Direct Democracy
Prof. Dr. André Kaiser
Class Time: Fri 12.00 – 13.30
Classroom: Hörsaal des Forschungsinstituts
First session: 13 October 2017

Course description:
We will explore empirically the manifold institutions of direct democracy. All of them allow citizens to decide directly on actual policies, however in very different ways. We concentrate on the positive analysis of direct legislation across space and over time and study its effects on political interaction and policy output. Hence, we are not concerned with normative considerations of the pros and cons of direct democracy. We simply start from the assumption that direct democracy is a complementary aggregation mechanism for decision making in modern democracies alongside representative democracy.

Logistics:
Enrolment will take place in the first session. After that, no further enrolments will be accepted. Students are expected to:
- attend sessions regularly
- actively contribute to class discussions
- complete assigned readings according to schedule
- give a presentation in the seminar (for all participants)
- write a term paper of about 15 pages in length (individual research papers, team research papers with individual contributions of about 8 pages), handed in on 15 March 2018 (late assignments will be penalized, unless prior arrangements are made!).

Since nearly all reading assignments are in English, this will be the general classroom language as well. Participants therefore must know enough English to be able to participate actively. Perfection is not required – you just need to understand and make yourself understood.

Readings:

A reader with the required texts will be made available to participants from early October.
Course schedule:

Course Introduction


Types of direct democracy


Variations in usage across space and over time


Effects on voters: Participation and knowledge


Effects on political parties: In the driver’s or in the back seat?


Effects on social movements and interest groups

The power of money


Minority rights


Does direct democracy make a political system more democratic?


Who uses direct legislation instruments and why?


Direct democracy and the welfare state


Direct democracy and the tax state


Direct democracy and economic performance

Final session: The relevance of direct democracy for political interaction and policy outputs – what have we learned?