

**Direct democracy, xenophobia and immigrants'
civic engagement
in Switzerland and the United States**

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Ambivalent nature of direct democracy: Active citizens...



Landsgemeinde («cantonal assembly») in canton Glarus,
05/05/2013

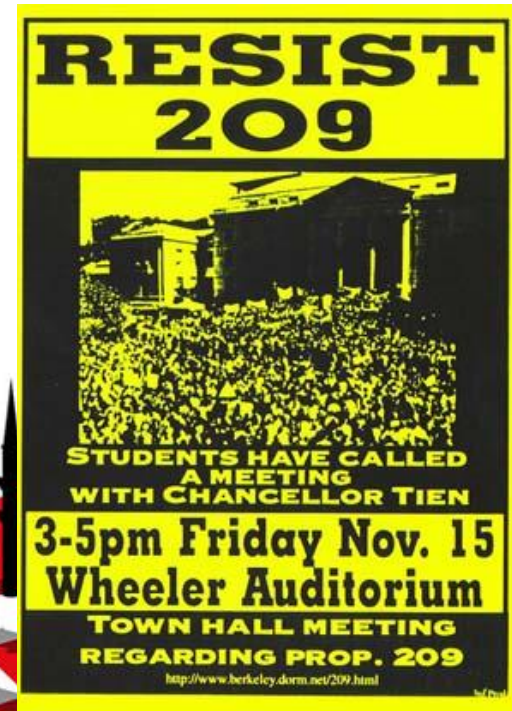
...versus immigrant sceptic outcomes

US states, e.g. California

- Proposition 187, “save our state initiative” (1994)—sought to eliminate public services (e.g. health care, education) to undocumented immigrants in California
- Proposition 209 (1996)—eliminated California’s affirmative action policies
- Proposition 227 (1998)—eliminated bilingual education in California’s public schools

Switzerland

- National vote banning the construction of minarets, adopted in 2009
- National vote on the deportation of criminal immigrants, adopted in 2010
- National vote on the initiative against “mass immigration”, adopted in 2014



Research Questions

- How does direct democracy affect (national and non-national) immigrants' civic engagement?

Subordinate questions:

- Which role does public opinion play, meaning to which extent is the relationship between direct democracy and immigrant civic engagement moderated by immigrant-skeptic attitudes and xenophobia?
- Is the relationship between direct democracy, xenophobia and immigrant civic engagement country specific, or not? In other words: Can it be observed in very different direct democratic systems, such as Swiss cantons and US-states?

Theory

- *direct democracy and civic engagement*: “educative” civic participation enhancing effect, neo-institutionalist perspective
(Smith & Tolbert 2007, Stadelmann-Steffen & Freitag 2014 etc.)
- *direct democracy and minorities*: tyranny of the majority, anti-immigrant minority bias of direct democracy
(Campbell et al. 2006, Christmann 2010, Vatter et al. 2014 etc.)
- *immigrants’ civic engagement*: individual and contextual determinants (e.g. integration regimes), neo-institutionalist perspective
(Handy & Greenspan 2009, Koopmans et al. 2005, Manatschal 2013 etc.)

Research gap: direct democracy → immigrants' civic engagement?

Basic theoretical rationale: **rainmaker effect** (e.g. Van der Meer 2003)

Research Design

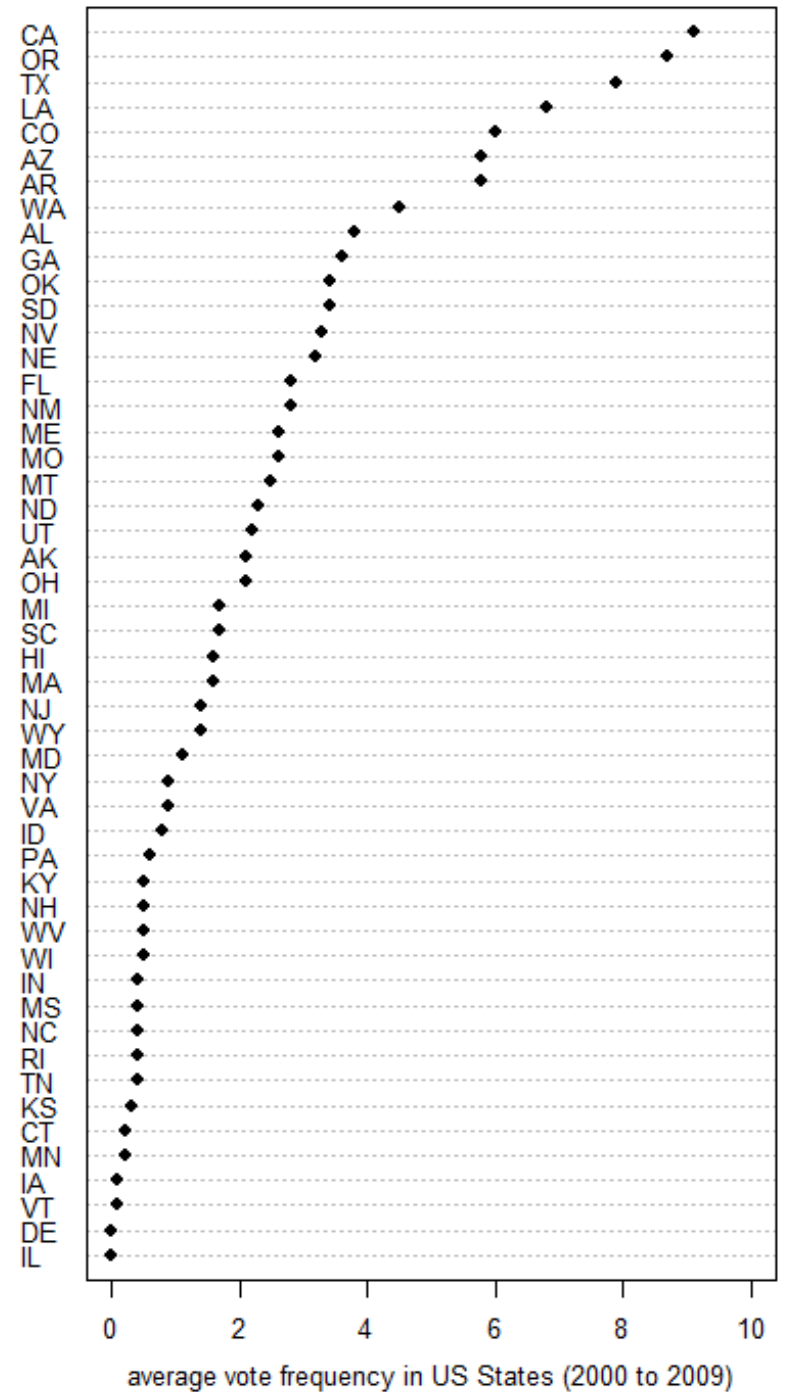
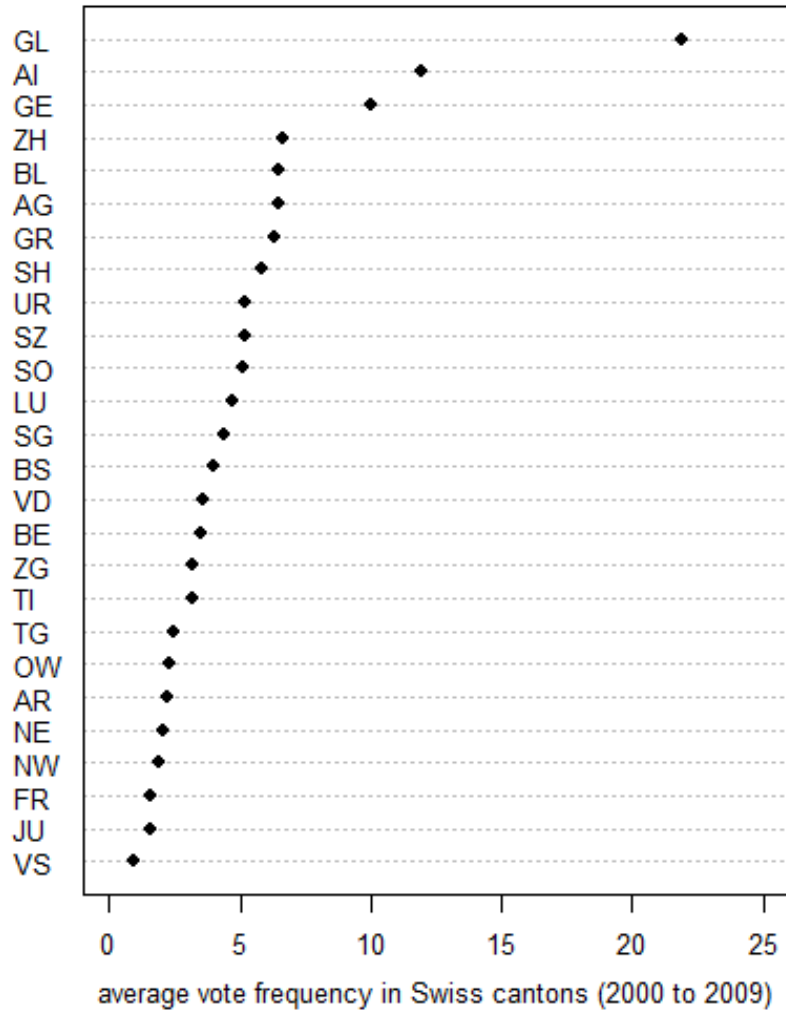
Two stage mixed-method comparative design

- Stage 1)** parallel subnational comparative analyses for Swiss cantons and US States
(internal Validity) ~ most similar systems
quan. Methods: Bayesian multilevel analyses (cross sectional, over time)
level 1: individuals (immigrants)
level 2: direct democracy at state/canton level
(level 3: time)
- Stage 2)** comparison across national contexts (CH vs. USA)
(external Validity) ~ most different systems
qual. Methods: e.g. paired comparison (Tarrow 2010)

Data

Variable	Indicators	Data for Swiss cantons	Data for US-states
Civic engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal volunteering for organizations and associations Electoral & non-electoral political participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Swiss Volunteering Survey (2006, 2009, 2014) Swiss Household Panel (1999-2013) SELECTS (national post electoral survey, 1971-2011) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current Population Survey (CPS), suppl. on volunteering, civic engagement, voting American National Election Survey (ANES, 1948-2012)
Individual Controls (selection)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Socio-demographics (nationality, age, gender) Level of education, employment status Religion, Pol. interest etc. 	ditto	ditto
Attitudes toward immigrants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identical indicator(s) of anti-immigrant attitudes (e.g. threat perception, equality of rights) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Measurement and Observation of Social Attitudes in Switzerland (MOSAiCH-ISSP) (2013) SELECTS (post-election survey, 1971-2011) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General Social Survey (GSS) (1972-2012) ISSP survey on national identity (2013)
Direct democracy at the subnational level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> direct democratic institutions (rules in form) practice of direct democracy (rules in use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dataset by Vatter et al. (2011) democracy in Swiss cantons (1979-2009) Own update (data collection) for years 2010-2014 using sources from Vatter et al. (2011) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dataset by Bernauer and Vatter (2015), democracy in US States (1990-2014) Initiative and Referendum Institute, University of Southern California (1904-2010), etc.

Direct dem. «in use»



Open questions

- Focus: broad understanding of civic engagement or just focus on political participation (electoral and non-electoral)?
- US survey data: other surveys on civic engagement?
- US context: immigrants versus ethnic/racial minorities

Contribution

1. Quantitative political analysis of migration phenomena
2. Hierarchical comparative research design exploits the complementarity of within and cross-country comparisons without losing sight of the inherently local nature of immigrant civic engagement
3. Assessment of political institutions and their substantive outcomes / quality of democratic systems in contemporary societies of immigration