

Mixed-member proportional electoral systems – the best of both worlds?

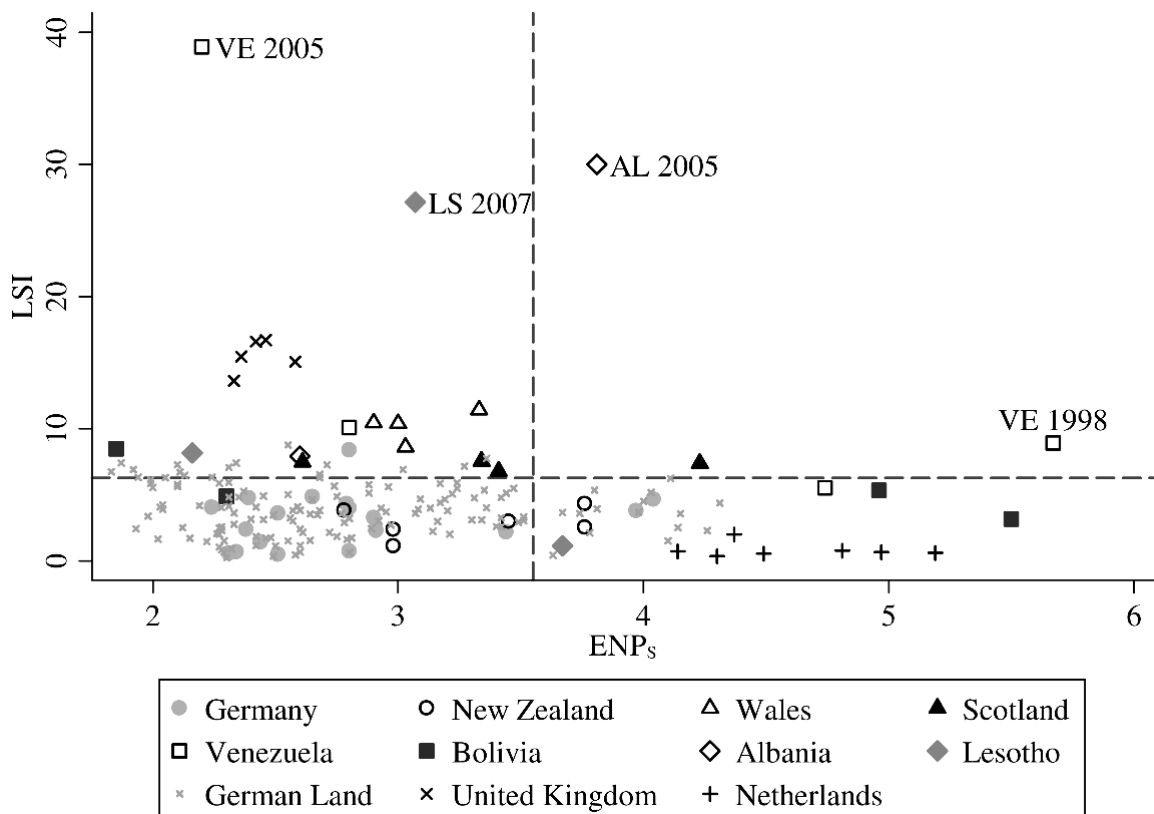
Additional robustness check

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In our paper, “Mixed-member proportional electoral systems – the best of both worlds?”, published in JEPOP, we divided all elections emerging under MMP (i) into the above-average proportional and the below-average proportional elections and (ii) into elections resulting in an above-average and those leading to a below-average concentrated party system. From this division, we get four categories:

- above-average proportional elections leading to below-average concentrated party systems,
- above-average proportional elections leading to above-average concentrated party systems,
- below-average proportional elections leading to below-average concentrated party systems,
- below-average proportional elections leading to above-average concentrated party systems.

The figure below depicts the researched MMP elections as well as recent elections in the UK and the Netherlands as reference points. Average values for party system concentration (according to Laakso’s and Taagepera’s effective number of parties, ENP_s) and disproportionality (according to Gallagher’s least squares index, LSI) are reflected by the crosshairs. The ‘best-of-both-worlds’ cases with above-average proportional elections leading to above-average concentrated party systems (category b.) can be found in the bottom-left sector.



While further analyses can be found in the JEPOP article, one point might be seen as critical, namely the question of the reference values dividing the sample in above- and below-average cases. These values come from a broad sample of 590 elections in 57 countries using all kinds of electoral systems. This broad sample's mean values are 6.27 (LSI) and 3.55 (ENP_s). We believe that the use of these reference points makes sense for the evaluation of electoral systems as they cover the whole world of electoral systems.

However, there is one concern against this view, namely a variation of these mean values over time. In a former version of the JEPOP paper, we considered post-1990 cases only in order to get a more balanced sample. (Germany is the only country using MMP systems before 1990.) For this analysis, we consequently used only post-1990 elections from the broad sample for the identification of reference points. Strikingly, compared to elder cases, post-1990 elections have become more disproportional and led to more fragmented party systems. The respective mean values are 7.00 (LSI) and 3.84 (ENP_s).

While for Germany, certainly, the above mentioned mean values are appropriate, one might question if, for the other cases which all have taken place after 1990, the latter means are more adequate to compare elections of the same time period. In our paper, we present results of robustness checks by repeating our analyses for subsamples. Some of the subsamples include post-1990 cases only. In particular for these subsamples, the reference points of LSI = 7.00 and ENP_s = 3.84 seem to make more sense.

For this reason, we repeat our analyses with the modified reference points. As these reference points are higher, it is not surprising that this relaxes the criterion for a case belonging category b. and the amount of above-average proportional elections and above-average concentrated party systems is higher. The key results, however, remain the same. The following tables contrasts results with the original and the modified reference points. All results which are not mentioned in the table do not change.

<i>original reference points</i> (LSI = 6.27; ENP _s = 3.55)	<i>modified reference points</i> (LSI = 7.00; ENP _s = 3.84)
128 cases (68.5%) in category b.	149 cases (79.9%) in category b.
19 cases (42.2%) in category b., when German <i>Länder</i> are excluded from the sample.	24 cases (53.3%) in category b., when German <i>Länder</i> are excluded from the sample.
With one exception, all category b. cases are German or New Zealand cases.	With three exceptions, all category b. cases are German or New Zealand cases.
3 cases belong to category c. and can therefore be interpreted as 'worst of both worlds'.	3 cases belong to category c. and can therefore be interpreted as 'worst of both worlds'.
With a mean ENP _s value of 3.65, Bolivian MMP elections lead to slightly below-average concentrated party systems.	With a mean ENP _s value of 3.65, Bolivian MMP elections lead to slightly above-average concentrated party systems.

More importantly, we analyze which factors in detail split the cases into the 128 category b. and the 59 other cases. Table 3 in the JEPOP paper shows the results, Table 4 indicates which of the results or robust for which subsamples. Repeating these analyses with 149 category b. and 38 other cases according to the modified reference points, the results change in nuances only. Implications remain the same.

The following tables are reproductions of Tables 3 and 4 of the JEPOP article but basing on the modified reference points.

	mean LSI	mean ENP _s	mean PR legal threshold ^{a)}	mean PR district magnitude	mean share of SMD seats ^{a)}	share of cases with minority districts ^{a)}	share of elections in established democracies ^{a)}	ethnic fractionalization
best-of-both-worlds cases	3.5***	2.8***	5.1***	150*	56.9	4.0	99**	0.34
others	6.6***	3.5***	3.0***	92*	57.0	5.7	77**	0.45

Notes:

Levels of statistical significance: * < 0.05; ** < 0.01; *** < 0.001.

The results shown here are basing on the full sample excluding the manipulation cases.

^{a)} In per cent.

manipulation cases included	cases before 1991 included	subnational cases included ^{a)}	mean LSI	mean ENP _s	mean PR legal threshold	mean PR district magnitude	mean share of SMD seats	share of cases with minority districts	share of elections in established democracies	ethnic fractionalization
x	x	x	o***	o***	b***	b*	o	o	b***	o
x	x		o***	o***	b***	b**	o*	b	b***	o
x	x	SW	o***	o***	b***	b***	o**	b	b**	o
x		x	o***	o***	b***	b	o	b	b**	o
x			o*	o	b**	b	o	b	b***	o
x		SW	o**	o	b***	b	o*	b	b*	o
	x	x	o***	o***	b***	b*	o	o	b**	o
	x		o***	o***	b**	b*	o	b	b***	o
	x	SW	o***	o***	b***	b***	o**	b	b*	o
		x	o***	o***	b***	b	o	b	b*	o
			o***	o	b**	b	o	b	b**	o
		SW	o***	o	b***	b	o	b	b	o

Notes:

“b” stands for higher values of the best-of-both-worlds cases and “o” for higher values of the other cases.

Levels of statistical significance: * < 0.05; ** < 0.01; *** < 0.001.

^{a)} SW = Scotland and Wales are included, German *Länder* are excluded.