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DIRECT DEMOCRACY AND EUROPEAN UNION DEMOCRACY

CHALLENGE AND RESPONSE

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EPOP (Elections, Public Opinion and Parties) Conference

University of Nottingham

8-10 September 2017
PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY: PROBLEMS OF AGGREGATION

* Electors must accept a package of policies that is better than any alternative but falls short of fully representing them

* National governments win a minority of popular votes and coalitions aggregate parties

* Big parties aggregate different views: soft/hard, pro/anti EU

* To speak of organization is to speak of bias. Schattschneider
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ADDS MULTI-NATIONAL AGGREGATION

* Median national party has 2 MEPS out of 751 MEPs. Most MEPS spend most of their week working on collective action problems in a foreign country and working in foreign language with foreigners

* Party Groups aggregate up to 40 national parties from 28 countries

* Party Groups vary greatly in the extent to which the aggregation of their MEPs’ national commitments create cohesion or disagreement within each multi-national group

* Absolute majority requires Black/Red coalition of opposites

NATIONAL REFERENDUM OFFERS CLARITY OF CHOICE

* Vote on a single issue, not a package. E.g. Remain/Leave

* Dichotomous choice requires an absolute majority

* Ballot can be politically binding. E.g. UK 2016

* Endorse a valued goal. BUT implementation unclear

* Absolute majority requires combining votes from a cohesive protest party with a ceiling on its support and splitting vote of governing parties, e.g. Brexit 2016
EU REFERENDUMS: INPUTS TO MULTI-NATIONAL PROCESS

Demand → Referendum → Majority → EU deliberation → Response

Votes count, resources decide. Stein Rokkan
DIRECT DEMOCRACY vs. LEGAL-RATIONAL LEGITIMACY

* Direct Democracy majority has national legitimacy

* EU Treaties give legal-rational legitimacy (Weber) to EU institutions

* Multi-national EU institutions can respond in their own interest to national Referendums

* Prime Ministers face the Goldoni problem of serving two masters: a majority of their national electorate and a consensus in the European Council

(Longer papers with more data available on request)