, T. M. (1990). Political Institutions: The Neglected Side of the Story. *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization*, 6, 213–253.
- Monroe, B. L., & Rose, A. G. (2002). Electoral Systems and Unimagined Consequences: Partisan Effects of Districted Proportional Representation. *American Journal of Political Science*, 46(1), 67–89.
- Montgomery, J. M., & Nyhan, B. (2010). Bayesian Model Averaging: Theoretical Developments and Practical Applications. *Political Analysis*, 18(2), 245–270.
- Natsch, R. (1967). Die Auseinandersetzung um das gerechte Wahlverfahren im 19. Jahrhundert. In E. Walder (Ed.), *Festgabe Hans von Greyerz. Zum sechzigsten Geburtstag* (pp. 535–558). Lang.
- Natsch, R. (1972). Die Einführung des Proporzwahlrechts für die Wahl des Schweizerischen Nationalrates (1900–1919). *Die schweizerische Referendumsdemokratie im XX. Jahrhundert* (pp. 119–182). Éditions universitaires Fribourg Suisse.
- Nelson, M. (2023). Independent Redistricting Commissions Are Associated with More Competitive Elections. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 56(2), 207–212.
- Nohlen, D. (1969a). Ireland. In D. Sternberger & B. Vogel (Eds.), *Die Wahl der Parlamente und anderer Staatsorgane. Band I. Europa* (pp. 651–694). De Gruyter.
- Nohlen, D. (1969b). Italien. In D. Sternberger & B. Vogel (Eds.), *Die Wahl der Parlamente und anderer Staatsorgane. Band I. Europa* (pp. 713–752). De Gruyter.
- Nohlen, D. (1969c). Niederlande. In D. Sternberger & B. Vogel (Eds.), *Die Wahl der Parlamente und anderer Staatsorgane. Band I. Europa* (pp. 857–890). De Gruyter.
- Nohlen, D. (1984). Changes and Choices in Electoral Systems. In A. Lijphart & B. Grofman (Eds.), *Choosing an Electoral System: Issues and Alternatives* (pp. 217–224). Praeger.
- Nohlen, D. (Ed.). (2005). *Elections in the Americas. A Data Handbook: North America, Central America, and the Caribbean*. Oxford University Press.
- Nohlen, D. (2010). France. In D. Nohlen & P. Stöver (Eds.), *Elections in Europe* (pp. 639–722). Nomos.
- Nohlen, D., Grotz, F., & Hartmann, C. (Eds.). (2001). *Elections in Asia and the Pacific: A Data Handbook. South East Asia, East Asia, and the South Pacific*. Oxford University Press.
- Nohlen, D., & Opiela, H. (1969). Belgien. In D. Sternberger & B. Vogel (Eds.), *Die Wahl der Parlamente und anderer Staatsorgane. Band I. Europa* (pp. 77–124). De Gruyter.
- Nohlen, D., & Stöver, P. (Eds.). (2010). *Elections in Europe: A Data Handbook*. Nomos.
- Nohlen, D., & Torka, G. (1969). Finnland. In D. Sternberger & B. Vogel (Eds.), *Die Wahl der Parlamente und anderer Staatsorgane. Band I. Europa* (pp. 413–440). De Gruyter.
- Noiret, S. (1997). La riforma elettorale del 1918-19. *Meridiana*, 29, 73–93.
- Norris, P. (1997). Choosing Electoral Systems: Proportional, Majoritarian and Mixed Systems. *International Political Science Review*, 18(3), 297–312.
- Norris, P. (2004). *Electoral Engineering: Voting Rules and Political Behavior*. Cambridge University Press.
- Norris, P. (2006). The Impact of Electoral Reform on Women's Representation. *Acta Politica*, 41(2), 197–213.
- Norris, P. (2017). *Strengthening Electoral Integrity*. Cambridge University Press.
- Norris, P. (2018). Electoral Systems and Electoral Integrity. In E. S. Herron, R. J. Pekkanen, & M. S. Shugart (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Electoral Systems* (pp. 490–512). Oxford University Press.
- Nunez, L., & Jacobs, K. T. (2016). Catalysts and Barriers: Explaining Electoral Reform in Western Europe. *European Journal of Political Research*, 55(3), 454–473.

- Nuscheler, F. (1969). Grossbritannien. In D. Sternberger & B. Vogel (Eds.), *Die Wahl der Parlamente und anderer Staatsorgane. Band I. Europa* (pp. 605–650). De Gruyter.
- Obinger, H., & Schmitt, C. (2018). The Impact of the Second World War on Postwar Social Spending. *European Journal of Political Research*, 57(2), 496–517.
- Ong, K.-M., Kasuya, Y., & Mori, K. (2017). Malapportionment and Democracy: A Curvilinear Relationship. *Electoral Studies*, 49, 118–127.
- Orr, G., & Levy, R. (2009). Electoral Malapportionment: Partisanship, Rhetoric and Reform in the Shadow of the Agrarian Strong-Man. *Griffith Law Review*, 18(3), 638–665.
- Overacker, L. (1955). The New Zealand Labor Party. *American Political Science Review*, 49(3), 708–732.
- Pelinka, A. (1966). Die Geschichte des Wahlrechts in der Ersten Republik. In R. Stiefbold (Ed.), *Wahlen und Parteien in Österreich. Österreichisches Wahlhandbuch* (pp. 265–71). Österreichischer Bundesverlag.
- Penadés, A. (2008). Choosing Rules for Government: The Institutional Preferences of Early Socialist Parties. In J. M. Maravall & I. Sánchez-Cuenca (Eds.), *Controlling Governments* (pp. 202–246). Cambridge University Press.
- Penadés, A., & Pavía, J. M. (2024). An Ecological Inference Approach to the Origins of Proportional Representation. *Social Science Information*, 63(2), 168–192.
- Persson, T., & Tabellini, G. E. (2003). *The Economic Effects of Constitutions*. MIT Press.
- Pilet, J.-B. (2007). *Changer pour gagner? Les réformes des lois électorales en Belgique*. Université de Bruxelles.
- Pilet, J.-B., & Bol, D. (2011). Party Preferences and Electoral Reform: How Time in Government Affects the Likelihood of Supporting Electoral Change. *West European Politics*, 34(3), 568–586.
- Pilet, J.-B., Renwick, A., Nunez, L., Reimink, E., & Simón, P. (2016). Database of Electoral Systems.
- Pilon, D. (1999). The History of Voting System Reform In Canada. In H. Milner (Ed.), *Making Every Vote Count: Reassessing Canada's Electoral System* (pp. 111–122). Broadview Press.
- Pilon, D. (2002). *Renewing Canadian Democracy: Citizen Engagement in Voting System Reform*. Law Commission of Canada.
- Pilon, D. (2013). *Wrestling with Democracy: Voting Systems as Politics in the Twentieth Century West*. University of Toronto Press.
- Poier, K. (2010). Austria. In D. Nohlen & P. Stöver (Eds.), *Elections in Europe* (pp. 169–232). Nomos.
- Polosky, J. L. (1992). A Revolution for Socialist Reforms: The Belgian General Strike for Universal Suffrage. *Journal of Contemporary History*, 27(3), 449–466.
- Przeworski, A. (2009). Conquered or Granted? A History of Suffrage Extensions. *British Journal of Political Science*, 39(2), 291–321.
- Przeworski, A., & Sprague, J. (1988). *Paper Stones: A History of Electoral Socialism*. University of Chicago Press.
- Quintal, D. P. (1970). The Theory of Electoral Systems. *Western Political Quarterly*, 23(4), 752–761.
- Rae, D. W. (1971). *The Political Consequences of Electoral Laws*. Yale University Press.
- Rahat, G. (2011). The Politics of Electoral Reform: The State of Research. *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion & Parties*, 21(4), 523–543.
- Rainey, C., & McCaskey, K. (2021). Estimating Logit Models with Small Samples. *Political Science Research and Methods*, 9(3), 549–564.
- Rasmussen, M., & Knutsen, C. H. (2023). *Reforming to Survive: The Bolshevik Origins of Social Policies*. Cambridge University Press.

- Rauchberg, H. (1907). Die statistischen Unterlagen der Wahlreform. *Statistische Monatsschrift*, 12(1), 229–269.
- Rauh, M. (1977). *Die Parlamentarisierung des Deutschen Reiches*. Droste Verlag.
- Raunio, T. (2005). Finland: One Hundred Years of Quietude. In M. Gallagher & P. Mitchell (Eds.), *The Politics of Electoral Systems* (pp. 473–490). Oxford University Press.
- Raymond, C. (2016). Explaining the Multiparty Systems of Western Europe Prior to the Adoption of Proportional Representation. *Comparative European Politics*, 14(3), 253–272.
- Rehfeld, A. (2005). *The Concept of Constituency: Political Representation, Democratic Legitimacy, and Institutional Design*. Cambridge University Press.
- Reibel, C.-W. (2007). *Handbuch der Reichstagswahlen 1890–1918: Bündnisse, Ergebnisse, Kandidaten* (Vol. 1). Droste.
- Remmer, K. L. (2008). The Politics of Institutional Change: Electoral Reform in Latin America, 1978–2002. *Party Politics*, 14(1), 5–30.
- Renwick, A. (2010). *The Politics of Electoral Reform: Changing the Rules of Democracy*. Cambridge University Press.
- Renwick, A. (2018). Electoral System Change. In E. S. Herron, R. J. Pekkanen, & M. S. Shugart (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Electoral Systems* (pp. 112–132). Oxford University Press.
- Reuter, O. J., & Szakonyi, D. (2021). Electoral Manipulation and Regime Support: Survey Evidence from Russia. *World Politics*, 73(2), 275–314.
- Reynolds, A. (1999). *Electoral Systems and Democratization in Southern Africa*. Oxford University Press.
- Riera, P., & Lago, I. (2023). The Strategic Determinants of Legislative Malapportionment in New Democracies. *Electoral Studies*, 81, 102568.
- Roberts, J. M. (2022). Careerism, Status Quo Bias, and the Politics of Congressional Apportionment. *Journal of Historical Political Economy*, 2(3), 391–414.
- Rodden, J. (2009). Why Did Western Europe Adopt Proportional Representation? A Political Geography Explanation. *Working Paper*.
- Rodden, J. (2010). The Geographic Distribution of Political Preferences. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 13, 321–340.
- Rodden, J. (2019). *Why Cities Lose: The Deep Roots of the Urban-Rural Political Divide*. Basic Books.
- Rogowski, R. (1987). Political Cleavages and Changing Exposure to Trade. *American Political Science Review*, 81(4), 1121–1137.
- Rokkan, S. (1970). *Citizens, Elections, Parties. Approaches to the Comparative Study of the Processes of Development [2009]*. ECPR.
- Rose, R., & Munro, N. (2010). United Kingdom. In D. Nohlen & P. Stöver (Eds.), *Elections in Europe* (pp. 2001–2034). Nomos.
- Rossiter, D., Johnston, R. J., & Pattie, C. (1999). *The Boundary Commissions. Redrawing the UK's Map of Parliamentary Constituencies*. Manchester University Press.
- Rottwilm, P. (2015). *Electoral System Reform in Early Democratisers: Strategic Coordination Under Different Electoral Systems*. Dissertation.
- Rueschemeyer, D., Huber, E., & Stephens, J. D. (1992). *Capitalist Development and Democracy*. University of Chicago Press.
- Rustow, D. (1955). *The Politics of Compromise*. Princeton University Press.
- Samuels, D., & Snyder, R. (2001). The Value of a Vote: Malapportionment in Comparative Perspective. *British Journal of Political Science*, 31(4), 651–671
- Santucci, J. (2022). *More Parties or No Parties: The Politics of Electoral Reform in America*. Oxford University Press.

- Särilvik, B. (2002). Party and Electoral System in Sweden. In B. Grofman & A. Lijphart (Eds.), *The Evolution of Electoral and Party Systems in the Nordic Countries* (pp. 225–269). Agathon Press.
- Sartori, G. (1968). Political Development and Political Engineering. In J. D. Montgomery & A. O. Hirschmann (Eds.), *Public Policy* (pp. 261–298). Harvard University Press.
- Sartori, G. (1994). *Comparative Constitutional Engineering: An Inquiry into Structures, Incentives, and Outcomes*. New York University Press.
- Sauger, N., & Grofman, B. (2016). Partisan Bias and Redistricting in France. *Electoral Studies*, 44, 388–396.
- Sawer, M. (2004). Australia: Replacing Plurality Rule with Majority-Preferential Voting. In J. M. Colomer (Ed.), *The Handbook of Electoral System Design* (pp. 475–486). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Schanbacher, E. (1982). *Parlamentarische Wahlen und Wahlsystem in der Weimarer Republik*. Droste.
- Schattschneider, E. E. (1960). *The Semisovereign People: A Realist's View of Democracy in America*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Schedler, A. (2002). The Menu of Manipulation. *Journal of Democracy*, 13(2), 36–50.
- Schröder, V., & Manow, P. (2014). Elektorale Koordination, legislative Kohäsion und der Aufstieg der modernen Massenpartei. Die Grenzen des Mehrheitswahlrechts im Deutschen Kaiserreich, 1890–1918. *Politische Vierteljahresschrift*, 55(3), 518–554.
- Schröder, V., & Manow, P. (2020). An Intra-Party Account of Electoral System Choice. *Political Science Research and Methods*, 8(2), 251–267.
- Schuster, K., Pukelsheim, F., Drton, M., & Draper, N. R. (2003). Seat Biases of Apportionment Methods for Proportional Representation. *Electoral Studies*, 22(4), 651–676.
- Seabrook, N. (2022). *One Person, One Vote: A Surprising History of Gerrymandering in America*. Pantheon Books.
- Seawright, J., & Gerring, J. (2008). Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options. *Political Research Quarterly*, 61(2), 294–308.
- Seliger, M., & Ucar, K. (1984). *Wahlrecht und Wählerverhalten in Wien 1848–1932: Privilegien, Partizipationsdruck und Sozialstruktur*. Jugend und Volk.
- Senn, M. A., & Straumann, T. (2022). *Unruhe im Kleinstaat. Der schweizerische Generalstreik von 1918 im internationalen Vergleich*. Schwabe Verlag.
- Shugart, M. (2001). Electoral 'Efficiency' and the Move to Mixed-Member Systems. *Electoral Studies*, 20(2), 173–193.
- Shugart, M. (2005). Comparative Electoral System Research: The Maturation of a Field and New Challenges Ahead. In M. Gallagher & P. Mitchell (Eds.), *The Politics of Electoral Systems* (pp. 25–55). Oxford University Press.
- Shugart, M. (2008). Inherent and Contingent Factors in Reform Initiation in Plurality Systems. In A. Blais (Ed.), *To Keep or to Change First Past the Post? The Politics of Electoral Reform* (pp. 7–60). Oxford University Press.
- Snyder, R., & Samuels, D. (2004). Legislative Malapportionment in Latin America. Historical and Comparative Perspectives. In E. Gibson (Ed.), *Federalism and Democracy in Latin America* (pp. 131–172). John Hopkins University Press.
- Spencer, M. E. (1970). Weber on Legitimate Norms and Authority. *British Journal of Sociology*, 21(2), 123
- Stengers, J. (2004). Histoire de la législation électorale en Belgique. *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire*, 82(1-2), 247–270.
- Stephanopoulos, N. O., & McGhee, E. (2018). The Measure of a Metric: The Debate Over Quantifying Partisan Gerrymandering. *Stanford Law Review*, 70, 1503–1568.

- Stephanopoulos, N. O., & Warshaw, C. (2020). The Impact of Partisan Gerrymandering on Political Parties. *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 45(4), 609–643.
- Streeck, W., & Thelen, K. (2005). Institutional Change in Advanced Political Economies. In W. Streeck & K. Thelen (Eds.), *Beyond Continuity. Institutional Change in Advanced Political Economies* (pp. 1–39). Oxford University Press.
- Sundberg, J. (2002). The Electoral System of Finland: Old, and Working Well. In B. Grofman & A. Lijphart (Eds.), *The Evolution of Electoral and Party Systems in the Nordic Countries* (pp. 67–99). Agathon Press.
- Szekendy, P. (2018). 100 Jahre nach der Einführung des Proporzwahlrechts. Blick auf fünf lange Jahrzehnte als dynamischer Prozess. *Parlament*, 21(3), 48–62.
- Taagepera, R., & Shugart, M. (1989). *Seats and Votes: The Effects and Determinants of Electoral Systems*. Yale University Press.
- Tan, N. (2013). Manipulating Electoral Laws in Singapore. *Electoral Studies*, 32(4), 632–643.
- Tan, N., & Grofman, B. (2018). Electoral Rules and Manufacturing Legislative Supermajority: Evidence from Singapore. *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, 56(3), 273–297.
- Tanner, A. (1998). Ein Staat nur für die Hablichen? Demokratie und politische Elite im frühen Bundesstaat. In B. Studer (Ed.), *Etappen des Bundesstaates. Staats- und Nationsbildung der Schweiz, 1848–1998* (pp. 63–88). Chronos.
- Tausanovitch, A. (2023). It's Time to Talk about Electoral Reform: To Fix the Dysfunction in American Politics, Reformers Should Consider Fundamental Changes to the Electoral Rules. [magazine]. *Center for American Progress*. <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/its-time-to-talk-about-electoral-reform/>
- Tilly, C. (2007). *Democracy*. Cambridge University Press.
- Törnudd, K. (1968). *The Electoral System of Finland*. Hugh Evelyn.
- Trefs, M. (2010). Belgium. In D. Nohlen & P. Stöver (Eds.), *Elections in Europe* (pp. 269–318). Nomos.
- Tsebelis, G. (1990). *Nested Games: Rational Choice in Comparative Politics*. University of California Press.
- Ucakar, K. (1985). *Demokratie und Wahlrecht in österreich. Zur Entwicklung von politischer Partizipation und staatlicher Legitimationspolitik*. Verlag für Gesellschaftskritik.
- Unkown. (1916). *Tableau des élections Générales a la Chambre des Députés pour la onzième Législature*. Imprimerie de la Chambre des Députés.
- Urbanati, N., & Warren, M. E. (2008). The Concept of Representation in Contemporary Democratic Theory. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 11, 387–412.
- van den Heuvel, J. (1899). *Contre le scrutin uninominal*. Librairie Engelcke.
- Vanhanen, T. (2003). *Democratization and Power Resources 1850-2000 [dataset]*. Finnish Social Science Data Archive.
- Vatter, A., Freiburghaus, R., & Arens, A. (2020). Coming a Long Way: Switzerland's Transformation from a Majoritarian to a Consensus Democracy (1848–2018). *Democratization*, 27(6), 970–989.
- Vauthier, M. (1894). The Revision of the Belgian Constitution in 1893. *Political Science Quarterly*, 9(4), 704–729.
- Verney, D. (1957). *Parliamentary Reform in Sweden, 1866–1921*. Clarendon Press.
- von Greyerz, H. (1977). Der Bundesstaat seit 1848. In U. Hof & A. Stahelin (Eds.), *Handbuch der Schweizer Geschichte* (pp. 1019–1268). Berichthaus.
- Walter, A. (2021). Socialist Threat? Radical Party Entry, Cleavage Structure, and the Introduction of Proportional Representation. *American Political Science Review*, 115(2), 701–708.
- Walter, A., & Emmenegger, P. (2019). Majority Protection? The Origins of Distorted Proportional Representation. *Electoral Studies*, 59, 64–77.

- Walter, A., & Emmenegger, P. (2024). Who Counts? Non-Citizen Residents, Spatial Sorting, and Malapportionment. *British Journal of Political Science*, forthcoming.
- Ward, N. (1950). *The Canadian House of Commons: Representation*. University of Toronto Press.
- Ward, N. (1967). A Century of Constituencies. *Canadian Public Administration*, 10(1), 105–122.
- Wigger, B. (1997). *Die Schweizerische Konservative Volkspartei 1903–1918*. Universitätsverlag Freiburg.
- Wisler, D. (2008). *La démocratie genevoise*. Georg Editeur.
- Woeste, C. (1927). *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire contemporaine de la Belgique. Tome I (1859–1894)*. L'édition universelle.
- Woeste, C. (1933). *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire contemporaine de la Belgique. Tome II (1894–1914)*. L'édition universelle.
- Wong, S. H.-W. (2017). Gerrymandering in Electoral Autocracies: Evidence from Hong Kong. *British Journal of Political Science*, 49(2), 579–610.
- Ziblatt, D. (2006). How Did Europe Democratize? *World Politics*, 58(2), 311–338.
- Ziblatt, D. (2017). *Conservative Parties and the Birth of Democracy*. Cambridge University Press.
- Ziblatt, D., & Blossom, J. (2011). Electoral District Boundaries, Germany, 1890–1912. *Harvard University Geospatial Library*.
- Ziblatt, D., & Levitsky, S. (2018). *How Democracies Die*. Crown.

Index

A

- agricultural workforce, *see* industrialization
- apportionment, 40–41, 67, 69–70
 - Austria, 78
 - France, 80
 - United States of America, 76, 88
- Australia, 20, 58, 120–121, 135
 - electoral reform, 176–177
 - malapportionment, 71–75, 80, 127
 - party positions, 123, 144
- Austria, 20, 43, 84, 129, 135–146
 - district design, 194–197, 214
 - electoral reform, 159–161
 - malapportionment, 71–79, 127
 - party positions, 123
 - runoffs, 60–66
- autocratic holdovers, electoral
 - legacy, 298–304

B

- ballot structure, 4–5, 28
- Belgium, 20–22, 24, 31, 49–50, 192–199, 223–226, 252–286
 - cartel and vote margins, 262–266
 - Conservatives' vote for PR (1898–1899), 269–276
 - constitutional debates (1893–1894), 257–261
 - district design, 35, 81, 105, 183, 187–188, 262–281
 - electoral reform, 135–140, 145, 252–282
 - majority built on sand (1894–1898), 261–269
 - malapportionment, 72–85, 127, 261–269
 - party positions, 120–123
 - runoffs, 60–65, 261–269
- bias, partisan, 6, 13–19, 28–58, 90–103
 - see also* gerrymandering;
 - malapportionment
- bicameralism, 108, 112, 117, 121
- boundary commissions, 39, 42–43, 53, 67, 80–86, 114

C

- Canada, 40, 120, 175, 177
 - electoral reform, 135, 144, 175
 - gerrymandering, 56, 84–86, 127
 - malapportionment, 75–77, 127, 297
 - party positions, 123
- cartel lists (Belgium), 60, 263–268, 273–282, 284, 286
 - see also* electoral alliances
- case selection, 19–22, 121, 223
 - see also* first-wave democracies
- cleavages, social and geographic, 184, 274, 295
- coalitions for reform, 23–24, 50, 101–102, 110–120, 134–143, 192–195

D

- democratic backsliding, 298–304
- democratic norms, 12–17, 50–53, 296–298
- democratic transitions, *see* first-wave democracies
- Denmark, 20, 136–142, 193–194, 202, 206, 211, 293–296
 - district design, 206–208
 - electoral reform, 145, 161–165, 199
 - malapportionment, 71–75, 127
 - party positions, 123
- direct democracy, 115, 139–140, 225–252, 282, 286
- disproportionality, 122, 200, 205–206, 239, 248–250
 - by electoral system, 98–100
 - relation to containment, 127–132
- district design, 1–26, 38–46, 66–99
 - for new PR systems, 181–214
 - party influence on design, 197

E

- electoral alliances, 46–47, 57–66, 98–115, 166–170, 223–227, 247–248, 262–282, 290–297
- electoral geography, 9–18, 33–44, 102–110, 186–192

electoral market(s), 10–13, 101–107, 292
 electoral system(s), 4–8
 electoral threats, 27–32, 38–57
 see also Rokkan's theory
 electoral thresholds, 7, 40, 187–188, 297,
 303, 306
 extra-parliamentary means, 112–117,
 143–147

F

Finland, 20, 140
 electoral reform, 173–174
 party positions, 124
 first-past-the-post, 5
 first-wave democracies, 19–22, 298–299
 France, 20
 district design, 214–215
 electoral reform, 165–169
 gerrymandering, 84–86, 127
 malapportionment, 70–80, 127
 party positions, 124
 pre- and post-reform districts, 190–192

G

geographical coalitions for reform, 103–112
 Germany, 20
 district design, 208–210
 electoral alliances and runoffs, 46, 57–66
 electoral reform, 169–173
 malapportionment, 40, 71–75, 127
 party positions, 124
 gerrymandering, 41–46, 82–85
 Canada, 85–86
 Switzerland, 91–97, 228–240
 USA, 86–91

I

Incumbent parties, 13–17, 44–48, 113–117,
 127, 138–142
 industrialization, 67–71
 Belgium, 261–269
 Switzerland, 229
 inter-district homogeneity, 11
 Ireland, 20, 135
 electoral reform, 174–175
 party positions, 125
 Italy, 20, 138, 141–142
 electoral reform, 148–151
 party positions, 125

J

Japan, 20, 121
 joint lists, 46–47, 57–66
 Belgium, 262–282
 see also electoral alliances

K

king's influence
 Belgium, 267–271
 Denmark, 145–146, 162–165
 Sweden, 158

L

liberal containment strategies, 91–97,
 228–240, 301–302
 list proportional representation (PR), *see*
 proportional representation

M

majoritarian representation (MR), 5–6,
 28–30, 32–38
 malapportionment, 6, 34–46, 66–82,
 104–107, 297–299
 military conflicts, 17, 23, 115–116, 144–145
 see also extra-parliamentary means
 multi-member districts, 5–7, 28–39

N

neo-Rokkanian theory, 13–19, 289–299
 Netherlands, 20, 138–145
 1917 Pacification (Netherlands), 139, 151
 district design, 181–184, 215
 electoral alliances, 60–66
 electoral reform, 151–153
 gerrymandering, 84, 127
 malapportionment, 72–81
 party positions, 125
 runoffs, 60–66
 New Zealand, 20
 electoral reform, 177–178
 independent boundary commissions, 39,
 43, 80–86
 party positions, 125
 non-parliamentary channels to
 reform, 112–117, 143–147, 240–252
 see also direct democracy; military
 conflicts; revolutions
 Norway, 20, 138, 141–142
 district design, 181–184, 210–212
 electoral alliances, 57–66
 electoral reform, 153–157

Norway (*Continued*)

- malapportionment, 71–77
- party positions, 125
- peasant clause, 76
- runoffs, 57–66

P

- partisan districting, 10–13, 38–48, 66–99
 - see also* gerrymandering; malapportionment
- party cohesion, 9, 260–277, 295–296
- party fragmentation, 7, 29, 46, 114, 269
- party preferences for PR, 119–134
 - rural vs. urban party positions, 103–110, 134–143
- plural vote (abolition and effects), 254–282
- plurality/majority systems, 5–6, 28–30, 32–38
- population shifts and districting, 6, 34–46, 66–82, 104–107
 - see also* gerrymandering; malapportionment
- pre-reform districts (France), 191–193
- proportional representation (PR), 7–8, 28–38
 - PR system, *see* proportional representation

R

- reapportionment frequency and regularity, 72–82
- redistricting, 10–13, 38–48, 66–99
 - see also* gerrymandering; malapportionment
- referendums, 115, 225–252
 - see also* direct democracy
- regional concentration (party voters), 9–18, 33–44, 102–110, 186–192
 - see also* electoral geography
- revolution, 32, 116, 144–145, 172–173, 228
 - see also* extra-parliamentary means
- Rokkan's theory, 26–38
 - first road (electoral threats), 27–32
 - second road (seat-vote distortions), 32–38
- runoffs, 46–47, 57–66
 - see also* electoral alliances
- rural parties, 103–110

S

- seat-vote distortions, 32–52, 205–206
 - by electoral system, 98–100
 - relation to containment, 128–132
 - see also* disproportionality; Rokkan's theory
- single-member districts (SMD), 5–7, 195–196, 206–212
- Sweden, 3–4, 20, 137–142
 - district design, 194–195, 215
 - electoral reform, 157–159
 - party positions, 126
- suffrage extension, 27, 145–147
 - Austria, 160
 - Belgium, 257–261
 - Denmark, 163
 - Finland, 173
 - Italy, 151
 - Netherlands, 152–153
 - New Zealand, 177
 - Norway, 155–156
 - Sweden, 157–159
 - United Kingdom, 178–179
- support for PR (determinants), 102–148
- Switzerland, 20, 136–143
 - direct democracy, 240–252
 - district design, 181–184
 - electoral reform, 225–252
 - gerrymandering, 91–97, 127, 228–252
 - malapportionment, 71–77, 81
 - party positions, 126
 - runoffs, 57–66

T

- territorial representation, 12, 35, 40, 52, 67, 297

U

- United Kingdom, 1–7, 20
 - electoral reform, 178–180
 - gerrymandering, 84
 - malapportionment, 80
 - party positions, 126
- United States, 20, 82–97, 85–90
 - electoral reform, 175
 - gerrymandering, 13, 86–91, 127
 - malapportionment, 76–77, 127
 - party positions, 126
 - reapportionment revolution, 82–86

urban parties, 103–110
urbanization, 40, 68–70

V

vote-seat translation, 6, 18, 23–25, 34–36,
44–45
see also district design; gerrymandering

voter coordination, 63–65

W

winner-takes-all logic, 5, 28, 33–35, 103,
257–263

Y

year of PR adoption, 20

