VAAs and Issue-Voting – a Challenge to Liberal Representative Democracy

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A. Introduction

In many countries VAAs have become an almost indispensable part of the elections (Cedroni and Garzia 2010, Garzia and Marshall 2014). They are integrated in the campaigning activities of parties and candidates, have become an important element in the media coverage of the elections, and are widely used by the citizens prior to casting their vote. A number of studies have shown that the use of VAAs has an impact on the cognitive behavior of the users, on their likelihood to participate in the elections and on the choice of the party they vote for (see for example Pianzola 2013, Garzia 2010, Garzia et al. 2014, Andreadis/Wall 2014). The more general impact of these tools on democratic processes, however, remains an under-researched topic, yet.

This paper looks at the following question: *"To what extent do VAAs challenge fundamental principles of political representation in liberal and representative democracies?"* In the classical model of liberal representative democracy citizens entrust political power to candidates and parties they believe that they will act in their interest. The mandate given is not binding in a strict sense. Frequently, constitutional provisions prohibit attempts to limit free decididing of the members of parliament.

The functioning of VAAs is based on the idea of issue and proximity voting. The parties and candidates recommended are those with the highest number of equal positions on a certain number of political questions and issues. This is much more specific and detailed than party programs and electoral platforms. It not only increases transparency since the voters know exactly what positions the party and candidates hold on the most actual political issues, the positions presented can also be seen as electoral promises. The candidates make explicit what they are going to vote once they become a member of parliament and the voters know exactly what they can expect from them. This mode of political representation is best described by the delegate model. Promises are supposed to be kept and no leeway is given to the candidates once they are elected. The candidate model is usually opposed to the trustee model, which goes hand in hand with the free mandate. Here the candidates are supposed to decide on the behalf of their voters.

Our hypothesis postulates that *VAAs foster elements of promissory representation*. Parties and candidates are elected for their promises and sanctioned accordingly if they do not keep them. In

terms of political representation it is the delegate model, which prevails over the trustee model; which can be seen as a step away from the traditional liberal model of representative democracy. The more popular these tools become, the more likely is the delegate model to become the prevailing model of political representation. This, however, is not in line with the principles of liberal representative democracy.

Evidence for a trend towards a more direct and controlled representation can be found among all political actors involved: the parties and candidates running for elections, the way the behavior of elected members of parliament is monitored and discussed, and the voters. In this paper we are going to concentrate on the latter. We expect voters to rank issue proximity with candidates higher than party membership or being an incumbent, and we expect to find an inclination among these voters to control the candidates they voted for once they are in parliament and to sanction them if they do not keep their promises.

The data we use for our analyses stem from the Swiss VAA smartvote, the oldest and most popular VAAs in the country. Smartvote offers a wide range of analytical possibilities since it is not based on the political positions of the parties but on the positions of the candidates running for office (Ladner and Fivaz 2012, Ladner and Pianzola 2014). The online survey was conducted among users of smartvote in the course of the 2015 election in the canton of Zurich.

B. Theory and Hypotheses

The hypotheses tested to answer the questions outlined above draw on different theoretical arguments:

The principle of liberal representative democracy

In theories on political representation two models are traditionally confronted (see for example Fox/Shott s2009)**:** the *trustee model* and the *delegated model***.** The difference between the two lies in the role given to the representatives. In the trustee model, representatives keep a large margin of autonomy. The idea is that constituents trust them to find the best solution for the common good. Thus, they have to be able to deliberate and choose the best option. Even though their policy decisions may not coincide with the short term interest of their electorate, they have to take them. Thereby, they follow the common good and are not bound to their electoral promises. The idea is that politicians are better informed than the voters and thus are in a better place to make the right decision.

The delegated model considers representatives being the delegates for their constituency. They act as a mouthpiece for the wishes of the voters who elected them. It means that their autonomy is restricted, because they are bound to electoral promises. This was strongly criticised by John Stuart

Mill (Mill 1882) and Edmund Burke (Burke, 1854) because it leaves no space for open debate. In a delegate model, every representative sticks to his or her initial position and the discussions in parliament are frozen. For two authors, deliberation is essential to find out the best path to the common good and can only take place if representatives have room for their own decisions in respect to their voters.

Mansbridge (2003) develops in a similar vein two more models of representation. She opposes a sanctions model to a selection model. The idea of the first model is that the interest of the principal (the constituents) and their agent (the representative) are in conflict. Thereby, the constituents must closely monitor the actions of their representatives and punish them if they do not act according to their best interests. In the selection model, the constituents choose the candidates with whom they share the most similar interests. Thus, they will not have to spend time monitoring their representatives' actions, because representatives will act spontaneously the same way as constituents would.

Decreasing importance of cleavages and parties

The last decades saw a fundamental change of the political landscape, of politics and parties. Traditional cleavages and ideologies which had structured the political space over a very long time lost their importance. Part of this so-called process of dealignment was the loosening of party ties and a continuous increase of swing-voters (Franklin et al. 1992, Dalton 1996:319). The decreasing importance of often rather vague ideologies was compensated by an increasing importance of more concrete political positions and electoral promises by parties and candidates on specific issues (Mansbridge 2003). Today, it is generally upheld that voters base their electoral decision mainly on the specific issues and political preferences the parties and candidates stand for (Singh 2010). Additional and more general trends in recent years are the growing personalization and mediatisation of politics (Mazzoleni and Schulz 1999).

Issue- and Proximity-Voting

A result of social change and a reinforcing driver at the same time is the concept of issue and proximity voting (Lau and Redlawsk 2006: 262) which is inherent to practically all VAAs. The privileged role of issue preferences goes back to the spatial models of electoral competition which explain voting choices and party strategies by their relative positions in a policy or ideological space (Downs 1957, Enelow and Hinich 1984). Voters are supposed to vote for parties and candidates which are closest to them in the political space. Issue or proximity voting is a contrasting model to a more general party identification based on cleavages and ideologies. Here, the decision for a party (or a candidate belonging to a party) is the result of a more stable psychological attachment which is not constantly readjusted by rational decisions.

One of the problems with the issue voting model, however, is the assumption that voters are well informed about the issue positions of the parties and the candidates running for office. This is usually

not the case since voters generally only invest limited cognitive resources in their electoral choice. This leads authors like Carmines and Stimson (1980) to make a distinction between two groups of issue voters. Their idea is that some issues are clearly more difficult than others. Thus, they differentiate "hard-issue" voters and "easy-issue" voters. They argue that members of the first group are sophisticated, educated and well informed about politics because "hard-issue" voting requires a rational calculation of the alternative electoral choices, as well as a good knowledge of the political landscape. Voters of the second group are not well informed or sophisticated. They presume that "easy-issue" voting occurs when an issue is put forward over a long period and leads to "gut responses" for a candidate or a political party. Because "gut response" do not require any conceptual sophistication, "easy-issue" voters are not better informed than the average. This perpective would explain why a part of the issue-voters only invest limited cognitive resources in politics.

Furthermore, voters develop easy ways to make electoral choices. Rather than engaging in a rational comparison of the parties different positions with their own preferences, they rely on simpler decision making strategies called heuristics (Lachat 2009) or short-cuts. Heuristics are easily available pieces of information which allow for decision making without processing a huge amount of information. In the context of electoral choices, party affiliation can be such a heuristic. Whether party is used as a heuristic or whether it is still the product of a more stable relationship does not matter in this context. We are interested in the primary point of references for the voters when it comes to their electoral decision. Is it issues or parties?

Promissory representation and accountability

Issue voting fosters also *elements of promissory representation* (Mansbridge 2003) and the idea of correct voting (Lau and Redlawsk 1997) which occurs when citizens share exactly the same values as the candidates and the parties they vote for. The more precise the parties and candidates positions on specific questions are, the easier it gets to control whether they still maintain these positions once they are elected and to hold them accountable. Electoral platforms and especially party programs reveal the norms and values the party stands for and give a more general idea about their positions in respect to the different policies at stake. Issue positions are more concrete which makes it easier to monitor them in the parliament. Parties and candidates are elected for their promises and are sanctioned if they do not keep them.

Taken the idea of issue voting seriously and applying it on the idea of political representation, it is the delegate model (Pitkin 1967, Madison et al. 1987) which prevails over the trustee model. This can be seen as fundamental challenge to the prevailing model of liberal and representative democracy where the link between voters and the candidates is less tight ("no binding mandate").

VAAs and VAA research

The main service VAAs offer is providing for each voter a personalized voting recommendation based on a matching over very detailed issue positions of parties. VAAs started their story of success around the millennium. The first studies mainly had descriptive and explorative character and were

interested in the users of VAAs. The results were not surprising: the typical user was young, male, with a higher education and a high interest in politics (Fivaz and Nadig 2010). Throughout the years, VAA research became more sophisticated both in terms of methods and questions and focussed on the impact of VAAs on political participation/voter turnout and on the voters' electoral decisions. It could be shown that VAAs contributed to more informed and hence more politically active citizens. Research also showed that VAAs had a positive impact on voter turnout. Furthermore, they also motivated their users to search for additional information on issues and parties as well as to engage more in political discussions with friends or colleagues at work (Fivaz and Nadig 2010). Most recent research confirmed the positive impact, but it is still unclear how strong this effect is (Germann et al. 2014).

A number of studies also found evidence for a significant impact of VAAs on the actual voting decision (Ladner et al. 2010a, Marschall and Schultze 2011, Mykkännen and Moring 2006, Vassil 2011, Wall et al. 2012). The strongest impact was reported by Ladner et al. (2010a) for the case of Switzerland. Asked directly whether the voting recommendation changed their voting behaviour 67% of the users answered with yes.

The main problem in this respect is the sometimes insufficient quality of the available data. Most of the data stems from online surveys among VAA users and suffers therefore from a self-selection bias and from over reporting in the data sample (Ladner et al. 2010b, Pianzola 2014, Vassil 2011). In order to overcome these problems, several studies applied complex approaches and sophisticated statistical models (Vassil 2011, Pianzola 2014, Israel et al. 2014).

Others studies, like Louwerse and Rosema's (2014) focus on the method used by VAAs to calculate matches. They show that the method used is not neutral, because the advice depends on the model used. A change in the method can change the recommendation. These problems lead certain researchers (Wagner and Ruusuvirta 2012) to advice voters to use these applications as tools and guides rather than as stringent recommendations.

The question of how candidates are affected by VAAs is a blind spot of VAA research up to now. What is also missing so far, are more general studies estimating the impact of VAAs on parties and candidates, on the media coverage of elections, on the elections themselves and on the concept of political representation.

Smartvote

In the case of Switzerland and smartvote, the VAA matching is based on the positions of candidates. For example in the context of the 2011 National elections almost all of the more than 3000 candidates revealed their positions on about 70 issues individually. Every candidate thus becomes visible to the voters with his or her specific positions. He or she cannot hide behind the party organisation since they are invited to give their personal positions. By doing so smartvote perfectly responds to the Swiss electoral system and to the needs of the voters which not only have the possibility to vote for parties but also for candidates (preferential voting). This is most probably also

an explanation for the huge success of VAAs in recent years. In the case of the 2011 elections in Switzerland about 18% of the voters used smartvote before they casted their vote.

Hypotheses

Since VAAs are based on the principle of issue voting we expect the typical user of smartvote to be an issue voter. This, unfortunately cannot be tested straight forward, since our sample only contains users of smartvote. However, we believe that some of these users subscribe to the idea of issue voting to a lesser extent than the others. We therefore have to look at other variables, for example, their reasons to use the website. In a second step we expect issue voters to be more likely to change their voting behaviour and to follow the recommendation given by smartvote. Since they do not have a countervailing rational such as party ties for their vote choice they are more likely to adjust their ballot list according to the results of the VAA. And finally, we expect issues voters to be more inclined to understand the political positions of the candidates issued on smartvote as electoral promises which should be kept once they are elected (promissory voting). If this is the case, we will be able to conclude that issue voters adhere to the delegate model of political representation as opposed to traditional liberal trustee model. They might even increasingly want to control the voting behaviour of their representatives in parliament. The three hypotheses to be tested can be formulated as follows:

- H 1: (Real) Smartvote users consider issue-positions being more important than party membership.
- H 2: Smartvote users with particularly strong preferences for issue-voting are more likely to change their ballot list (panaschieren).
- H 3: Smartvote users with particularly strong preferences for issue-voting are more likely to expect the candidates elected to keep their promises.

C. Data

The data we use stem from an on-line survey conducted among the users of smartvote in the course of the 2015 elections in the canton of Zurich. The citizens elected the 180 members of the cantonal parliament in a PR system in 18 electoral districts. At the same time they also elect the 7 members of the cantonal government. The canton of Zurich is the largest Swiss canton with 1.4 Million people out of which 880'000 are entitled to vote. The electoral turnout was 32.7 percent or about 287'000 people.

As in previous elections smartvote offered an extensive coverage of the parties and the candidates running for office. Out of a total of 1734 candidates 1309 (75%) were revealing their political profile and their issues positions on the website. They had to provide answers to 59 questions. About 82'000 voting recommendations were issued. It can be estimated that between 10 and 15 per cent of the voters used the website prior to their electoral decision.

The online-survey addressed those users which revealed their email address on the website. About 800 users filled in the questionnaire. Some of the questions have never been asked before and were formulated to shed light on the questions treated in this paper.

Proceeding like this, unfortunately, bears some considerable shortcomings. There is a double self-selection bias we have to be aware of (see Pianzola 2014). The users of smartvote are not representative with respect to the voters participating in the elections and the respondents of our questionnaire are not representative with respect to the users of smartvote. We expect the users of smartvote to be more open to the ideas of smartvote and therefore also more open to the idea of choosing parties and candidates according to their issue positions, and we expect the respondents in our survey to be more positive towards smartvote and more likely to follow the recommendations given by smartvote. Since we are not interested in the extent of the effects expected but rather in a possible existence of them the two biases are of lesser importance. And finally, we have to deal with reported behavior. Even if our respondents tell us that they have been influenced by smartvote, we do not know whether this really has been the case. This shortcoming, however, we share with most electoral surveys.

D. Results

Considering the fact that the sample we look at is far from representative (see above), the results have to be treated with care. We cannot really test to what extent the users of smartvote are different compared to ordinary voters without relying on other sources. However, we believe that some of the users are closer to the ordinary voters than others. Those users which go on a VAA-website are doubtlessly more open to the recommendations given, but not all of them are open to the same extent.

In a first step we try to identify different meaningful groups of voters, i.e. does who consider the party program more important and those who consider issue positions more important. Then we shall test whether those who consider issue positions more important are also more likely to follow the recommendations given by smartvote. And, finally we ask whether issue voters expect the

candidates they vote for to keep their "promises" more fiercly than those who vote for candidates for other reasons.

Party voters and Issue (smart) voters

In our post-electoral online-survey we asked the smartvote users which factors they considered decisive for their electoral choice. The question was formulated straight forward and they had to consider whether the factors were important, rather important, rather not important and not important. Table 1 shows the different factors and the answers of our respondents.

Not astonishingly, the users of smartvote consider the candidates position on smartvote most important. About two thirds claim that the positions given by the candidates on smartvote was an important factor for their electoral decisions, and 25 percent considered them rather important. There were, however, about 65 percent of the voters who considered the party program of the candidate as rather important or important, and about the same amount of respondents considered the competences, the personality and the political ideas of the candidates as a decisive factor for their electoral decision. Personal characteristics such as age, gender and education proved to be of lesser importance.

Table 1: Decisive factors for the electoral choice

	Important	Rather important	Rather unimportant	Unimportant	Don't know	N=
Party Program	26.0%	40.0%	19.1%	14.9%		697
Positions according to smartvote	66.0%	25.6%	5.3%	3.1%		702
Competence	20.3%	43.9%	20.9%	10.2%	4.7%	704
Personality	15.6%	33.9%	30.3%	17.0%	3.1%	704
Political ideas	30.0%	40.3%	17.6%	9.8%	2.3%	704
Look	1.1%	7.0%	22.2%	68.6%	1.1%	704
Age	4.4%	24.3%	31.7%	38.8%	0.9%	704
Gender	3.3%	13.1%	24.7%	58.1%	0.9%	704
Education/profession	6.7%	34.5%	34.2%	24.1%	0.4%	704

Based in these answers we can distinguish different groups of voters. Most important for our analyses are those who consider the candidates' position on smartvote more important than the party program of the candidates' party. These voters – or better users of smartvote – are considered to be issue voters whereas those who base their decisions on the party program use the heuristic of the party and we refer to them as party voters. Table 2 reveals that about a quarter of our

respondents are issue voters and a quarter are party voters. For about 40 percent both issues and party program are important, and for about 10 percent neither of them seems to be relevant.

Table 2: Issues Voters and Party Voters

	issues important	party program rather important	Percentage	N=
Party Voters	0	1	24.6	171
Neither Party nor Issues	0	0	9.6	67
Party and Issues	1	1	41.3	287
Issue Voters	1	0	24.5	170
Total			100	695

In a next step we are interested whether there are specific personal characteristics related to the different types of voters. As it comes out clearly in Table 3, there are no significant differences as far as gender, age and education are concerned. There is a slight tendency that issue voters are a bit younger and party voters have a higher level of education but the results cannot be taken for granted. It is more likely that the differences have something to do with the citizens' normative values in respect to parties, politics and democracy.

Table 3: Different types of voters and socio-demographic characteristics

	Party Voter	Neither Party nor Issues	Issues and Party	Issue Voter	Total	N=	Sig.
Women	26.1%	9.1%	41.8%	23.0%	100.0%	165	
Men	23.8%	9.8%	41.3%	25.1%	100.0%	491	n.s.
Average year of birth	1973	1972	1975	1975	1974	656	n.s.
Education low	18.1%	16.7%	43.1%	22.2%	100.0%	72	
Education medium	24.8%	11.4%	40.0%	23.8%	100.0%	105	
Education high	25.3%	8.6%	41.4%	24.7%	100.0%	478	n.s.

Issue voters have weaker party ties – measured by the likelihood they are going to vote for the different parties – and they are generally less interested in politics (see Table 4). These two

observations are significant whereas there is no significant difference in their evaluation of the well-functioning of democracy within the country.

Table 4: Different types of voters and party ties, interest in politics and satisfaction with democracy

	Party Voter	Neither Party nor Issues	Issues and Party	Issue Voter	Total	N=	Sig.
Strong party ties	27.7%	8.0%	43.1%	21.2%	100.0%	513	
Weak party ties	14.0%	15.2%	38.4%	32.3%	100.0%	164	0.000
Very much interested in politics	28.7%	7.3%	45.9%	18.0%	100.0%	327	
Rather interested in politics	20.9%	12.3%	38.5%	28.3%	100.0%	325	0.000
Very content with functioning of CH democracy	22.9%	5.7%	42.1%	29.3%	100.0%	140	
Rather content with functioning of CH democracy	24.7%	10.6%	41.1%	23.6%	100.0%	453	
Rather not content with functioning of CH democracy	24.4%	11.6%	44.2%	19.8%	100.0%	86	n.s.

Issue voters use smartvote for different reasons than party voters. Almost three quarter of the issues voters in our sample are looking for help for their electoral decision whereas only one quarter of the party voters state that this was the most important reason for them to do smartvote (see Table 5).

The weaker party ties of issue voters together with their search for advice while going on smartvote confirms our expectations that there is a meaningful difference between issue and party voters. In the next two sections we are going to test whether these differences reveal the expectations mentioned in our two remaining hypotheses.

Table 5: Why did you use smartvote?

	I was looking for help for my electoral decision	I wandet to know more about the parties'/candidates' positions	I wandted to double check my electoral decision	I wanted to find out how smartvote works	Other reasons	N=
Party Voter	26.4%	28.8%	33.1%	8.0%	3.7%	163
Neither Party nor Issues	47.0%	28.8%	19.7%	3.0%	1.5%	66
Issues and Party	57.5%	20.4%	19.3%	2.1%	0.7%	280
Issue Voter	76.4%	13.7%	9.3%	0.6%	0.0%	161
All	53.4%	21.6%	20.3%	3.3%	1.3%	670
Cramer-V: .221; Sig.: .000						

Who is more likely to change its electoral decision?

As already mentioned, we expect those who consider issues more important than the party program to be more likely to follow the recommendations given by smartvote and to change their ballot list. For a better understanding of why this should be the case and how this can be done, some insight in the Swiss voting system is needed.

The Swiss electoral system can best be described as a preferential system. Voters have to choose a party list which contains as many lines with names of candidates as seats to be gained. Additionally, they have the possibility to alter the party list by deleting some of the names and writing down other names of candidates even if they stem from different parties (panaschieren). They also have the possibility to double the name of a candidate to make him or her moving up within the party hierarchy (kumulieren). In order to do so, they have to delete another name on the list.

The seats are generally allotted in a PR system to the parties on the basis of the votes received by the candidates. The candidates with the highest numbers of votes from each party are given the seats the party wins. The voters also have the possibility to select an empty list and to write down up to twice the names of the candidates they want to vote for. These candidates can be from different parties, too.

Being influenced by the voting recommendation can thus mean: a) the user votes for another party than he or she intended to vote for, or b) the user writes down or doubles the name of candidates which are recommend by smartvote on a list they are not mentioned or on the free list. According to

our results so far, the users are more likely to alter the party list they intended to vote for than to choose another party list.

The results of our survey show a high number of smartvote users who state that the use of smartvote and the recommendation received had an influence on their electoral choice. Only about 10 percent claimed that smartvote had not influenced their voting decision whereas 46.8 percent stated that they have been influenced "a little" and 43.5 percent have been "strongly" influenced (see Table 6). As expected, the results are unambiguous when we look at the different type of voters. Party voters claim that the have been influenced "a little" whereas a huge majority of issue voters claim that they have been "strongly" influenced by smartvote.

Table 6: Type of voter and influence of smartvote on voting decisions

	not at all	a little	strongly	Total	N=
Party Voter	27.2%	59.3%	13.6%	100%	162
Neither Party nor Issue	7.7%	61.5%	30.8%	100%	65
Issues and Party	5.4%	46.8%	47.8%	100%	278
Issue Voter	0.0%	28.6%	71.4%	100%	161
All	9.6%	46.8%	43.5%	100%	666
Cramer-V: .345; sign. .000.					

If we look at the way they have been influenced, it is the customized adaption of the party list according to the ranking of the candidates issued by smartvote which is most popular among the issue voters which clearly fits into the overall picture of citizens which care less about parties and more about the personal political profile and the concrete issue positions of the candidates (Table 7).

Table 7: Type of voter and type of effect of smartvote

|	adapted my ballot paper with new candidates recommended by smartvote	voted for a different party as recommended by smartvote	voted for all the candidates recommended by smartvote	N=
Party Voter	46.8%	5.8%	7.6%	171
Neither Party nor Issues	68.7%	10.4%	9.0%	67
Issues and Party	71.8%	9.8%	17.4%	287
Issue Voter	78.8%	12.4%	17.6%	170
N=	466	66	99	695
Cramer-V	.256	.079	.130	
Sig.	.000	.226	.009	

Do issue voters favour promissory voting?

To our knowledge there are no broadly accepted empirical strategies to measure promissory voting. Initially, we tried to find out whether smartvote users were in favour of the delegate model of representation or whether they rather preferred the trustee model. Unfortunately, this question has been changed in the last minute and did not function the way we expected. We therefore have to rely on another question in which we asked our respondent to state on a scale from 0 to 100 to what extent they expect their candidates to stick to the political positions issued on smartvote once they are in parliament. The value 100 meant that they expected them to stick completely to their electoral "promises" and the value 0 meant that they were not expected to stick to them at all.

Figure 1 reveals the voters' evaluation of the actual (real) situation and the way it should be in their eyes (ideal). As a matter of fact, there is quite a gap between the ideal world and reality. More than 60 percent of the users expect the voters to keep their electoral promises between most of the time (between 80 and 100) but only 5 percent estimate the real practice to be like this. Reality clusters in the eyes of the users around 60 and the ideal candidates are estimated to be at almost 90. Although the numbers do not seem to make sense numerically, they might be helpful for our analyses. We expect those with lower values for the ideal case to leave more leeway to the candidates and to

favour the trustee model whereas those with the highest values (close to 100) to be adherents of the delegate model.

Figure 1: To what extent do and should the voters stick to their promises? Real and ideal
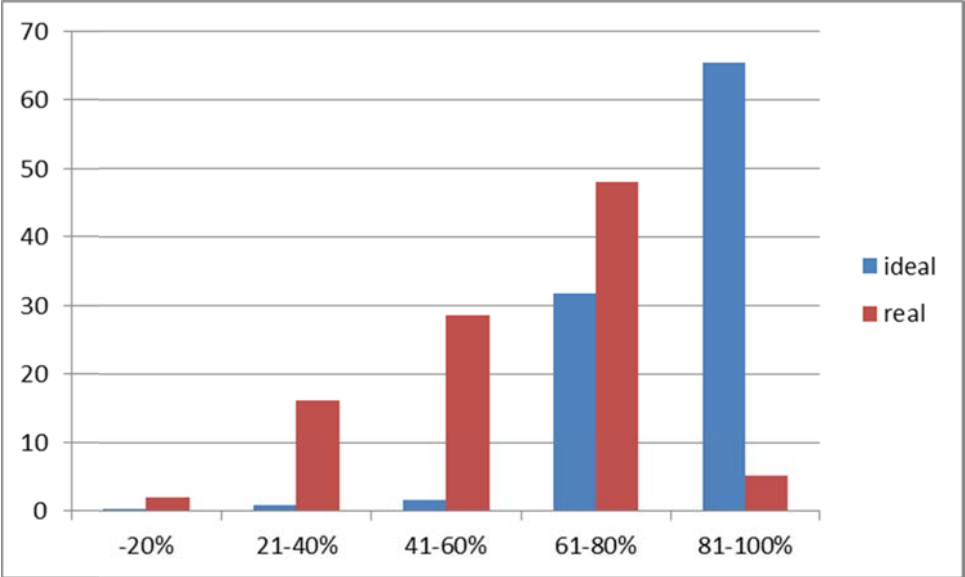
As expected, issues voters – asked how it ideally should be – give significantly less leeway to the candidates than party voters (see Table 8). They are therefore comparatively more in favour of the delegate model than the party voters. As for the estimation of the actual situation there is no significant difference between the different groups of voters.

Table 8: Do and should voters stick to their promises and type of voters

	Ideal	Real
Party Voter	81.2	59.6
Neither Party nor Issues	82.6	57.5
Issues and Party	87.5	60.9
Issue Voter	89.7	61.7
All	86.0	60.4
N=	656	622
F=	14.116	0.996
Sig. =	0.000	0.394

There are two final questions which are helpful for a better understanding of the differences between party voters and issue voters. They concern the monitoring of the candidates elected and the impact of smartvote on political representation (see Table 9).

Issue voter do not closely follow the work of their elected members of parliament and they are therefore most probably also unable to sanction them if they do not keep all their promises. It is the party voters which have a closer look at the positions their elected MP defend. This is goes hand in hand with their lower interest in politics as we have seen at the beginning of this section. Issue voters finally believe that smartvote leads to a better representation of their interest in parliament whereas this is less the case for party voters. This hints at their diverging understanding of political representation and rather at the selection model of Mansbridge (2003) than at the sanction model.

Table 9: Following the work of the candidates and better representation?

How close do you follow the work of the elected MPs?						
	Very closely	Rather closely	Rather not closely	Not at all		N=
Party Voter	2.5%	28.2%	58.9%	10.4%	100.0%	163
Neither Party nor	1.5%	10.6%	66.7%	21.2%	100.0%	66
Issues and Party	2.1%	24.8%	54.6%	18.4%	100.0%	282
Issue Voter	1.2%	14.2%	50.6%	34.0%	100.0%	162
All	1.9%	21.7%	55.9%	20.5%	100.0%	673
Cramer-V: .138; sig.: .000						
Do you think smartvote leads to a better representation of your interest in parliament?						
	Yes	Rather yes	Rather no	No		N=
Party Voter	32.5%	45.9%	14.0%	7.6%	100.0%	157
Neither Party nor	31.7%	55.6%	6.3%	6.3%	100.0%	63
Issues and Party	52.6%	43.8%	2.6%	1.1%	100.0%	274
Issue Voter	60.0%	36.9%	3.1%	0.0%	100.0%	160
All	47.6%	43.7%	5.8%	2.9%	100.0%	654
Cramer-V: .188; sig.: .000						

E. Conclusion and Outlook

In this paper we tried to find out, whether VAAs foster issue voting and by doing so enforce a trend towards electoral promises which are supposed to be kept. We argue that this could be a step away

from the guiding principles of liberal representative democracies which are much more based on the trustee model of political representation than on the delegate model.

The data from our online-survey among users of smartvote show that there are in fact different groups of voters. Among others, those who consider party affiliation the most important reason for their electoral choice and those who consider issue positions most importantly. The results also show that issues voters are more likely to follow the recommendations given by smartvote and they have higher expectations when it comes to the question whether the candidates should keep all their electoral promises once they have become a member of parliament. The results thus smoothly meet our expectations, almost too smoothly to be believed in.

There are in our eyes at least four critical points which need further considerations and research:

First: Like most studies with user data our sample is biased and we do not control for it. We only look at a very special group of smartvote users which were willing to participate. Therefore we do not know how widespread this phenomenon is. We believe that issue voters are overrepresented in our sample. People voting for other reasons (party, incumbents, personality, etc.) are more numerous. Nevertheless, there are issue voters and with the growing popularity of VAAs issue voting is likely to become more popular.

Second: What is first? Are VAAs actively promoting issue voting or are they simply taking up an ongoing development, reinforcing it at the very best? Further research is definitely needed to clarify this question. And perhaps we also have to be more explicit about the issues at stake. Not all of them are equally important.

Third: In this study we did not control for possible context effects. The Swiss political system on the one hand allows for considerable leeway for the elected members of parliament since the government does not depend on a lasting coalition. Consensus democracy on the other hand makes it difficult to respond to questions of accountability since all parties constantly have to compromise. Keeping promises (maintaining) issue positions is particularly difficult but people also know that in order to reach a compromise parties cannot uphold their positions all the time. It would be interesting to address these questions in different political systems.

And finally, most voters do not follow politics very closely. At least in the Swiss case, issue voters are less interested in politics than party voters, they do not seem to know what the members of parliament do in parliament and they do and cannot sanction them if they do not keep their promises. Here, the models of Mansbridge might proof to be helpful. Issues congruence is not used in the perspective of the sanction model but rather in the perspective of the selection model. It is a means of choosing candidates which are politically closer and which do not have to be controlled afterwards. And there might also be different types of issue voters in the sense of Carmines/Stimson (1980). At this stage, we conclude, the free mandate does not really seem to be in danger.

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