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On the origins of electoral systems and political parties: The role of elections in multi-member districts

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Abstract

The old, under-studied electoral system composed of multi-member districts, open ballot and plurality rule is presented in this article as the most remote scene of the origin of both political parties and new electoral systems. A survey of the uses of this set of electoral rules in different parts of the world during remote and recent periods shows its widespread use. A model of voting by this electoral system demonstrates that, while it can produce citizens' consensual representation, it also provides incentives for potential leaders to form factional or partisan candidacies. Famous negative reactions to the emergence of factions and political parties during the 18th and 19th centuries are reinterpreted in this context. Many electoral rules and procedures invented since the second half of the 19th century—including the Australian ballot, single-member districts, limited ballot, and proportional representation rules—derived from the search to reduce the effects of the 'originating' multi-member district system in favor of a single party sweep. The general relations between political parties and electoral systems are restated to account for the foundational stage here discussed.
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1. Introduction

Political parties and electoral systems have been analyzed both as a cause and as a consequence of each other. First, a long tradition of empirical studies has focused on the consequences of electoral systems on party systems. Maurice Duverger postulates that ''old'' political parties were created internally in elected (and also in non-elected) assemblies and parliamentary groups (Duverger, 1951; see also LaPalombara and Weiner, 1966). From a social choice perspective, the origin of political parties is also found within an endogenous process in elected legislatures that embody incentives to form enduring voting coalitions (Schwartz, 1989; Aldrich, 1995). Empirical analyses of the numbers of political parties and their relations, which typically focus on democratic regimes during the second half of the 20th century, usually assume that political parties derive from given elections and electoral systems that can be taken as the independent variable in the explanatory framework (Duverger, 1951; Rae, 1967; Taagepera and Shugart, 1989; Lijphart, 1994).

A number of contributions, including by this author, have turned this relationship upside down by postulating that it is the parties that choose electoral systems and manipulate the rules of elections. The origins of the invention and adoption of different electoral rules

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and procedures, especially during the 19th and early 20th centuries, can be found in the incentives created by political party competition. With this approach it is thus assumed that it is the political parties that can be taken as given, and work as the independent variable to explain the emergence of different electoral rules (Grumm, 1958; Boix, 1999; Colomer, 2004a, 2005).

The present article tries to disentangle this discussion by specifying the type of assembly and electoral conditions that can be located at the most remote origins of the creation of political parties. Specifically, I emphasize the role of traditional elections in multi-member districts, with open ballot and plurality rule, in the initial creation of political parties. This under-studied, 'originating' electoral system was used very widely in local and national assemblies in pre-democratic or early democratic periods before and during the 19th century. It is still probably the most common procedure in small community, condominium, school, university, and union assemblies and elections. It has also been adopted in a few new democracies in recent times. This set of electoral rules appears indeed as almost 'natural' and 'spontaneous' to many communities when they have to choose a procedure of collective decision-making based on votes, especially because it permits a consensual representation of the community.

The important point to be made here is that these traditional electoral rules, while being able to produce satisfactory and acceptable citizens' representation, also create strong incentives for self-interested, would-be political leaders to form 'factional' candidacies or voting coalitions, in a word 'parties'. Under the 'originating' electoral system, factions or parties tend to induce 'voting in bloc' for a list of candidates, which may change election results radically. In some crucial cases, it was largely as a consequence of this type of experience that different political leaders, candidates and parties began to seek alternative, less intuitive, or 'spontaneous', electoral rules likely to be less advantageous for the faction or party best organized. In more recent times this has induced parties and politically motivated scholars to invent and choose new electoral systems.

The structure of the article is the following. First, the 'originating' electoral system is defined and discussed. Second, a survey of the uses of this type of electoral rules in different parts of the world shows its widespread use. Third, a simple model of voting demonstrates the incentives to form factional or partisan candidacies. Fourth, a number of prominent, mostly negative reactions to the emergence of political parties during the 18th and 19th centuries are collected and reinterpreted in the light of this discussion. Fifth, a great variety of electoral rules and procedures that were invented since the second half of the 19th century are presented here as having derived directly from the 'originating' system in the intention to reduce the advantage of a single party. In the conclusion, the general relations between political parties and electoral systems are restated in order to account for the foundational stage discussed here.

2. The 'originating' electoral system

The originating electoral system analyzed here has been widely used, especially in relatively simple elections with rather homogeneous electorates, and particularly at the beginning of modern suffrage regulations and for small-size local governments. Specifically, it was used with some variants from the 13th century on in English town meetings and shire (county) courts (Bishop, 1893), German and Swiss communes and cantons (Lloyd, 1907), Italian communes (Brucker, 1983; Guidi, 1992; Hyde, 1973; Waley, 1988), French municipalities, and from the 15th century on, also in provincial Estates and the Estates-General (Babeau, 1882, 1894; Baker, 1987; Cadart, 1952). During the 17th and 18th centuries this system was also adopted in the British colonies in North America (Sydnor, 1962; Pole, 1971), as well as, by the early 19th century, in Juntas and Cortes elections in Spain and in the Spanish and Portuguese colonies in the Americas (Annino, 1995; Graham, 1990).

This is basically the same type of electoral system that is typically used in many meetings and assemblies of modern housing condominiums, neighborhood associations, school and university boards and delegates, professional organizations, corporation boards, and students' and workers' unions. In these, as well as in many of the traditional communities mentioned in the previous paragraph, individual representation is well suited to contexts of high economic and ethnic homogeneity in which it is relatively easy to identify common interests and priority public goods to be provided by the elect.

The essential elements of this electoral system are the following:

- multi-member districts ($M > 1$).
- open ballot ($V \leq M$).
- plurality or majority rule.

where M is the district magnitude or number of seats to be filled and V is the number of votes per voter.

The first element, multi-member districts, has been neglected in recent political science literature on

elections. Well-established empirical 'tendencies' in the relation between electoral systems and party systems include two basic types of electoral systems: one combining single-member districts with majoritarian rules (which are associated with bipartism) and another combining multi-member districts with proportional representation rules (corresponding to multipartism). In contrast, the combination of multi-member districts with majoritarian rules has attracted much less attention. Indeed this type of electoral system would be difficult to fit into the above mentioned relationships since it permits a representation that is based on individual candidates and at the same time it is highly pluralistic, which is in contrast to the characteristics of the other two types of electoral systems mentioned.

The second element, open ballot, permits voters to choose individual candidates, not a partisan list. This is compatible with voting by both raising hands (like in traditional Swiss communes or English counties) and oral vote (like in colonial Virginia, for instance), even if this requires voting separately for a candidate for each seat. Voting by raising hands or by oral vote, as well as the need for a second or further rounds for each seat, are procedures favoring the holding of this type of election in an assembly of voters. But an assembly of voters can also proceed by secret ballot. Also, distributing groups of voters among different booths within the same multi-member district, which may facilitate secret ballot, is also compatible with this type of system (as in most at-large local or state elections in the United States). Thus, many formulas—oral or written ballot, assembly or booth voting, second or further round rules—are compatible with the essentials of the electoral system to be discussed here.

An interesting variant concerns the number of candidates each voter can vote for. While in some cases the voter must vote for as many candidates as seats to be filled ($V = M$), an alternative common rule permits the voter to vote for *up to* as many candidates as seats ($V \leq M$), which is a limited form of approval voting (already used, for instance, in medieval English boroughs and in Italian communes, see Lines, 1980).[1]

Other variants may include a series of successive, 'staggered' single-seat elections or may require voters in a multi-seat election to choose one candidate for each seat, typically among the corresponding subset of candidates previously allocated to each seat (a procedure sometimes called 'place' system in certain state and local elections in the United States). In spite of certain contrary interpretations, none of these procedures is equivalent to a series or a collection of single-member district elections. While in single-member district elections the voter elects only one seat, in the variants of multi-member district elections considered here, each voter still elects multiple seats. A prominent example in present times is the United States Senate, in which two-member districts with staggered single-seat elections permit the election of senators from two different parties in each district, as happens with high and increasing frequency (Brunell and Grofman, 1998). In 'place' systems forcing the voters to choose a candidate for each seat from a different subset of candidates, the margin of choice may be more limited. But if the voters' preferred candidates in a multi-seat election are running for different seats, they can choose them as well. In any case, the voter can vote for candidates from different parties for different seats. (See discussion with alternative interpretations in Cox, 1984; Richardson and Cooper, 2003).

In reference to the third element, plurality rule is most common in this type of system, but absolute majority rule can also be used. Variants of the latter include a second or a third round by simple plurality or between the two or the three leading candidates at the previous round (like in Ancient regime France). For several-round rules, the procedure may require the voter to vote separately for one candidate for each seat, but this may not alter substantially the expected consequences of the election of representatives, as discussed above.

3. Very widespread electoral rules

A survey of modern and current uses of the 'originating' electoral system in national and local political elections shows its widespread use. For reasons of space I limit my comments to a few countries, while data for both national and local elections using multi-member districts and majoritarian rules, in 27 countries in all parts of the world, are given in Tables 1 and 2.

Two-member districts were largely used in English shires, towns and boroughs from the 13th century on. Even by 1867 three-quarters of the English districts for the House of Commons elected two members, while the rest were either single- or four-member districts. The proportion of multi-member districts was dramatically reduced to less than 10% in 1885, but some survived until 1935. In two-member districts the voter

[1] In contrast, standard approval voting permits voting for up to all candidates but one, as presented in Brams and Fishburn (1978, 1983), Weber (1995), Colomer and McLean (1998). Interestingly, while an abundance of literature exists on approval voting for single-winner elections, apparently no one has studied approval voting for multi-winner elections, a variety much more widely used, as demonstrated in the present article.

Table 1
Multi-member, majoritarian elections: lower house

Country	Election years	*M*	Rule
Argentina	1826, 1862–1908	2–12	Plurality
Belgium	1847–1898	26–62	Majority/2nd round plurality
Brazil	1826–1878, 1890–1930	2–37	Plurality
Canada	1874–1968	≥1	Plurality
Chile	1833ff	>1	Plurality
Colombia	1857ff, 1913–1929	>1	Plurality
Costa Rica	1919–1948	1–2	Mixed PR-plurality
France	1789–1820, 1848–1872, 1885	>1	Majority/2nd round plurality
Greece	1844–1923, 1933, 1952	≥1	Majority or plurality
Honduras	1879–1954	3	Majority
India	1952–1957	1–3	Plurality
Lebanon	1943–	4–7	Majority runoff or plurality
Mali	1992–	1–7	Majority runoff
Netherlands	1848–1884	2	Majority/2nd round plurality
New Zealand	1890–1905	1–3	Plurality
Norway	1815–1903	3	Indirect, plurality
Philippines	1946–49	≥1	Plurality
Portugal	1852–1856	>1	Plurality
Russia	1917	1–15	Majority/3rd round plurality
Senegal	1993–	1–5	Mixed PR-plurality
Spain	1836–1844, 1854, 1865–1936	1–18	Majority/2nd round plurality or plurality
Sweden	1866–1908	1–2	Indirect, plurality
Switzerland	1848–1917	>1	Indirect, majority/2nd round plurality
Thailand	1979–1996	≥1	Plurality
Turkey	1946–1957	1–27	Plurality
UK	1832–1935	1–4	Plurality
USA	1790–1966	≥1	Plurality

Note: *M*, district magnitude. Source: From data in Colomer (2004a).

could cast either two votes or only one. According to historians, during the period 1688–1866 borough elections were dominated by a desire to secure effective representation of the public or corporate interest, while there is evidence of a considerable degree of hostility towards parties and partisanship. The presence of political 'tendencies' was elusive and partial and included many labels—Radical, Whig, Liberal, Tory, Conservative, Peelite, Protectionist—rather than a few compact parties (Mitchell, 1976; O'Gorman, 1989; Phillips, 1992; Plumb, 1969; Taylor, 1997).

Multi-member districts and to some extent nonpartisan candidacies have survived in English local elections. According to the rules enforced from 2003 on, about 60% of local councils are still elected in two- or three-member electoral districts, usually called wards or divisions. They include 36 metropolitan councils, as well as the London boroughs, a number of unitary, borough, district and parish/town councils, as well as an increasing number of urban areas in county councils. A few districts use mixed systems of single- and multi-member constituencies. Nowadays nation-wide political parties dominate local politics, but in 2000 still about 12% of elected local councilors were independent (Electoral Commission, 2004).

In France, the tradition of using multi-member districts in indirect elections for medieval estates was maintained for post-revolutionary national assemblies during most of the 19th century. From 1789 to 1820, canton or arrondissement assemblies elected delegates to department assemblies, which in turn chose deputies. Direct elections were introduced in 1848; until 1872, and again in 1885, voters met in departmental assemblies and used limited approval voting in a written ballot. Party lists were increasingly relevant, but individual-candidate voting was always an option (Campbell, 1965; Cole and Campbell, 1989).

Table 2
Multi-member, majoritarian elections: current local governments

Country	Councils	District *M*	Rule
Canada	Many cities (esp. in British Columbia)	At large	Plurality
France	Municipal <3500 h	At large	Majority runoff
	Regional	≥1	Majority runoff
Hungary	Municipal <10,000 h	At large	Plurality
Russia	24 regions	≥1	Plurality
Spain	Municipal <250 h	At large	Plurality
UK	Most municipal	2–3	Plurality
USA	Many cities	At large	Plurality
	15 states	≥1	Plurality

M, magnitude. Source: Author's elaboration with data from Benoit (2001), Council of Europe (1999), Dupoirier (2001), UK's Electoral Commission (2004), Engstrom and McDonald (1986), Golosov (2003), Jewell and Morehouse (2001), Johnston and Pasis (1990).

The 'originating' system has survived in French small municipalities with less than 3500 inhabitants, where the local councils are elected in a single multi-member municipal district with individual-candidate voting and majority runoff rule. For recently established regional councils, a quarter of councilors are also elected in a single regional district by majority runoff rule, but now using closed lists that produce a single-party overrepresentation (Dupoirier, 2001; Patriat, 2001).

In Spain as well, multi-member districts were used in indirect elections of anti-French-invasion Juntas in 1810 and in constitutional elections from 1812 to 1834. Parish- or judicial party-juntas chose electors, which in turn chose deputies by majority runoff. The election of Juntas was extended to the Spanish colonies in 1810–1811, including New Spain (today's Mexico), for the election of representatives to both the Spanish Cortes and provincial councils. In this case, multi-member districts were defined as corresponding to traditional parishes and the preserved Indian republics. The same was extended to Argentina in 1811. At the Portuguese Crown's call, similar rules were used in Brazil in 1821. In several direct elections in Spain from 1837, deputies were elected by limited approval voting and majority rule. Mixed systems of single- and multi-member districts, the latter with limited approval voting, were used from 1879 to 1936. Since 1977, multi-member districts with individual-candidate ballots are used for the Senate (Rueda, 1998; Colomer, 2004b).

The English model of multi-member districts, individual vote and plurality rule was adopted in all the British colonies in North America for the lower houses of their legislatures. Since its inception in 1619, the House of Burgesses in Virginia used English-style two-member districts, later enlarged to up to eight seats. Other colonies also used, for their assemblies, two-, three-, four- or six-member districts, while South Carolina and New Jersey had districts with up to 10 and 20 members, respectively (Dinkin, 1993; Greene, 1993).

With independence, state congresses were made larger than the colonial assemblies. Eight new state constitutions established congressional elections in multi-member districts, while five adopted this formula for most of their districts but also introduced a few single-member districts. The US Presidential College was elected mostly in state-wide multi-member districts beginning in 1828. The House of Representatives was also initially elected mostly in either state-wide 'at-large' districts or in smaller multi-member districts. From 1824 on, new state-level political parties promoted voting 'in bloc' for a list of party candidates or the 'general ticket', which tended to create state single-party representation. In a defensive reaction, the Whigs managed to establish single-member districts as the general norm for electing the House across all the United States territory as of 1842. However, at least 16 states still used at-large districts during some periods between the 1840s and the 1960s. (Calabrese, 2000; Engstrom, 2004; Flores, 2000; Klain, 1955; Wood, 1969).

At the state and local levels, most representatives have been elected in multi-member districts most of the time. At the state level the peak was reached in 1962, when 41 of the 50 states elected more than half of the total state legislators in the country in multi-member districts. In 2000, 15 state lower chambers and four state senates used some multi-member districts to elect in total over 25% of all state legislators (Jewell and Morehouse, 2001).

At the municipal level, the progressive-oriented National Municipal League recommended in 1899 the adoption of at-large districts, together with a non-partisan ballot, to insulate local elections from the influence of state and national party politics, a recommendation largely followed, especially in the West and the South. In 1970, over 60% of the cities and over 30% of the counties elected their representatives in a single 'at-large' district (Cox, 1984; Niemi et al., 1985). In the 1980s, at-large districts were used in 84% of the largest central cities (Engstrom and McDonald, 1986; Weaver, 1984). It has been estimated that in about two-thirds of US municipal elections candidates run for office without a party label (Cassel, 1986).

The ability of at-large districts to produce a single-party "sweep" to the disadvantage of political, ethnic and gender minorities has been broadly discussed. Contrary to traditional assumptions, it has been found that, at the state level, multi-member district lower chambers provide representation more proportional to the ethnic minority population than either single-member district lower chambers or single-member district upper chambers in the same states. Multi-member districts have also favored female representation during some periods (Adams, 1996; Niemi et al., 1985; Grofman et al., 1986; Richardson and Cooper, 2003).

4. Endogenous party formation

The 'originating' electoral system reviewed above is able to produce a consensual individual representation of the community. But at the same time it creates incentives for the coordination of candidacies and voting.

Forming or joining a coordinated candidacy, usually called a ‘faction’ or ‘party’, may increase the prospects of winning additional votes and seats. ‘Party’ is thus defined here in a minimalist way that is not substantially different from traditional meanings of ‘faction’ in early periods of voting and elections. The distinction between a faction and a party became more pronounced only by further organization and development of policy programs and ideology.

Let us present a simple model in which an election is held in a two-member district by individual-candidate voting and simple plurality rule. Let us assume that there are four groups of voters, A, B, C and D, with different preferences over four candidates, W, X, Y and Z, as in Table 3. In Table 3(1), the distribution of voters' preferences is relatively consensual because the ‘intermediate’ groups, B and C, encompass 70 out of 90 voters, whilst in Table 3(2) the distribution is more polarized because it is the ‘extreme’ groups, A and D, that now encompass 70 voters (90 is taken in the example as the total number of voters in order to facilitate a majority of 50 without ties). If each voter votes for two candidates according to first and second preferences, the total number of votes received by each candidate makes the intermediate candidates X and Y the winners. Observe that, although with different numbers of votes, this result is valid for the two distributions of voters, the consensual and the polarized. The result can be considered consensual because every group of voters elects at least one of the candidates it has voted for; specifically, the voters of the ‘intermediate’ groups elect the two candidates they have voted for while the members of the ‘extreme’ groups elect their second most preferred candidate. Thus, none of the voters' groups is a total loser.

Let us examine now the situation when a ‘party’ is formed by candidates W and X, the ‘party WX’. We assume that all voters vote now for all the candidates of the party including their first preference, that is, all voters preferring either W or X as the first preference vote now ‘in bloc’ for W and X, even if some of them would have preferred another candidate as second preference (Y in the example). The result is that now W and X become the winners—the party sweep. In contrast to the results of individual-candidate voting, only three groups of voters now elect some candidate they have voted for (the members of group D do not in this instance elect any of their candidates).

Table 3
Individual-candidate voting and party voting

	Voters' groups			
	A	B	C	D
(1) Consensual society				
No. of voters	10	40	30	10
First preference	W	X	Y	Z
Second preference	X	Y	X	Y
Electoral results with different candidacies				
Individual candidates	Party WX vs. individuals Y, Z		Party WX vs. party YZ	
W: 10 (A10)	W: 50 (A10 + B40)		W: 50 (A10 + B40)	
X: 80 (A10 + B40 + C30)	X: 80 (A10 + B40 + C30)		X: 50 (A10 + B40)	
Y: 80 (B40 + C30 + D10)	Y: 40 (C30 + D10)		Y: 40 (C30 + D10)	
Z: 10 (D10)	Z: 10 (D10)		Z: 40 (C30 + D10)	
	A	B	C	D
(2) Polarized society				
No. of voters	40	10	10	30
First preference	W	X	Y	Z
Second preference	X	Y	X	Y
Electoral results with different candidacies				
Individual candidates	Party WX vs. individuals Y, Z		Party WX vs. party YZ	
W: 40 (A40)	W: 50 (A40 + B10)		W: 50 (A40 + B10)	
X: 60 (A40 + B10 + C10)	X: 60 (A40 + B10 + C10)		X: 50 (A40 + B10)	
Y: 50 (B10 + C10 + D30)	Y: 40 (C10 + D30)		Y: 40 (C10 + D30)	
Z: 30 (D30)	Z: 30 (D30)		Z: 40 (C10 + D30)	

Note: This models an election in a two-member district, two votes per voter ($M = V = 2$), and plurality rule. The electoral results with individual-candidate voting derive from the assumption that each group of voters votes for their two preferred individual candidates; with party WX, voters vote ‘in bloc’ for W and X if they prefer any of the two as first preference; with two parties WX and YZ, all voters vote ‘in bloc’ for the party including their first preference. The winners are underlined.

It is important to remark that, in order to attain a party sweep, it is not necessary that all voters—like in the model—or even most or many of them follow the advice of factional leaders to vote for all of and only for the members of a list of candidates. It may be sufficient that a few people do it, since, even if they are few, they can make a difference, especially under simple plurality rule where no specific threshold of votes is required to win.

The party sweep result might be more satisfactory than the previous individual-candidate result for some voters in a polarized distribution (depending on how voters evaluate their relative satisfaction with their first and second preferences), but it is exclusionary for those members of the electorate who become total losers. Certainly, the party sweep result is less collectively satisfactory than the individual-candidate result in the consensual distribution, which, as noted above, is more typical of elections in small local, early national and professional communities.

A logical reaction to the party sweep may be the formation of another 'party', say, in this example, with Y and Z, which may also be capable of making voters voting in bloc for its candidates. The election is now held with two parties, WX vs. YZ. In the example in Table 3, the winners are still W and X, but the losers are now closer to the winners in numbers of votes, which may encourage them to persevere in their party candidacy in further elections with the expectation that they may turn over a few more votes and win in bloc. Similar results can be obtained if we assume somewhat different distributions of voters' preferences, voting by majority runoff rule or other variations the reader may be interested in exploring.

This stylized model may account for the endogenous formation of parties, which were initially conceived as merely enduring candidacy and voting coalitions in early elections and assemblies using the 'originating' electoral system. The model also suggests that the emergence of parties may produce sentiments of dissatisfaction and disappointment relative to previous experiences of voting for individual candidates, especially in largely consensual societies in which the formation of party candidacies may introduce political polarization.

Note again that, in historical terms, voting 'in bloc' was not an institutionally-induced behavior, but a party strategy-induced behavior. In the old-fashioned way, certain men more or less distinguished for their professional or other activities were announced as eligible by newspapers or offered themselves as candidates. Gradually, elected representatives moved to organize their supporters and present lists or tickets of candidates. The success of this new way may lie in the fact that 'party' candidacies and labels provide the voters very cheap information about their candidates, which may be more difficult to obtain on those candidates who are not labeled. This may move voters to vote in bloc rather than for individuals weighed separately.

However, party inducements to voting in bloc were also crucially aided in some countries and periods by the form of ballot, which is of course an institutional feature of elections. In the earliest times surveyed above, oral voting or handwritten ballots facilitated the voting for individual candidates independent of their possible grouping or factional allegiance. At some moment, which can be roughly located around the 1830s and 1840s for Britain, the United States and a few countries in Western Europe, the parties began to print their own ballots, listing only their own candidates. The voter needed only to cast the paper in the ballot box without marking any candidate in order to vote for the entire list (the 'general ticket'). Typically the party ballots were of various sizes, colors and shapes, and thus distinguishable to the election officials, the candidates, the party organizers and the rest of the voters.

Still, splitting the vote between candidates from different parties was possible by crossing out and writing in names or by turning in multiple party ballots with votes marked on each. In fact, in 19th century England, about half of the districts with two seats rendered 'split' representation of two different groupings (Cox, 1984). But in the United States before 1890, a single party swept all the seats in almost 90% of elections in multi-member districts (Calabrese, 2000). Criticisms of the party ballot were persistent. In particular, the National Municipal League of the US defended non-partisan ballots in local government. In the words of one of its founders: with party candidacies "a small, but well-disciplined, energetic and unscrupulous minority can generally defeat the honorable and patriotic majority". If people are forced to vote in bloc, the consequence is that "while many voters find sentiments which they disapprove in each platform, they can see no alternative but to cast their ballots for one or the other, and thus seem to endorse and support ideas to which they are really opposed" (Richardson, 1892, in Scarrow, 2002: part 2, ch. 7, pp. 103–104).

The so-called 'Australian ballot' once again made non-partisan voting for individual candidates relatively easier. The new ballot, which was now printed and distributed by the electoral authority, listed the candidates of all parties instead of only one. As its name indicates, this new form of ballot was first introduced in the British colonies of Australia in 1856 and New Zealand in 1870; it was adopted by Britain in 1872, Canada in

1874, Belgium in 1877, several states in the US from 1888, and later adopted by most other countries with democratic experience (Markoff, 1999; Mackie, 2000; Lehoucq, 2003).

The Australian ballot ensures a secret vote if the procedure includes a booth where the voter can mark the ballot unobserved. In some cases, the ballot requires the voters to vote for each candidate they want to vote for, which facilitates the choice of individual candidates independent of their party affiliation; but in other cases it is also possible to vote for all candidates from a party with a single mark, which still favors bloc voting.

5. Against factions

The emergence of factions and parties from within largely consensual elections and assemblies increased polarization, made representation more biased and in general decreased voters' satisfaction with political outcomes, as suggested by the formal model discussed above. In communities holding elections with the 'originating' system during the 18th and 19th centuries, reactions against factions and political parties were loudly and widely voiced, as will be reviewed below. Initially, factions tended to be loose and fluctuating groupings of individuals who joined together to support a particular leader or policy, but from the beginning they were viewed with suspicion as destroyers of previously existing unity and consensus. Gradually, a tension was developing between the recurring suspicion of partisan divisions and the seeming inevitability of partisan organization. Parties were eventually conceived as "unavoidable evils". "While political experience may have convinced many people of parties' inevitability and expediency, it was and is less effective in persuading everyone of their desirability" (Scarrow, 2002: 4).

A number of early, prominent analyses and statements along this line can be re-interpreted in the light of the discussion presented in this article. In general, in classical political literature 'faction' is usually associated with bad intentions, to the disadvantage of general or at least broad collective interests. David Hume, in particular, early on considered that "sects and factions [should] be detested and hated … [because they] subvert government, render law impotent, and beget the fiercest animosities" (Hume, 1741). Later on, however, he pondered that "to abolish all distinctions of party may not be practicable, perhaps not desirable, in a free government". Interestingly, when Hume had to face the undesirable but perhaps unavoidable existence of political parties, he turned to wish that government were in the hands not of a single party but of multiple-party coalitions in order "to prevent all unreasonable insult and triumph of the one party over the other, to encourage moderate opinions, to find the proper medium in all disputes, to persuade each that its antagonist may possibly be sometimes in the right, and to keep a balance in the praise and blame, which we bestow on either side" (Hume, 1758).

Perhaps it was Jean-Jacques Rousseau who better realized and anticipated the dramatic influence of factions in elections held in multi-member districts by plurality rule—as was used in his native Geneva. "When factions arise", he observed in a rather well-known but diversely interpreted passage, "and partial associations are formed at the expense of the great association, the will of each of these associations becomes general in relation to its members, while it remains particular in relation to the community: it may then be said that there are no longer as many votes as there are men, but only as many as there are associations.… Lastly, when one of these associations is so great as to prevail over all the rest, the result is no longer a sum of small differences, but a single difference; in this case there is no longer a general will, and the opinion which prevails is purely particular". Most remarkably, Rousseau also pondered that if factions of parties were unavoidable, that is, "if there are partial societies, it is best to have as many as possible and to prevent them from being unequal" (Rousseau, 1762: book II, #3).

A similar evolution can be detected in James Madison—who was in fact influenced by reading Hume—who initially also condemned factions, but later on saw them as unavoidable and even a necessary evil. Madison perceptively noted that, with parties organized in small communities there would likely be a single dominant party embedded in local prejudices and schemes of injustice, and "the smaller the number of individuals composing a majority, and the smaller the compass within which they are placed, the more easily will they concert and execute their plan of oppression". In contrast, larger political units would provide "the greater security afforded by a greater variety of parties, against the event of any one party being able to outnumber and oppress the rest.… In an equal degree does the increased variety of parties comprised within the [large] Union increase this security" (Madison, 1788: No. 10). When they turned to organize new political parties at the national level, Madison, as did other prominent leaders of the newly emerging United States, surely had in mind his previous experiences in the House of Delegates in Virginia and other local and state institutions holding elections with the 'originating' system (Main, 1973; Aldrich, 1995).

The present analysis also induces us to revise an established interpretation of some statements by Honoré Gabriel Riqueti, Count de Mirabeau, in his address to the provincial Estate of Provence in 1789, on the eve of those events that would trigger the Revolution in France. It must be remarked that the subject under discussion on that occasion was precisely this question of which procedure to follow for the election of provincial representatives to the Estates-General. Mirabeau and his audience certainly had in mind the multi-member district, individual vote type of elections they were accustomed to participating in at local and provincial levels. He famously declared that "the Estates-General *are* to the nation what a chart is to its physical configuration; in all its parts and as a whole the copy *should* at all times have the same proportions as the original". In another passage of the same speech, Mirabeau stated, "the nation is not there [in the Estates' assemblies] if those who call themselves its representatives have not been chosen in free and *individual* elections, if the representatives of groups of equal importance are not equal numerically and in voting power…. In order to know the will of the nation, the votes must be collected in such a way so as to prevent the mistake of taking the will of one estate for that of another, or the particular will of certain individuals for the general will". (Author's translation, with emphases added, from Mirabeau, 1789: v. 1, 7–8).

These statements have often been interpreted, including by this author, as an early pronouncement in favor of the principles of proportional representation (see, for example, Hoag and Hallett, 1926: ch. IX, #117; McLean, 1991: 173; Colomer, 2001: 116–117). However, we should acknowledge that no explicit reference to new electoral rules of proportional representation was ever made by Mirabeau and that the discussion of these principles as potentially operative for allocating seats on the basis of votes did not start until several decades later. Putting Mirabeau's contribution in context, it may appear rather obvious that he was referring to elections held in multi-member districts by an open ballot favoring the choice of individual candidates and majority rule. He was alluding to the peril of imposing only votes in bloc for each of the estates in such a manor that the aristocracy and the clergy would prevail over the whole nation. But note that Mirabeau states that the existing elected assemblies of the time "are" like a chart of the nation, and that they "should" keep being it. If they actually "were" like a chart it is because they were elected in a way permitting such a representation (in the two senses of the word); that they "should" maintain that characteristic may be reasonably interpreted as a warning against the risk that they might cease to maintain it and become partial, most likely as a consequence of voting in bloc for closed lists of candidates of each estate, grouping or faction.

The authors mentioned were among the most influential in the making and criticism of constitutions in Britain, the emerging United States, revolutionary France and indirectly in many other countries at the time. It is noteworthy to remark that they essentially coincided in the following observations.

(1) They valued positively traditional electoral systems based on multi-member districts and individual-candidate voting—what I call here the 'originating' system—able to produce a faithful representation of the community, like "a chart".
(2) They realized that the formation of electoral factions or parties introduced more biased and partial representation than previous practices based on individual votes for individual candidates.
(3) They eventually acknowledged that in mass elections in large societies, where the homogeneity of interests and values that had prevailed in small, simple communities during the previous eras was decreasing, the formation of political factions was unavoidable and perhaps even necessary to make the political representation of a diversity of groups possible.
(4) Finally, they considered that once parties had begun to intervene in the electoral process, the existence of multiple parties was better than the concentration of power in the hands of a single party, in the sense that this might reestablish to some extent the previous capacity of elections to become "a chart" of the society by giving representation to different groups. In other words, if parties were unavoidable, multipartism was better than single-party dominance or two-party alternation.

6. Derived electoral systems

To the extent that parties and factionalization were unavoidable, the re-establishment of broad electoral representation required the invention and introduction of new electoral rules different from the traditional, now obsolete system based on multi-member districts and majoritarian rules. By the first few decades of the 20th century, as surveyed above, the 'originating' electoral system had generally been replaced with alternative formulas. Multi-member elections with majoritarian rules basically survived at local level elections, although they also reappeared in a number of cases of

new democracies devoid of previous experience with competitive elections.

Virtually all the new electoral rules and procedures that were created since the 19th century can be understood as innovative variations of the 'originating' system—which can be called 'originating' precisely for this reason. They can be classified in three groups, depending on whether they changed the district magnitude, the ballot, or the rule.

The first group of new electoral rules implied a change of the district magnitude from multi-member to single-member districts, keeping of course both individual-candidate voting and majoritarian rules. With smaller single-member districts a candidate that would have been defeated by a party sweep in a multi-member district may be elected. Thus, this system tends to produce more varied representation than multi-member districts with party closed lists, although less varied than multi-member districts with open ballot. Single-member districts were broadly introduced in Scotland and Wales and in lower proportions in England during the 18th century, although they did not become the general norm for all Britain until 1885. They were also introduced in the US state of Vermont in 1793 and gradually expanded to the rest of the country, especially for the election of the House of Representatives in 1842, as mentioned. France also replaced multi-member districts with single-member districts for the first time in 1820, but oscillated between both formulas during the rest of the 19th century.

The second group of new electoral rules implied new forms of ballot favoring individual-candidate voting despite the existence of party candidacies, while maintaining the other two essential elements of the traditional system: multi-member districts and majoritarian rules. By limited vote, one party can sweep as many seats as the voter has votes, but it is likely that the rest of the seats will be won by candidates of different political affiliation. The earliest experiences of limited vote in multi-member districts took place in Spain, first in the form of a single-nontransferable vote, that is, with only one vote per voter, from 1865 on, and giving each voter two votes in three-seat districts from 1878 on. Limited vote was also introduced in previously existing multi-member districts in Britain in 1868 and in Brazil in 1875.

Finally, the third group of new electoral rules implied the introduction of proportional representation formulas, which permit the maintenance of multi-member districts and in some variants also open or individual-candidate ballot. The early, British-style formula of single-transferable vote is used in multi-member districts with individual voting, like the traditional 'originating' system, although it requires each voter not only to select but to rank candidates. Other formulas of proportional representation, such as double vote, preferential voting and open ballots, may also be compatible with the other essential element of the 'originating' system: individual-candidate voting.

7. Conclusion

In traditional analyses in political science, political parties have been presented as having derived from previously existing assemblies, elections and electoral systems, rather than the other way around. The present article has documented this relationship, but it only appears to be valid in general terms for remote periods, when elections were held by a very old electoral system based on multi-member districts, open ballot and a majoritarian rule. This electoral system, while being able to produce a consensual, acceptable representation for most citizens, did indeed create incentives for potential political leaders to form coordinated candidacies and voting coalitions, usually called 'factions', which were the most primitive form of political parties. However, once partisan candidacies, partisan voting in bloc and even partisan ballots emerged, other political leaders, activists and politically motivated scholars began to search for alternative electoral systems able to reduce single-party sweeps and exclusionary victories. This new period began to develop by mid-19th century. It can be held that, from that moment on, it was the previously existing political parties that chose, manipulated and promoted the invention of new electoral rules, including the Australian ballot, single-member districts, limited ballot, and proportional representation rules, rather than the other way around. This trend in favor of more pluralistic electoral rules was in some sense a re-establishment of the consensual representation of the community that, before the formation of parties, had been characteristic of the multi-member district-based set of rules that I have suggested calling the 'originating' electoral system.

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