

ABSTRACTS*

Dhungel, Anna-Katharina and Eric Linhart: Interest mediation in the German Bundestag's committees.

Many studies have analyzed lobbying systems as a whole, but so far only very few have examined the role of interest groups in the German Bundestag's committees: which lobbying structures can be found in these committees, how important are interest groups compared to other experts and how pluralistically do the committees organize interest groups' access? To answer these questions the agendas and reports of the 17th legislature's committees are examined. Our results include that (1) interest groups are an important group among the invited experts, (2) instead of finding a concentration on few interest groups there is a fragmentation of many, and (3) much variation between the policy fields can be observed. [ZParl, vol. 45, no. 4, pp. 743 – 762]

Dohle, Marco and Uli Bernhard: Members of the German Bundestag and how they use and perceive the media. Do online media substitute or complement the traditional information and communication channels?

Numerous studies have shown that online media have become important for the political information and communication of members of parliament. Thus, the question arises whether the extension of the media repertoire of parliamentarians to online media has consequences for the use of traditional media communication channels. To answer this question, two surveys among the Members of the German Bundestag were conducted in 2012 and 2013 (n = 194 and 149). The results demonstrate that the parliamentarians use both online and offline media extensively. In particular, newspapers are still relied on strongly, even more than social media. Especially younger parliamentarians use the latter more frequently and the same is true for parliamentarians who perceive social media to be suitable for political information. Although the complementary use of online and offline media for political information and communication is rational for various reasons, it must be kept in mind that they are tied to additional challenges and demands. [ZParl, vol. 45, no. 4, pp. 763 – 774]

Pappi, Franz Urban and Thomas Bräuninger: District candidates and the electoral success of their parties in the German two-vote system. The example of Stuttgart in the federal election 2013.

In the German mixed electoral system, district candidates are of two-fold importance. In those cases in which the electorate evaluate them in a positive manner, they help a party to win the district mandate and they may increase the party's (second) votes locally. But how parties are viewed is also important for both purposes. As an exit-poll for the two Stuttgart constituencies in 2013 shows, parties are on average better evaluated than candidates, if the latter are evaluated at all. If both are rated, most voters' judgement of the party and their candidates are in concurrence; the candidate of the best rated party receives the first vote and the best party the second vote (consonance voters). If the ratings differ, the two votes tend to differ, too (divergence voters) and candidate ratings become decisive when casting the first vote. Since the first vote is a majority election, the possible outcome, which can typically be assessed quite well, plays a role when deciding on whom to vote for. The candidate's rating is subtracted from the probability of him or her taking the vote. When SPD and Greens recommended to choose the Green candi-

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date in one and the SPD candidate in the other Stuttgart constituency due to their respective higher chances of victory, this party strategy failed nevertheless. Some addressees would have been forced to choose a candidate whom they rated less favourably than the one of their own party. A party furthermore weakens its position if it advises against consonance voting. [ZParl, vol. 45, no. 4, pp. 775 – 795]

Nestler, Christian: Non-Party actors in the federal elections from 1949 to 2013 – numerous but chanceless.

With 261 in 1987 and as many as 81 candidates in the last federal election non-party actors are a numerically significant group. Taking into account the legal framework, the development of the German party system, the election results since 1949 and the personal motivation of the applicants, it is possible to outline fundamental assertions about this group. Idealism and party disaffection are the key drivers of engagement – directly followed by advertising and promoting oneself. In this sense, election posters and the very limited media attention are used as a platform for the presentation of more or less personal, social, economic and political agendas. The conclusion is that non-party actors, although numerous, are without chance at the federal level. [ZParl, vol. 45, no. 4, pp. 796 – 811]

Klein, Markus, Jan Ballowitz and Per Holderberg: The social acceptance of compulsory voting in Germany. Results of a representative population survey.

Against the background of declining voter turnout in Germany, the introduction of a legal duty to vote has been proposed. Those who advocate the introduction of compulsory voting expect a significant increase of voter turnout. It can be argued, however, that this effect only comes to pass when a legal duty to vote meets the population's acceptance. To date, this has hardly been studied empirically in Germany. This paper presents the results of a representative population survey, which was conducted on behalf of the authors right before the 2013 German federal election. It turns out that compulsory voting finds only little acceptance among German citizens. Only a third of the population supports its introduction. Is compulsory voting connected with sanctions for non-voters, support drops even lower. In this case, only eleven percent of the population is in favour of introducing a legal duty to vote. Adoption compulsory voting in Germany would therefore encounter significant resistance in the population. Under such circumstances, it seems quite questionable whether compulsory voting would actually enhance the level of turnout. [ZParl, vol. 45, no. 4, pp. 812 – 824]

Althoff, Martin: Nonvoting due to discontent: an option also for highly educated?

Turnout rates in federal elections have fallen and reached their lowest point in 2009 with a rate of 70.8 percent. Existing research identifies political discontent of the poorly educated social class as the main driving force of nonvoting. Previous nonvoting research has not recognized the relationship between education, discontent and voter turnout in its full complexity. The analyzed survey data on the federal election in 2009 show that negatively regarded government performance increases the likelihood of nonvoting especially among the higher educated voting population. Thus, disgruntled nonvoters are a far more general problem than previously thought. [ZParl, vol. 45, no. 4, pp. 825 – 837]

Schröder, Valentin: Party proportionality, party-constituent list proportionality, and Bundestag size in the German federal electoral law.

Germany's new Federal Electoral Act has sparked sustained criticism, especially with regard to its tendency of increasing the number of Bundestag mandates well beyond previous levels. This effect is seen as a trade-off inherent to mixed-member systems that aim at combining proportionality across parties, proportionality across party-constituent lists and personal representation on

the one hand, and economical size of the parliamentary body on the other. The problem the Electoral Act brings about is characterized as one of inefficiency of allocation, i.e. as unnecessarily compromising economical size in favor of the other three aims. Ways to minimize inefficiency within the confines of Germany's mixed-member system are assessed by a series of simulations on Bundestag mandate allocation mechanisms for the elections 1949 to 2013. Combining a coherent way of seat allocation (e.g. the "Pukelsheim-3" procedure) with a modest decrease in the share of direct mandates would considerably enhance efficiency. A respective reform would, under a wide array of scenarios, keep numbers of mandates at reasonable levels and still adhere to the other three aims. [ZParl, vol. 45, no. 4, pp. 838 – 858]

Hermsdorf, Fred: Equality of votes as a standard of allocation of parliamentary seats.

Each method for solving the problem of apportionment after an election has its own history of origin. The German Constitutional Court decided that the equality of votes or rather its best possible fulfilment has to be the main criterion. None of the commonly used methods meets this requirement. But when considering methods of seat allocation that do satisfy it, well-known paradoxes are encountered. These paradoxes are inevitable and, hence, must not be used as a negative argument when evaluating the different methods of apportionment. [ZParl, vol. 45, no. 4, pp. 858 – 865]

Wagschal, Uwe and Pascal König: Are they all the same? An analysis of programmatic party differences at German Bundestag elections based on the Wahl-O-Mat.

In order to investigate the thesis of a homogenization in the German party system in view of the 2013 Bundestag elections as compared to the two preceding elections (2005 and 2009), data contained in the Wahl-O-Mat is used as a new possible source for describing and mapping (spatial) party positions. The descriptive results together with their statistical inspection via cluster analysis and the extraction of parties' spatial positions do not support the idea of a homogenization and the disappearance of partisan antagonisms. There is some evidence for a slight convergence of the two catch-all parties in 2013 compared to the two preceding federal elections. However, the familiar structure of two blocks remains clearly discernible, with the Pirate Party and the AfD falling into the leftist and rightist block respectively. The most conspicuous drawback treated in the discussion of the suitability and possible improvements of the Wahl-O-Mat data is a consistently low discriminatory power within the left block. [ZParl, vol. 45, no. 4, pp. 865 – 884]

Cancik, Pascale: The „core area of governmental authority“ – on the relativity of a suggestive concept.

To enable parliamentary control over both the government and the administration, the Constitutions in Germany assign information rights to parliament and to the opposition in parliament. Thus, parliament gains access to the government's area. However, the control power does not allow parliament to participate in governing processes as such ("co-government"). Thus the separation of power principle provides for restrictions to information, shortly termed as „core area of governmental authority“. This concept suggests a perfectly protected area, which is never open to parliament. Such absolute exemption of control is, however, not supported by constitutional law. Rather the "core area argument" is the basis for a relative boundary, relative in content and time. To define the "protected area" a consideration of each individual case is necessary. Therefore, government has to justify the rejection of parliamentary claims for information. The authority to reject information claims lies only with the present government. Constitutional law does not provide for a continuing blocking effect of an information refusal, based on the "core area argument". Thus, after a change of government, a new balancing between parliamentary information rights and the governmental right to withhold information can become necessary. The potential right to withhold information of a former government cannot, in principle, be transformed into an obligation of the new government to withhold it. [ZParl, vol. 45, no. 4, pp. 885 – 907]