Hanspeter Kriesi (a cura di)

Political Communication in Direct Democratic Campaigns. Enlightening or Manipulating?

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Political Communication in Direct Democratic Campaigns

Enlightening or Manipulating?

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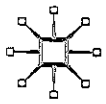

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intentional process (e.g. Forgas 1995; Kunda 1990). Motivated processing occurs when an individual has a specific motivational goal he or she wants to obtain. Sad moods, for instance, might motivate an individual to seek positive memories to repair the negative mood (Josephson et al. 1996). In the political domain, emotions have been identified as important sources of motivational goals (e.g. Sniderman et al. 1991; Pan and Kosicki 1996). Pan and Kosicki (1996) have pointed out, for instance, that white Americans rely strongly on affective predisposition towards blacks when forming opinions about racial policies. In our studies, emotions towards foreigners influenced what arguments were approved of. Negative emotions towards foreigners, for instance, motivated individuals to approve of arguments that supported a xenophobic voting decision. That is, individuals aligned their arguments to their affective predispositions.

The cumulative evidence of previous findings and our results demonstrate that affective reactions can influence political attitudes either directly or indirectly. On the one hand, for easy or familiar issues positive and negative affect is likely to act as a predisposition exerting an indirect effect on attitude, that is, the affective impact is cognitively mediated. On the other hand, for difficult and unfamiliar issues, affective reactions also exert a direct influence on attitudes. Thus, the results of our analyses support the thesis that emotions play an important part in the realm of politics and voting, either directly or indirectly.

Notes

1. Negative affect: Cronbach's $\alpha = .73$ in wave one; wave two: .76; wave 3: .78. Positive affect: $\alpha = .72$ in wave one; wave two: .78; wave three: .79.
2. Negative affect: $\alpha = .75$ in wave one; wave two: .79. Positive affect: $\alpha = .69$ in wave one; wave 2: .68.
3. Negative affect: $\alpha = .67$ in wave one; wave two: .71; Positive affect: $\alpha = .69$ in wave two; wave two: .80.
4. Oblique rotation; Eigenvalue-criteria for factor extraction; 64% explained variance.
5. Oblique rotation; Eigenvalue-criteria for factor extraction; 56 % explained variance.
6. Oblique rotation; Eigenvalue-criteria for factor extraction; 63 % explained variance.
7. The model shows a perfect fit to the data, $\chi^2(43) = 39.9$, *ns*, CFI = 1.00.
8. Again, the model fitted the data very well: $\chi^2(9) = 7.89$, *ns*; CFI = 1.00.
9. Model fit for the path analysis: $\chi^2(18) = 15.1$, *ns*; CFI = 1.00.

14
Conclusion

Hanspeter Kriesi

The study of political communication from an integrated perspective

In the introduction to this volume, we introduced two visions of democracy – a demand-side and a supply-side vision. For our study of direct-democratic campaigns in Switzerland, we adopted an integrated approach that combines the two visions. From such a perspective, the key question is whether, in direct-democratic campaigns, the political elites are capable of manipulating the voters in such a way as to impose their policy goals without taking the voters' preferences into account. Given the widespread lack of political knowledge on the part of the voters, and given the complexity of contemporary political decision-making, the political elites' manoeuvering space is potentially very large, opening up considerable possibilities for influencing the voters' opinion formation. Our goal was to find out the extent to which the elites make use of these possibilities and succeed in imposing their views, and to what extent the voters are enlightened or manipulated by the elites' attempts to influence them.

As we argued in the Introduction, whether or not the elites remain responsive and accountable to their voters very much depends on three conditions – the competitiveness of the political process; the independence, resourcefulness and diversity of the media; and the attentiveness of the citizen public. These three requirements define, as we have pointed out, the liberal representative model of the public space. A competitive political process implies the presence of competing political offers, opening up a real choice for the voters. To be competitive, all the adversarial camps need to be resourceful, and they need to be able to reach out to the public via the media. The media, in turn, need to be independent, resourceful and diverse enough to be able to communicate the messages from all political camps. Above all, the media need to be ready to invest in political news reporting. Ultimately, however, the manoeuvering space of the political elites crucially depends on the public. The public needs to be attentive to

political news, able to follow political news reporting in different channels, and capable of independent judgement in order to assess the competing offers. An attentive public constitutes the ultimate constraint for unresponsive political elites in a democratic system because the competing elites, for their political survival, have to take into account the preferences of such a public. The political offers made by the elites have to appeal to the public's predispositions, that is, the political communication of the elites have to establish a plausible link between their 'supply' and the public's 'demands'. This is where the supply-side vision of democracy meets the demand-side vision. Or, to put it more pointedly: To the extent that the supply side is induced/constrained to take the demand side into account, the supply-side vision is dominated by the demand-side vision. By contrast, to the extent that voters' preferences are malleable, leading them to flip-flop, depending on what happens to be at the top of their minds, the supply-side vision reigns supreme.

Whether or not these conditions are fulfilled cannot be answered in the abstract but has to be studied in a given context. We have proposed to study the effect of political communication in a very specific context – Swiss direct-democratic campaigns. Such campaigns share some characteristics, which create laboratory-like conditions for the study of political communication. First, direct-democratic campaigns are of limited duration, have a clear beginning and a clear ending, and typically involve an important intensification of political communication. Second, such campaigns give rise to a bipolar pattern of competition and are focused on a specific issue, which keeps the complexity of the communication processes within manageable proportions. We have studied three issues which differ systematically with respect to their familiarity and complexity, allowing us to study the implications of some key situational conditions influencing the effect of political communications.

As we pointed out in the Introduction, the three campaigns represent three rather ideal-typical choice situations. First, the asylum campaign stands for a campaign on a familiar issue of low complexity, an easy choice situation, where most voters' minds were essentially made up before the campaign even started. Second, the naturalization campaign stands for a campaign on an unfamiliar issue of low complexity, an intermediate choice situation, where most voters' had first to familiarize themselves with the issue, but where learning about the issue was relatively easy. Third, the corporate tax campaign stands for an unfamiliar and complex issue, a difficult choice situation, where many voters even at the end of the campaign had a hard time knowing what the choice was all about.

The disadvantage of our design is obvious, too: Its natural setting implies that our three campaigns and the issues involved differ in other respects as well, which makes comparing them more complex. Thus, the asylum reform and the naturalization initiatives are issues related to immigration,

while corporate tax reform is an issue of neoliberal economic reform. Accordingly, the coalitions opposing each other vary considerably, as do the resources at the disposal of the adversaries in the three campaigns. Moreover, critics may argue that we have been talking about three specific direct-democratic campaigns in Switzerland, and that our results are heavily tainted by the larger context of the Swiss media system and the Swiss political system.

We concede, of course, that the Swiss context has influenced our results, and that such a study should be replicated in other contexts to be better able to test the generalizability of our results. However, we would maintain that, even if the results of social science research in natural settings are always to some extent context-bound, they may still point beyond the narrow confines of their setting, provided the analysis succeeds in characterizing the context in general, analytical terms, and provided it succeeds in pointing out how the context conditions the results. In this summary, we shall attempt to indicate how we think that our results do not only speak to direct-democratic campaigns in Switzerland, but have something more general to say about the effects of political communication in political campaigns and about the applicability of the integrated approach of political communication.

The politicians' strategies

The institutional logic of a direct-democratic campaign is a binary, majoritarian logic that leaves little room for bargaining, does not know clearly designated leaders, and introduces a large number of potential partners. The campaign comes at the end of a protracted political process – in the Swiss case a much more protracted process than in the member states of the United States – that largely pre-structures the line-up of the competing camps and their framing strategies, as well as the outcome of the campaign. This means that the manoeuvering space of the politicians is rather limited by the preceding issue-specific political process. In addition, the politicians' control over the campaign may be limited by exogenous factors having an impact on the outcome of the campaign, but which are outside of the control by the competing camps. We have encountered two instances of such exogenous influences on our campaigns: first, the protracted conflict about the new justice minister (Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf) – who defended the government's position during the campaign for the naturalization initiative – intensely preoccupied the Swiss public in the months preceding the vote and led to a late start of the respective campaign, which has probably compromised the chances of the initiative at the polls. Second, the enormous losses of the largest Swiss bank (UBS) in the subprime crisis, which became public just before the campaign for the corporate tax reform started and resurfaced again during the campaign, seriously hurt the supporters of

the reform, and are very likely to have contributed to the surprisingly close result of the vote.

In other words, politicians face great uncertainty in a direct-democratic campaign, and they are highly constrained by the issue-specific and general political context in which campaigns are embedded. Within the constraints imposed upon them, they attempt to solve above all three tasks in such campaigns: the task of forming coalitions that are as large as possible, of crafting messages that are as strong as possible, and of diffusing those messages to as large a number of voters as possible. These three tasks, we maintain, need to be solved by political actors in any referendum campaign, not only in Switzerland, but also in the United States or in referendums organized in the context of the European integration process.

Coalition formation. First of all, politicians can improve their chances of winning a contest by forging a supporting coalition that is as broad and encompassing as possible. In the event of direct-democratic campaigns, the highly fragmented, multipolar system of political actors is reduced to a bipolar configuration of coalitions as a result of the majoritarian, bipolar logic of direct-democratic institutions. As we have argued, the process of coalition formation is decisively shaped by the actors' political beliefs. These beliefs operate at the level of fundamental ideological convictions, as well as at the more down-to-earth level of policy-specific positions. Even if political actors of different persuasions do not share the same overall ideology, they may find themselves in the same camp for pragmatic reasons. This does not mean, however, that they will closely cooperate in the course of the campaign. On the contrary, as we have shown in Chapters 4 and 6, the political actors who belong to the same 'objective' coalition for pragmatic reasons are forming distinct components within that coalition, each of which primarily caters to its own constituency. Thus, in the case of the asylum law campaign, the 'third force', which was mainly made up of dissidents from the moderate right, and formed a pragmatic coalition with the left, led its own campaign, and did not cooperate with the left in a joint effort. Similarly, the moderate right did not cooperate with the left in the naturalization campaign, although the two were 'objective' allies in the battle against the conservative/populist right. Even the two component forces of the moderate right – the Liberals and the Christian Democrats – did not cooperate with each other in this particular campaign in the aftermath of their conflicts over government formation after the 2007 elections.

In other words, the formation of coalitions with separate components allows for the reconciliation of the bipolar logic of the direct-democratic campaigns with the multipolar logic of the proportional consensus democratic system that predominates otherwise in Swiss politics. This is a lesson which has wider applicability beyond the Swiss context: The majoritarian logic of the direct-democratic votes can be reconciled with the context conditions of proportional, consensus democracies that prevail on the European continent by the particular strategies of coalition formation among the political elites.

In the Swiss context, the moderate right takes a pivotal position in this process of coalition formation. In the case of immigration-related issues, where the moderate right has an intermediary position between the left and the conservative/populist right, it forms a pragmatic alliance with the one or the other, depending on the specificities of the proposal at stake. In the case of economic issues, it usually teams up in a natural alliance with the conservative/populist right in a classic left–right conflict. We have too few cases here to generalize the coalition patterns, but three aspects of what emerges here imply very important lessons which again point beyond the Swiss context. First, although there are many other actors who are part of the emerging coalitions, the parties play a key role in coalition formation. They are highly instrumental in forging coherent coalitions which provide unambiguous cues to the voters. If the parties are internally divided, their signals are no longer easy to grasp, and the voters have greater difficulty orienting themselves. Second, the cases we have selected illustrate what we know from previous studies (see Chapter 2), namely, that coalition formation in such campaigns is variable and usually ends up in either a centre-right versus left or a centre-left versus conservative/populist right configuration. The variability of the coalition formation stabilizes the system, since it makes for cross-cutting patterns of conflict and undermines the congealment of oppositions. Third, the pivotal role of the moderate right tends to have a moderating impact on the polar positions – at least with respect to cultural issues. The moderate right who also dominates the government defends the government's position and usually, although not always, prevails.

Crafting the message. Each coalition or each component of a coalition has to be able to craft a convincing message that attracts the attention of the media and the public. We found that in all three campaigns, the message was above all a substantive one, that is, the campaigns were always focused on substance, and not on the contest and the actors involved. Moreover, in all three campaigns, both camps have been able to formulate one or two strong messages to support their point of view (Chapter 5). Some chapters have used the concept of 'arguments' to refer to these messages, others have preferred to refer to 'frames' when speaking of these messages. Each camp tried to promote its own frames and to stay on message, that is, to promote the same frames throughout the campaign. The difficulty of the framing task varied, however, with the issue at stake. Thus, in the asylum campaign, where the campaigners had to deal with a familiar issue of low complexity, both sides succeeded in staying on message throughout the campaign. In the other two campaigns, the supporters of the proposals made the experience that the frames they promoted were not as successful as intended

and, in one case they reacted by shifting the emphasis in framing. In the corporate tax campaign, the main frame of the supporters of the reform, the SME-frame turned out to be less effective than intended, because it was not really contested by the opposition. In the naturalization campaign, the conservative promoters' procedural argument ('people-final-say') was not as successful as intended either, which incited the campaigners in this particular case to shift to the 'mass naturalization' argument in the final stages of the campaign – especially in the paid media.

We proposed to measure the strength of a message by the amount of reactions it generates from the opposing camp. This conceptualization presupposes that messages which are ignored by the opponents are weak, while messages, which cannot be ignored by the opponents are strong. According to the conventional wisdom in political science, campaigners talk past each other, each side promoting its own themes. Even if direct-democratic campaigns do not constitute very favourable settings for the discursive quality of the public debate (see Chapter 1), it turns out that Swiss campaigners often feel constrained to react to the arguments of the opposing side, that is, the campaigns tend to have a dialogical character (Chapter 5). The degree to which a dialogue develops seems to depend a lot on the complexity of the issue at stake. Thus, we found that the extent to which the two camps referred to each other was much higher in the two immigration-related campaigns than in the highly complex case of the corporate tax campaign. Beyond this particular element of complexity, we were not able to sufficiently clarify the reasons why politicians feel compelled to react to the arguments of the other side.

The strength of a message can also be measured by its impact on the voters' choices. According to this conceptualization, the arguments of the two camps had an important effect. However, the winning camp not always had the strongest arguments. As we have shown in Chapter 13, the supporters of all three proposals always had the strongest arguments when it came to impacting the vote. But in only two of the three cases, the proponents also carried the day – in the case of the naturalization initiative, they lost, although their arguments had a stronger impact on the vote than the arguments of their adversaries. We can conclude that to have a particularly strong argument is not yet a guarantee for being able to win the contest.

Delivering the message. For Swiss politicians, just as for the Swiss media, direct-democratic campaigns are routine events which they know how to handle. The timing of the campaigns is largely determined by the established routines (Chapter 4). Thus, the campaigns start roughly two months before the ultimate voting date, and they reach their peak roughly three weeks before this date. The starting date is determined by convention, and influenced by seasonal considerations – such as the summer vacations or the Christmas break. The peak is determined by the voting behaviour of

the Swiss voters, most of whom vote by mail after they have received their voting material, but quite some time before the ultimate voting date. In the case of optional referendums, opponents tend to get a first-mover advantage, because they have already mobilized to qualify the issue for the vote, and just go on to campaign for the vote itself.

The choice of the channels of mobilization is largely determined by the resources the campaigners have at their disposal. Those who have sufficient amounts of money use it for paid ads in the press and public posters – the main forms of advertising in Swiss direct-democratic campaigns, given that advertising in electronic media is forbidden. Those who do not have enough money rely more on press releases and personnel resources – organizational staff, but also on volunteers. In Switzerland, there are no disclosure laws, which means that we do not have precise information on the amounts of money spent by the opposing camps. We have, however, rough estimates for our three campaigns, based on the interviews with the campaign operatives, and we have even rougher estimates about all campaigns since the 1980s, based on the amount of published ads in some selected newspapers. In general, the Swiss right has more financial resources available than the Swiss left, which is confirmed by our three campaigns. Exceptionally, the financial resources were roughly balanced in the asylum case, because the 'third force' could count on money from parts of the business elite thanks to the connections of its leading figure, who was a businessman.

Our three cases illustrate, however, that money does not always carry the day. Thus, although the supporters of the naturalization initiative invested much more money into the campaign than its opponents, they lost the vote. Moreover, at the end of the day the relative advantage the left enjoyed in the asylum case thanks to the support by the third force did not pay off in terms of number of votes. Finally, the tremendous advantage that the supporters of the corporate tax reform had did not at the end of the day bring about a clear-cut victory for their cause. The best we can currently say in general terms about the influence of money on the outcome of Swiss direct-democratic campaigns is that money does matter, but that it does not matter a lot (Kriesi 2009).

Generally, we know that the campaign expenditures increase in both camps when the expected outcome of the vote gets close. We know this from the United States (Stratmann 2006) and from Switzerland (Kriesi 2009). The reasons behind this relationship are obvious (Erikson and Palfrey 2000): government spending is driven by the *threat* that challengers exert. The government's camp is usually, although not always, in a strong position, and it can usually be quite sure to win the direct-democratic contest. In the case of initiatives, it has virtually always won in Switzerland in the past, although this has recently been changing. But if the government's camp can count on a victory at the polls with a high

probability, it has no reason to invest a lot of money. It will only invest its resources if the outcome of the vote becomes uncertain. Conversely, challenger spending is driven by the *opportunity* provided by the expectation of a close outcome. However, in the case of the challengers, spending is also driven by the intensity they often feel about their cause. Thus, challengers sometimes tend to invest the money they have, even if theirs is a lost cause. The asylum case illustrates the importance of the intensity of feelings to challengers' behaviour.

The case of the corporate tax reform is particularly intriguing against this general background. In this particular case, the challengers hardly had any money to invest at all. The government's camp, however, supported by the Swiss business community, invested large sums of money because it must have anticipated a close vote, given the exogenous events concerning the UBS and the results of its pre-electoral surveys. We do not know, of course, what might have happened if the supporters of the reform had not invested as much money as they eventually did. But given the very close outcome of the vote (50.5 percent vs. 49.5 percent), we can be quite confident that, in this particular case, money made a great difference.

The media's strategies

Campaign coverage by the mass media constitutes the most important source of information for Swiss voters, followed by the official information booklet, and by the perceived opinion of the Swiss public (Chapter 11). It is, therefore, very important to know how the Swiss media cover direct-democratic debates. We found that coverage of such campaigns is routine and ritualized business for the Swiss media. Direct-democratic campaigns routinely give rise to an intense issue-specific debate in the media, and the coverage is typically of a high level of quality. There is as of yet little evidence for a dominant market-orientation in the Swiss media (Chapter 7). The Swiss media spend an important amount of resources on the coverage of political news, and journalistic values seem to generally play an important role. Overall, the media coverage of the campaign is characterized by a high degree of intensity, diversity, and prominence (Chapter 8). The intensity and prominence of the coverage varies, however, according to the issue at stake; thus, immigration-related issues gave rise to a more intense and more prominent coverage than the more complex, unfamiliar, and highly technical corporate tax reform.

As shown in Chapter 9, campaign coverage by the media is clearly driven by politicians' input. Politicians act and the media react. The media faithfully cover the input they receive from the politicians, which results in a media output that roughly mirrors the politicians input in quantitative and qualitative terms. Although the media rely somewhat more heavily on contest frames than do politicians, they essentially take over the politicians' emphasis on substantive frames and reproduce the dialogical character of their arguments.

As a result of their overall focus on substance over contest, the debate in the media is not highly personalized (Chapter 8). Nevertheless, there are some dominant personalities and organizations in the news. Most importantly, and in line with the overall trend towards an increasing media focus on the executive, the ministers responsible for the proposal on the part of the Federal government, turn out to be the individuals with the greatest media presence in all three campaigns. In addition, the members of the Federal Parliament are also strongly represented in the media campaign. The power of the actors involved generally is a factor that increases their likelihood to make it into the media, but the input of the responsible members of the Federal government is especially attractive for the media, since they multiply their input more than that of any other source (Chapter 9).

While the prominence of the members of the Federal government is in line with the generally increasing 'presidentialization' of European democracies (Poguntke and Webb 2005), it goes against the grain of Swiss political culture. The government enjoys some important institutional advantages in the Swiss version of direct-democracy: It controls the voting agenda; it has important information tools (the official booklet, official slots for the presentation of its point of view on national TV); and its media input is, as we have seen, particularly newsworthy. But according to the Swiss political cultural tradition, the government is expected to exercise its campaigning role with a certain restraint. While entitled to provide the voters with a balanced diet of information, the authorities should, according to the traditional view, leave the opinion formation in the general public primarily to civil society, the social and political forces of the country (Kriesi 2009a).

As our results indicate, this plea for personal restraint by government representatives in campaigns is hard to reconcile with the new world of mediatized and, as far as the Swiss case is concerned, polarized politics. Personalization has not yet gone very far compared to other West European democracies (Kriesi, 2011), and the media still concentrate on the substance of the debate. But the media join the trend of the day, attribute responsibility to individual ministers, and expect them to defend the government's proposals in public.

There is another trend, which may not be dominant (yet), but which portends new problems for the future. The tabloids and free newspapers, which are significantly more market-driven than the general press, offer some coverage of direct-democratic campaigns, but do not invest in their coverage and simply report what they get out of news agencies. The free newspapers constitute a recent addition to the Swiss media system, but they already have become by far the most widely read Swiss titles. Although there is no indication that they are the only source of information for some segments of the Swiss public, to the extent that they replace the regional

newspapers, which have had a very strong position in the Swiss media market, the quality of the debate in the media can be expected to suffer a serious setback.

The voters' choice

The effect of a campaign is constrained by the voters' predispositions, which are the result of the voters' previous political experiences in general, and of their exposure to the previous issue-specific debates in particular. Thus, voters who are politically interested and who generally follow political debates already have a pretty good idea about how they are going to decide an issue, before the campaign has even started. But not all the voters have already made up their minds when the campaign sets in. Depending on the familiarity and the complexity of the issue at hand, the share of voters who are still undecided or whose opinion is still malleable varies a great deal. Accordingly, campaigns may make a great difference to the outcome of the vote. Campaigns, we have argued, generally have three types of effects: They may reinforce voters' original intentions, activate their predisposition to form opinions that are in line with those predispositions, or convert them to a choice that is not in line with their predispositions. Reinforcement gives the impression of an overall lack of effect, even if it also constitutes a non-negligible effect of the campaign. Activation is indicative of an enlightening, conversion of a manipulative effect.

Overall effects. All three campaigns had massive effects on the voters' choices, which confirms the increasingly popular idea that 'campaigns matter'. They all reinforced and activated previously held intentions and predispositions. Our three campaigns, however, differ crucially with respect to the three types of outcomes. Reinforcement was paramount in the asylum law campaign. In the other two campaigns, it was the major outcome only among politically interested voters. In the naturalization campaign, activation was very prominent, especially among politically uninterested voters, no less than half of whom became activated by this particular campaign. Conversion turned out to be very important in the campaign on the corporate tax reform – our most complex and unfamiliar case. Conversions were twice as numerous in this campaign than in the two immigration campaigns. Among the uninterested voters, the share of conversions in the corporate tax campaign amounted to no less than one-third, twice the size of the corresponding share in the naturalization campaign, and almost three times their share in the asylum campaign. Among the politically uninterested, the outcome of this campaign appears to have been almost random – one-third was reinforced, one-third activated and one-third converted.

The three types of effect are less straightforward than it appears at first sight, because the voters have more than one predisposition, and the various predispositions may actually draw the voters in different directions. We analysed the effects of two key predispositions – partisan and issue-specific predispositions – in more detail (Chapter 10). According to our results, partisan activation was pervasive in all three campaigns and tended to be stronger than issue-specific activation, although both types of predispositions tended to be less decisive in the corporate tax campaign. The comparison of the behaviour of the cross-pressured, ambivalent voters in the two immigration campaigns showed that the relative importance of the two types of predispositions may vary considerably, even among proposals that initially seem closely related. Thus, ambivalent voters on the left above all followed their issue-specific preferences in the asylum campaign, while they primarily followed their party line in the naturalization campaign. The ambivalent voters on the right behaved in the exact opposite way: they followed their party line in the asylum campaign, but their issue preferences in the naturalization campaign.

We suggested two complementary interpretations for these variable priorities: on the one hand, we argued with the inherent proximity of the substance of the proposal to the issue-specific positions of both the parties and the voters. We suggested that, compared to the naturalization initiative, the asylum law was much more closely linked to the core of both the conservative/populist right's programme and the issue-specific preferences of the voters (which we operationalized by a measure for xenophobia). The naturalization initiative dealt with the question of how to integrate foreigners into the Swiss society – foreigners who have been living in Switzerland for many years – and addressed this question in a rather indirect way. Therefore, it was less obvious to link xenophobia to the naturalization case than it was to link it to the asylum case. Despite all appearances to the contrary, the conservative/populist right had greater difficulty linking the naturalization issue to its opposition to immigration, which is reflected in the modifications of its framing strategy towards the end of the naturalization campaign. On the other hand, we argued that the choice behaviour of the two types of ambivalent voters is also in line with an alternative hypothesis which posits that the voters not only take their cues from their own parties, but also from other parties – in the Swiss case most likely from the pivotal parties of the moderate right.

Learning. Among the mechanisms by which campaigns can bring about their effects, learning is certainly a very important one. Campaigns as information-rich events provide ample opportunities to learn more about the arguments of the two camps, the partisan cues, and the consequences implied by the eventual adoption of a proposal. We have found that voters learned a lot during the campaigns, the knowledge levels in all three

respects significantly increased during all three campaigns (Chapter 11). At the same time, knowledge levels are unevenly distributed among the voters. Most importantly, we found indications for a knowledge gap between the more resourceful (politically interested, highly educated and committed) and the less resourceful (little interested, little educated, and uncommitted) voters. The results are of particular interest with respect to partisan learning, since partisan cues constitute the quintessential heuristic shortcut for voters' decision-making in direct-democratic campaigns. First of all, the more politically resourceful voters are significantly more likely to know about both their preferred party's position and the consequences of the proposal at the beginning of the campaign. Moreover, the more resourceful voters also learn more about the partisan cues (but not about the proposals' consequences) in the course of the campaign. That is, the knowledge gap which already exists at the outset of the campaign increases during the campaign – at least with respect to partisan learning. The exception is the naturalization initiative, where partisan knowledge was already comparatively widespread at the outset of the campaign and where individual resources do not seem to have made a difference at all.

Arguments versus emotions. We know from previous work (Kriesi 2005) that the arguments of the campaigns, or the frames used by the campaigners in their messages, have a very strong impact on the outcome of the vote. Swiss voters have previously been shown to be less minimalist than commonly expected and to rely heavily on the arguments provided by the campaigners of the adversarial camps when making their decisions. In Chapter 12, we tested the impact of arguments on the outcome of the vote, controlling for the voters' ideological predispositions. The predispositions controlled for in this chapter are not exactly the same as in the previous chapters, but correspond to self-positioning on the left–right scale. Still, the analysis in this chapter confirms the previous work by showing that arguments both of the pro camps and the con camps have a very strong impact on the individual vote at the end of the day – even if we control for the individual's general ideological predispositions.

This means that the individuals' positions on the arguments are not simply a reflection of their overall ideological stance, a result that can be interpreted in two different ways: In a positive vein, the observed independence between ideology and arguments could mean that the voters are not simply reacting to the arguments as a function of their overall ideological views, but that they reflect on the arguments and take them at their face value. In a more critical vein, this kind of independence could also be interpreted as a sign of the voters' incapacity to integrate the arguments in an overall ideological perspective. Independence between ideology and arguments could, as is argued in Chapter 12, be seen as a clear-cut case of priming: The most accessible arguments have the strongest weight. Both

interpretations are, of course, compatible with the received wisdom of attitude researchers, who have known since Converse's (1964) seminal work that the attitudes of the voters are less 'constrained' by ideological considerations than the attitudes of political elites.

In addition to these independent effects, we expected to find interactive effects between the voters' overall ideology and the arguments of the campaign, which would account for the widespread activation effects of the campaigns. Activation can be thought of as a result of a match between an argument and underlying ideological predispositions. The argument that falls on fertile ground and activates latent predispositions of voters has a particularly strong effect. In line with the activation idea, we find some argument-ideology interactions at the end of the two immigration-related campaigns, but not at the end of the corporate tax campaign. The effects are strongest for the naturalization campaign, that is, for the campaign with the most widespread activation effects. Moreover, in this particular campaign, the effects are as expected: Arguments of the opposition are reinforced for voters who are generally on the left, while arguments of the supporters are reinforced for voters who are generally on the right. Surprisingly, at first sight, the activation effect for the asylum campaign implies that the misuse argument activates voters of the left more strongly than voters of the right. But on reflection, this result is quite in line with what we have found previously: It is the xenophobic voters on the left who most consistently followed their issue-specific predispositions, even if these were on the left. The great appeal of the misuse argument to those on the left explains, at least in part, why they disregarded party loyalty in this particular vote. We believe that it is possible to argue that the great appeal of this argument for voters on the left is part of the populist right's syndrome of 'welfare chauvinism', which has proven to be highly attractive to West European working class voters (Andersen and Björklund 1990).

Our analyses of the individual vote choices also show that voters do not exclusively rely on arguments to decide how to vote on an issue. They are also influenced by the emotions they feel when thinking about the issue. Chapter 13 shows that the voters' emotions had a stronger direct impact on voting when the issue was highly complex and difficult to understand (the corporate tax reform) than when the issue was easy (the immigration cases). Difficult and complex issues apparently enhance the voters' reliance on their feelings, as the arguments for and against the proposal are not fully understood. As a matter of fact, it is quite counter-intuitive that a complex technical issue such as the corporate tax reform should be accompanied by stronger emotional effects on individual voting choices than for the familiar and highly polarizing issues related to immigration. This result suggests that voters can use their feelings as a heuristic both when they are not motivated to process information about a given issue and when the information is too complex for their decision-making. Thus, the impact

of ideological predispositions on the vote weakened over the course of the corporate tax campaign and was, although still significant, quite small at the end of this campaign. Similarly, the effect of the arguments, although still strong at the end of the campaign, was considerably weaker than in the immigration cases. In fact, the positive emotions proved to be by far the strongest factor in determining the final outcome of the vote in the corporate tax campaign – stronger even than the prior voting intentions at the outset of the campaign! No wonder we found such a large number of conversions in this campaign, while we could not find any systematic media-exposure effects, nor indications for activation by matching. The impression of a random outcome in the individual decision-making process that we got in the analyses of the previous chapters is, in part at least, explained by the great importance of emotions in individuals' final decision-making in this campaign.

Direct-democratic campaigns: enlightening or manipulating?

Having assembled the evidence, we can now ask, what can we conclude from it with respect to the question that has guided our analyses: Are direct-democratic campaigns enlightening or manipulating? The answer is, it depends. In the Swiss context it mostly, but not exclusively, depends on the difficulty of the decision task, which is a function of both the familiarity and the complexity of the issue at stake.

The Swiss context provides conditions which are generally very favourable for enlightening campaigns. The political strategists and the media have developed routinized procedures with which to approach these campaigns. The political strategists provide ample input into the public debates, substantive input that focuses on the content of the issue at hand, and does not distract from substance by mainly discussing secondary aspects of the contest itself. Both camps that oppose each other in these campaigns are capable of crafting powerful messages, and both camps get a fair hearing in the media. With some exceptions, the media are not primarily market driven, but invest in political news reporting and provide intense, diverse campaign coverage of considerable quality. On average, the voters get a steady stream of arguments and voting cues, allowing them, in principle, to make enlightened choices – that is, choices which are in line with their preferences.

The overwhelming majority of the voters end up making consistent choices – up to 90 per cent of the voters in the immigration-related votes, and still roughly two-thirds in the corporate tax case. Voters learned a considerable amount during the campaigns and, based on their enhanced knowledge, the campaigns mainly reinforced or activated their predispositions

as should be the case in an enlightening campaign. The voters' predispositions, indeed, constitute the key constraint on their opinion formation in the course of the campaigns, which means that the supply-side manoeuvering space is generally quite limited.

This is comforting news, but not entirely so. If the vote gets close, as it did in the corporate tax campaign, the voters who cast an inconsistent vote, that is, a vote not in line with their own preferences, may become decisive to the outcome. Inspecting the corporate tax vote more closely, we find that the majority of the inconsistent voters cast a no vote. However, there is one group among the inconsistent voters who overwhelmingly cast a yes vote a group of roughly 10 per cent of all the participants in the corporate tax vote: The originally undecided voters who ended up voting inconsistently. Eighty-nine per cent of this group, or 8.6 percent of all participants in this vote, opted for a yes. This is a group largely sufficient for deciding the overall outcome of the vote in favour of the proposed reform.

For several reasons, the corporate tax campaign suggests that the manoeuvering space for politicians may not be as limited as a pure demand-side vision of democracy is making us believe. In this particularly complex case, the voters' predispositions were less constraining than in the easier immigration cases. Many voters were converted, and they voted against their predispositions. Media coverage was less intense in this particular case, and the debate in the media had less of a dialogical character than in the other two campaigns. Accordingly, exposure to campaign news did not have any systematic impact on the voters' opinion formation. At the same time, in this complex case, which left many a voter without a clue, money has been particularly asymmetrically distributed between the opposing camps. In the final analysis, the voters' emotions appear to have been the most important factor determining their voting choices in this campaign.

The crucial question is, of course, which one of our three cases is most representative of direct-democratic campaigns – the enlightening campaigns or the more dubious case of the corporate tax reform? We have comparable information on the issue complexity and the campaign balance for more than 200 proposals that have been submitted to a federal vote since 1981. As it turns out, the immigration issues resemble the typical campaigns much more closely than does the corporation tax reform. In fact, roughly only 10 per cent of proposals over the last thirty years have been of comparable difficulty for voters as the corporate tax reform, and only somewhat more than 10 per cent have given rise to such excessively imbalanced campaigns (with one side spending 90 per cent of the total or more). Only 2 per cent have been as extreme on both criteria – difficulty and imbalance, and no other case exists that has at the same time given rise to as comparably close an outcome as the corporate tax reform. In other words,

the corporate tax case is quite unique in its combination of characteristics favouring a manipulated outcome.

Having come to this encouraging overall assessment, let us conclude with a few words about the ongoing trends. The share of imbalanced campaigns has been increasing more recently in Switzerland (from roughly 10 per cent in the 1980s to 16 per cent in the 2000s), as has the share of the issues that combine great difficulty of choice with an imbalanced campaign, albeit from a very low level (up from 0 per cent in the 1980s to 4 per cent in the 2000s). At the same time, the changing landscape of the Swiss press, with its shift from regional papers to tabloids and free newspapers suggests that the quality of the debate is decreasing for important segments of voters. These are two signs of deteriorating context conditions for the quality of direct-democratic campaigns. For the time being, however, we can be quite confident that, in Switzerland, the overall conditions remain such that the overall effect of these campaigns will, indeed, remain mostly enlightening.

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