

# **The Question of Electoral Reform in Established Democracies**

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# What is 'electoral reform'?

- A change in some feature of electoral system design
  - A reduction in district magnitude (M)
  - Redesign of the ballot paper (BS)
  - A shift from one divisor to another (EF)
- A fundamental shift from one electoral family to another

Plur/maj	Mixed	List	Other
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Plur/maj	Bermuda	Lesotho	Iraq	Jordan
	Fiji	Monaco	Rwanda	Afghanistan
	Montserrat	New Zealand	Sierra Leone	
	PNGuinea	Philippines	South Africa	
	Mongolia	Thailand	Moldova	
Mixed		Ukraine		
		Russia		
List		Mexico	Macedonia	
			Croatia	
Other	Madagascar	Bolivia	Netherlands?	
		Italy	Israel?	
	Venezuela			
	Japan			

Plur/maj	Mixed	List	Other
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Plur/maj
Mixed

SNTV → MMM

New Zealand

SMP → MMP

List → MMP → ... back to List!

**Sub-national reforms in Anglo-Saxon democracies....**

- Australia: ACT moves from List to STV
- New Zealand: shift from SMP to STV for local elections
- UK: regional parliaments by MMP; Scottish local elections shift from SMP to STV
- Canada's provinces adopt MMP or (potentially) STV systems

Other
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Japan

# How not to run an electoral reform process

- Case 1: The Netherlands
- Motivation?
  - “Accountability” of political parties
  - Coalition stitch-up?
- Proposed system
  - Mixed system (MMP)
  - SNTV for district seats
  - Open list for list seats

Subsequent Citizens' Assembly looks like recommending “no change”

Started for the wrong reasons?

Designed by civil servants

Lack of consultation

Late engagement with experts

Stupid system (too complex)

# How not to run an electoral reform process

- Case 2: United Kingdom
- Motivation?
  - “Fairness” of election result, or
  - Coalition stitch-up?
- Terms of reference
  - “broad proportionality”
  - Stable government
  - Voter choice
  - MP-voter link
- Proposed system
  - Mixed system (MMP) (17.5% list seats)
  - AV for district seats
  - Semi-open list for list seats

Australia

Proposed ballot paper

Germany

Belgium

CONSTITUENCY VOTE		SECOND VOTE	
<p>This vote will help to decide who is the constituency MP for Westbury. Rank the candidates in order of preference (1 for your preferred candidate, then 2, 3 etc.). Rank as many candidates as you wish.</p>		<p>This vote will help to decide the total number of seats for each party in the county of Purfordshire. You may vote either for one party or, if you wish, for one of the listed candidates. A vote for a listed candidate will also be counted as a vote for that candidate's party.</p>	
place the candidates in order of preference (1, 2, 3 etc.)		EITHER	OR
put an X against the party of your choice		put an X against the candidate of your choice	
<b>Stephen Collins</b> <i>Conservative</i>		<input type="checkbox"/> Conservative	<input type="checkbox"/> Giles Anderson
<b>Candice Crosby</b> <i>Liberal Democrat</i>			<input type="checkbox"/> John Coleman
<b>Dennis Graham</b> <i>Referendum Party</i>			<input type="checkbox"/> Julia Smith
<b>Stephanie Mills</b> <i>Natural Law Party</i>		<input type="checkbox"/> Labour	<input type="checkbox"/> Helen Baxter
<b>Amina Mir</b> <i>Independent</i>			<input type="checkbox"/> Tom Franklyn
<b>Diane Morgan</b> <i>Labour</i>		<input type="checkbox"/> Liberal Democrat	<input type="checkbox"/> Donna Jones
<b>Martin Newman</b> <i>Green Party</i>			<input type="checkbox"/> Carol Newton
<b>Peter Quine</b> <i>Independent</i>		<input type="checkbox"/> Natural Law	<input type="checkbox"/> Fazal Hussain
<b>Robert Russell</b> <i>UK Independence Party</i>			<input type="checkbox"/> Julian Morison
		<input type="checkbox"/> Referendum	<input type="checkbox"/> Paul Delaney
			<input type="checkbox"/> Nasim Shah
			<input type="checkbox"/> Anthony Barber

# How not to run an electoral reform process

- Case 2: United Kingdom
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Started for the wrong reasons?

Restrictive terms of reference

Weak consultation

Poor use of experts

Stupid system (too complex)

## Why change?

- Reform of new 'non-sticky' systems
- PR cases: concerns over accountability
- Non-PR cases: concerns over 'fairness'
- Corruption scandal

## How to change?

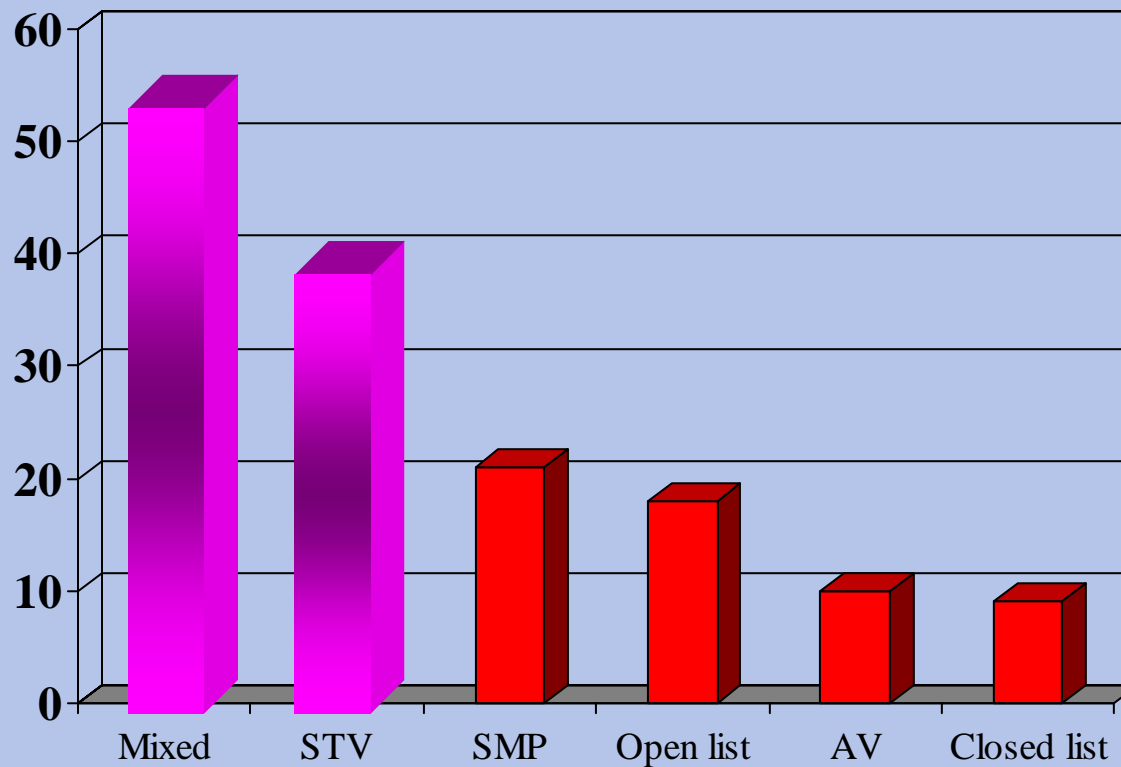
- Who sets the agenda?
- Who drafts the new system?
- What scope to amend the draft?
- Ultimately who decides?

## Change to what?

- Path-dependency?
- Elite control of the agenda?
- Role of 'experts'?
- Fashion?

... and what do the electoral system specialists think....

### Expert rankings of electoral systems



Bowler et al., *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*. Vol.15, 2005

# Conclusions?

- How 'value' driven is the process?
- Significance of...
  - Circumstances
  - Actors
  - Expediency