Parliamentary Transparency :
Would elected representatives behave the same way if they knew we were watching?

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Open Legislative Data in Paris: A Conference of the Third
Kind with Hacktivists and Academics

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Transparency & Legislative Voting

- The critical role of votes in the legislative process. They are used to . . . .
  - Decide agenda
  - Choose procedures
  - Select policies
- The critical role of votes in accountability
  - Voters
  - Party Leaders
  - The Executive
  - Watchdog Groups / Media

For What Purposes Do Observers Use Legislative Vote Results?

- Identify position taken by individual members
- Identify position taken by a party
  - Discipline, cohesion, unity
- Identify the lines along which conflict takes place (dimensionality of the policy space)
- Identify the amount of disagreement or dissension within the chamber (polarization)

Votes: seen and unseen

- In many legislatures, a significant share of votes are unrecorded at the level of the individual member and/or unpublished.

- Rules vary as to how members of parliament select the procedure to be employed on any given vote.
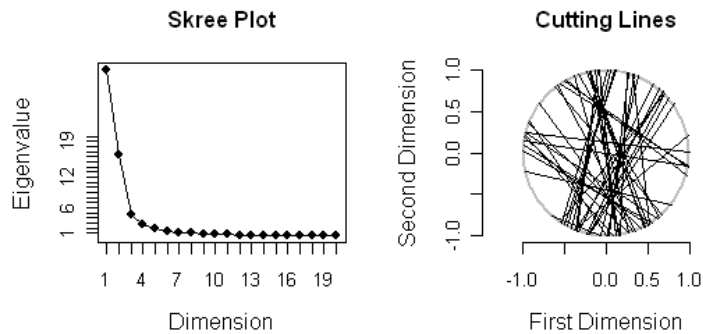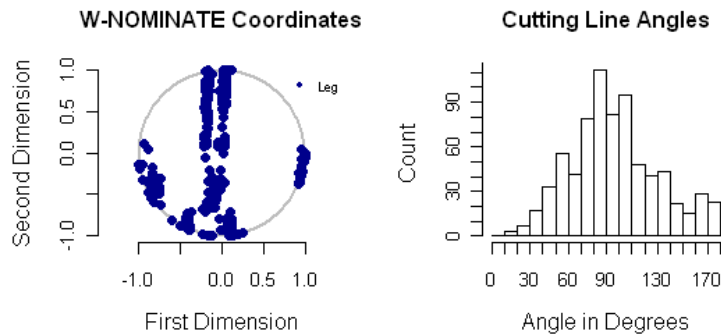
Our Project

- Where they are not the universe of votes, what do recorded votes tell interested observers about legislative voting behavior?
- Recorded votes may provide a misleading picture of how elected representatives are acting (who they are representing)
  - Selection of voting procedures is in hands of legislators (and parties), meaning the votes put on record reflect strategic considerations
    - To help enforce party <u>discipline</u>
    - To signal a higher level of cohesion than observers would expect
    - To stake out position only when it is known to be popular
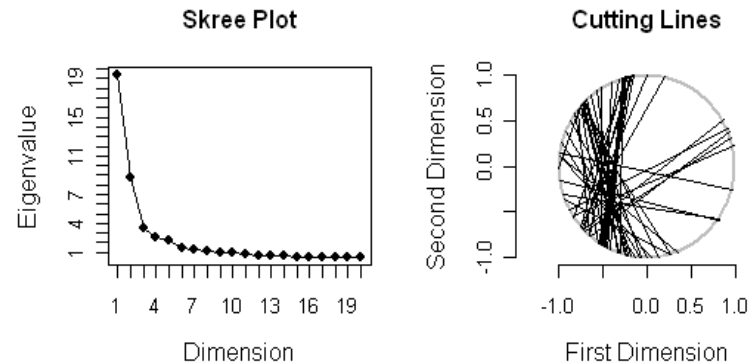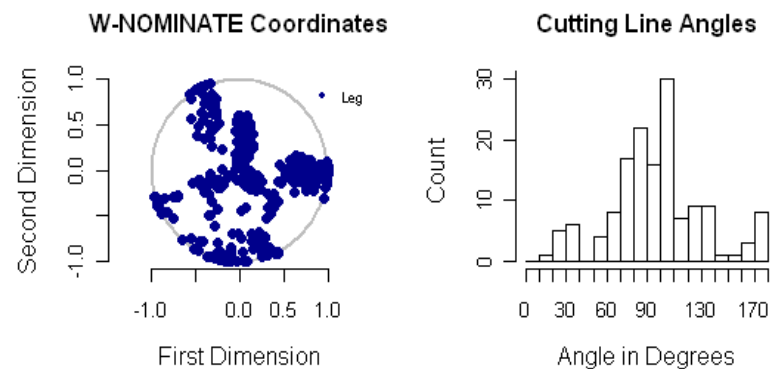
An example from Argentina

- In one year we identified 535 votes
  - On 20% a roll call was *mandatory*
  - On 80%, legislators could choose, but a simple, voice vote was the presumed default method
- Choosing to go on the record with a roll call?
  - Nearly 3 times greater when the item had its origins in the executive branch
  - More than 4 times greater when the vote was preceded by a lengthy debate
- The impact of choosing to roll call on party discipline
  - Increased dramatically if it was an attempt to amend the agenda
  - Increased dramatically if item had its origins in the executive branch
  - Decreased dramatically if item was preceded by lengthy debate

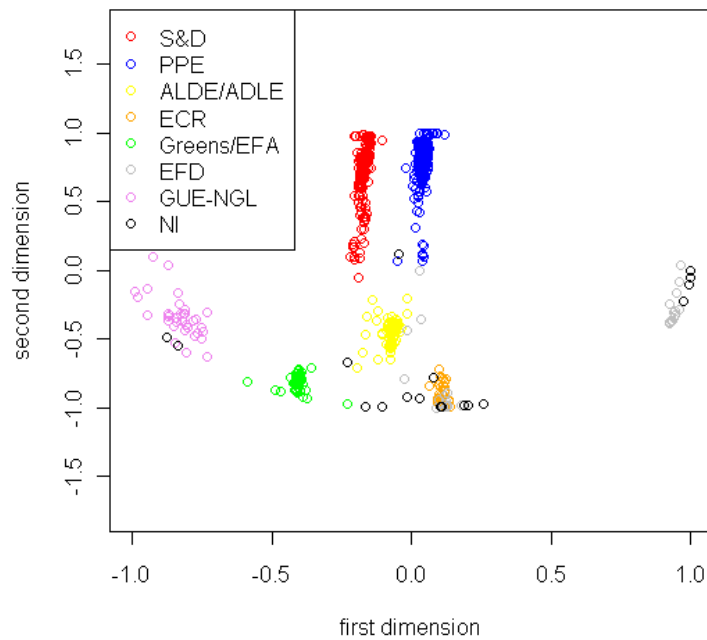# An example from the EP 7 I
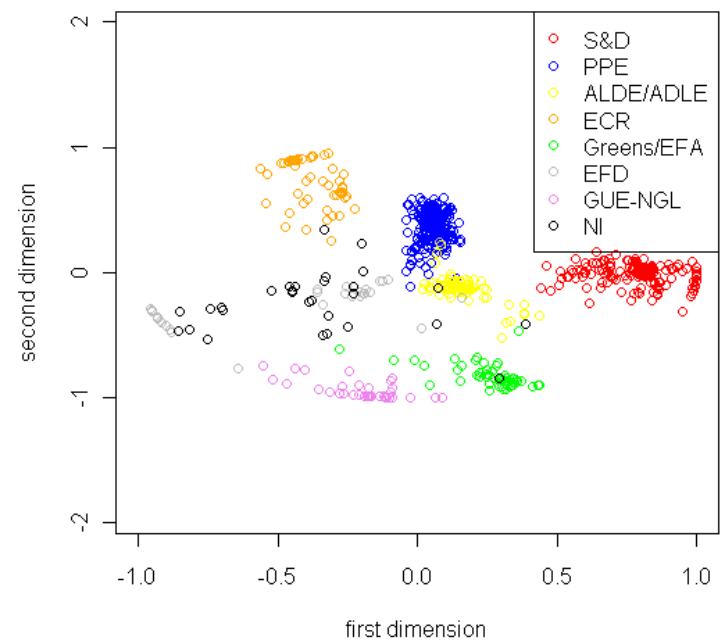
- Requested RCV

- Automatic RCV (final)

An example from the EP 7 II

- Requested RCV
- Automatic RCV (final)

Summing up the Puzzle

- We don't know much about many parliaments
  - Rules for selecting voting procedures
  - Proportion of votes conducted by each possible procedure
- What drives choice of voting procedures?
- Once we know what drives choice, can we correct inferences about . . . .
  - 1) positions of members, 2) positions of parties, 3) levels of party unity, 4) issue cleavage structure, 5) level of conflict

"Glitzy" Interfaces

Yeas and Nays

Deň v parlamente

| júl | | 2012 | |

26	25	26	27	28	29	30	1
27	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
28	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
29	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
30	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
31	30	31	1	2	3	4	5

Kalendár ukáže hlasovania pre daný deň.

Rýchly prístup

» Zoznam poslancov
» Výročné správy politických strán za
   rok 2010
» Oznámenia vereiných funkcionárov

Navrh presiel

Prítomní	Hlasujúcich	[Z] Za hlasovalo	[P] Proti hlasovalo
136	135	135	0
[?] Zdržalo sa hlasovania	[N] Nehlasovalo	[0] Neprítomní	
0	1	14	

Klub SMER – SD

[Z] Andreánsky, Ladislav   [Z] Babič, Ján   [Z] Bagačka, Michal   [Z] Baláž, Vladimír
[Z] Baška, Jaroslav   [Z] Blaha, Ľuboš   [Z] Blanár, Juraj   [Z] Brixi, Otto
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[Z] Müllerová, Emília   [Z] Muňko, Dušan   [Z] Náhlik, Peter   [Z] Nachtmannová, Oľga
[Z] Obrimčáková, Bibiána   [Z] Panáček, Milan   [Z] Paška, Pavol   [Z] Pavlovičová, Svetlana
[Z] Petrák, Ľubomír   [Z] Petráš, Vladislav   [0] Podmanický, Ján   [Z] Puci, Róbert
[Z] Raši, Richard   [Z] Rošková, Ľubica   [Z] Senko, Ján   [Z] Susko, Boris
[Z] Šedivcová, Viera   [Z] Šuca, Peter   [Z] Tomanová, Viera   [Z] Valocký, Jozef
[Z] Vaľová, Jana   [Z] Varga, Ivan   [Z] Vážny, Ľubomír   [Z] Vitteková, Anna
[Z] Záhumenský, Marian   [Z] Zmajkovičová, Renáta   [Z] Želiezka, Ľubomír

Formulaic Language

SR. PRESIDENTE FELLNER.- Se va a votar en general en forma nominal

-Se practica la votación nominal.

VER LISTADO DE LA VOTACION

-- *Conforme al tablero electrónico, sobre 172 señores diputados presentes, 165 han votado por la afirmativa y 1 por la negativa, registrándose además 5 abstenciones.*

SR. SECRETARIO (HIDALGO).- Se han registrado 165 votos por la afirmativa y 1 por la negativa.

-*AQUÍ VOTACIÓN NOMINAL*

Our
"Wish List"

- We need to identify and collect information available on-line for as many parliaments worldwide as possible:
  - Cameral rules regarding voting procedures
  - Results of votes taken by each method
  - Record (floor minutes) surrounding the choice of the voting procedure
  - Record (floor minutes) surrounding the substance of the issue being voted on

- Typically, this requires downloading legislative minutes and other parliamentary publications and then extracting from them (preferably by machine) large amounts of relevant information