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**The Rise of Direct Democracy in the Czech Republic:
Sources, Use and Consequences**

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Prohlašuji, že jsem disertační práci vypracoval samostatně a na základě literatury a pramenů uvedených v seznamu použité literatury.

V Praze dne 20. 6. 2016

Tomáš Dvořák

Poděkování

Děkuji svému školiteli Jiřímu Kabelemu za vedení a rady při psaní práce a oponentům z malých obhajob, Lukáši Linkovi a Pavlu Šaradínovi za cenné připomínky.

Foreword

This dissertation consists of several articles that were written over the period of my doctoral study. These articles were either published or are currently under peer review. This concerns Sections 2.4, 2.5, 3 and 4. The dissertation consists of analyses in the areas of some key scholarly debates in direct democracy research. Every section of this dissertation was written with the aim to not only study how direct democracy works in the Czech Republic but also, above all, to contribute to the existing scholarly debates in direct democracy research. Through the analyses that follow I engage in several debates that relate to the topic of direct democracy: on the sources of popular support for direct democracy, on participation and voting behaviour in direct democracy as well as on the consequences of referenda for further political engagement. Since this dissertation focuses on a number of particular subfields of direct democracy research, each of its sections is usually based on different data sources and uses particular sets of empirical data. Each section also provides a specific introduction to the literature in the given direct democracy subfield. Nonetheless, a connecting link is provided by the research question formulated in the introductory section. For the reader of this dissertation it may be demanding that every chapter is based on different data sources and often draws from different streams of direct democracy literature. Nonetheless, I hope that this will be offset by the scope and scholarly contributions of the presented analyses.

The following articles have already been published:

Dvořák, T. (2013). Referendum Campaigns, Framing and Uncertainty. *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion & Parties*, 23 (4), 367–386. (Section 3)

Dvořák, T. (2013). Modernizace, hodnotová změna a přímá demokracie [Modernization Process, Value Change and Direct Democracy.]. *Sociológia-Slovak Sociological Review*, (2), 107–127. (Section 2.5)

Articles currently under peer review:

An article based on Section 4 was written in collaboration with Jan Zouhar (University of Economics) and Jakub Novák (Faculty of Science, Charles University), and is currently under peer review:

Dvořák, T., J. Zouhar, J. Novák. The Effect of Direct Democracy on Turnout. The Participatory

Theory of Democracy in the Doldrums? (Section 4)

Dvořák, T. Popular support for direct democracy institutions in the Czech Republic. (Section 2.3)

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1. Introduction

Over the past several decades there has been a rise of direct democracy institutions on the national and local levels in most developed Western democracies (Butler and Ranney 1994; Matsusaka 2005; Altman 2010). This development has also taken place in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The Czech Republic has been no exception and although there has been just one nation-wide referendum about the accession to the EU, there have been hundreds of local/municipality referenda over the past 16 years. Moreover, a law enabling regional referenda was passed in 2011. In addition, there has been (as in most European countries) great popular support for direct democracy institutions. Although the existing record of direct democracy “events” is in the Czech Republic not as rich as in the case of Switzerland and some U.S. states, it constitutes a sufficient basis for empirical analysis.

As for the analyses of direct democracy, there is a great variety of issues that have become topics of scholarly debates about the intended as well as unintended consequences of direct democracy (DD). To name the best-known debates:

- sources of popular support for DD (Donovan and Karp 2006),
- the effect of DD on political knowledge and efficacy* (Tolbert, McNeal and Smith 2003),
- the effect of DD on fiscal policies/economic performance* (Matsusaka 1995; Keele 2009; Feld and Kirchgässner 2000),
- the effect of DD on tax morale* (Torgler 2005),
- the effect of DD on minority rights and oppression* (Haider-Markel et al. 2007),
- the effect of DD on happiness* (Frey and Stutzer 2000),
- voter competence in DD (Lupia 1992; 1994; Hobolt 2007),
- dynamics of DD campaigns (LeDuc 2003),
- the effect of DD on political engagement (Childers and Binder 2012),
- consequences of different institutional features of DD institutions* (Hug 2004).

It is not my goal to study all of the above issues, also because for many of them there is simply no relevant data available for the Czech Republic¹.

The goal of this dissertation is to study direct democracy as a case of institutional innovation and to focus on the sources, use and consequences of direct democracy. I use the theoretical framework for analysing democratic innovations proposed by Smith (2009) which outlines the key goods that form the criteria and basis of analysis of democratic innovations. These goods constitute the analytical framework for this dissertation.

In what follows I deal with the case of national and local direct democracy. As for the terminology, I use the term direct democracy to label national or local referenda, irrespective of the way of initiation. When I refer to “referendum”, I mean direct democracy initiated by the incumbent (national or local government). When I use the term “citizen initiative”, I mean direct democracy initiated by citizens themselves on the basis of signature gathering. This approach stems from the American distinction between popular referenda and citizen initiatives.

1.1 The problem and analytical framework

Smith (2009) offers a framework for analysing participatory and deliberative institutions that is based on six criteria: inclusiveness, popular control, considered judgement, transparency, efficiency and transferability. These criteria should represent the idea of democratic process and stem mostly from the work of Robert Dahl on democracy (e.g., Dahl 1998: 37–38). These goods, as Smith notes (Smith 2009: 13), not only represent a way of analysing democratic innovations but are also the embodiment of democratic process as outlined by Dahl in the concept of polyarchy (Dahl 1989). It is a concept that outlines the conditions of responsive and pluralistic governance in modern societies. An analysis using these underlying criteria enables us not only to evaluate direct democracy as an institutional innovation but also to examine how it contributes to the democratic process in modern societies.

Inclusiveness means that all parts of the general population should be present and take part in the given political process and that no social group should be *a priori* excluded from the process. Considered judgement refers the skills and competence citizens need to make qualified choices. Popular control means whether or not citizens’ opinions will be ignored, as citizen input can be manipulated and not reflected in the final decisions. Efficiency refers to whether the given

¹ These topics are marked with an asterisk.

democratic process is sustainable not only in terms of organizational and bureaucratic costs, but also in terms of the burden placed on citizens that could discourage them from further political participation. Fifth, transparency refers to the openness and popular understanding of the decision-making process. It means that not only participating individuals but also the wider public should understand the conditions under which decisions are made. Finally, transferability relates to a potential to employ and embed the respective innovation not only in a small local setting, but also at higher levels of public administration.

In the analyses that follow, I will focus only on three of these goods:

1. inclusiveness,
2. considered judgement and
3. efficiency.

These three criteria are apt for the study of direct democracy. The other three (popular control, transparency and transferability) are more likely to be used in evaluating and analysing institutions of deliberative democracy. Transparency of the decision process is a criterion that has been widely used in the study of popular assemblies and town meetings where the legitimacy of public governance is bolstered by participatory institutions with clear rules and programmes (Fung 2003). Transferability to a large-scale setting is a challenge for deliberative institutions (such as participatory budgeting) rather than institutions of direct democracy. The issue of popular control refers to the implementation phase of decisions and the accountability of policymakers and is rather used in research on deliberative institutions (Santos 1998).

In the narrow sense, the issue of popular control relates to openness of the mechanism of decision making process. It refers to the ability of citizens to exert control within the decision making process as a safeguard against manipulation and agenda setting threats (Smith 2009: 22). However, in the broader sense popular control also refers to the core idea of direct democracy (Saward 1998): that it should place the decision making power and/or agenda-setting power into the hands of people. However, the extent to which popular control is realized does not depend only on institutions of direct democracy as such. Direct democracy is in modern societies unfeasible as the only democratic mechanism and some combination with representative institutions is necessary and unavoidable (Budge 1996; Saward 1998). This, however, leads to rather normative question of relation between representative and direct democracy. If direct democracy has to be embedded in the system of representative institutions,

the ideal of absolute popular control via direct democracy is rather irrelevant. So what should be the role of direct democracy within representative governance? I will come back to this issue in the conclusion section and will discuss it based on empirical evidence from all the sections.

First, I will focus on the criterion of inclusiveness. Equal opportunities and equal input into politics are regarded as the basic guiding principles of politics. Defined by Dahl (1998), this standard focused on the idea that no individual should face barriers in political participation. However, as Smith argues (2009: 20–21), the question is how to ensure effective participation across different social groups when “faced with opportunities to take part in political activities, we find differential rates of participation across social groups. Self-selection may well simply replicate existing inequalities.” The ideal of inclusiveness suggests that decision making in politics should include large numbers of citizens (Saward 1998). However, there is ample evidence that direct democracy, due to self-selection, does not lead to equal participation (Berinsky 2005; Quortrup 2005). Nonetheless, it is unclear whether it reproduces the existing inequalities in political participation or whether it also introduces new biases. I will focus on two facets of this criterion. I will analyse who demands the use and expansion of direct democracy (i.e. which social groups support direct democracy and which ones oppose it) and also who actually participates and who does not. Since focusing only on participation in direct democracy might be strongly biased by the particular issue on the ballot, I will also examine the question of sources of popular support for direct democracy. The results of the analyses not only show whether there are inequalities in participation in direct democracy (we already know there are some), but also what these inequalities are at the level of values (support for direct democracy) as well as real behaviour (turnout in direct democracy).

Second, I will discuss the considered judgement criterion. The issue is whether people voting in direct democracy can and do make competent choices based on their knowledge of the issue at hand (Smith 2009). In the empirical analysis I will verify whether voters reach informed opinions based on (and in line with) their underlying preferences. In addition, I will discuss the dynamics of decision making in referendum campaigns and analyse the cognitive aspects of opinion formation in direct democracy.

Third, I will deal with the efficiency aspect. Smith (2009: 18–19) describes efficiency in two respects. First, he studies the costs of the establishment and use of direct democracy, i.e. administrative costs associated with placing the issue on the ballot either through citizen initiative or popular referendum. Second, he studies the demands placed on citizens and the

costs associated with voting in referenda and citizen initiatives with respect to time spent voting and gaining knowledge about the issue. The first issue will not be a subject of the analyses. The second brings to light the question of voter fatigue and the overall effect of direct democracy on further political participation. Smith (2009: 19) argues that “The demands of participation are ... likely to generate anxieties and fears and a reasonable preference to spend any spare time in other activities” and points out the notion of “economy of time” in the context of political participation – there is only a limited amount of time and resources people are ready to devote to public decision making and political participation (Beetham 1999: 9)². The question is whether the costs of participation might be too high, leading to voter fatigue. If the practice of referenda and citizen initiatives discourages voters from further political participation (as suggested by Swiss research – see below), then direct democracy cannot be regarded as efficient.

Finally, since the aim of the dissertation is to study direct democracy as a case of institutional innovation and change, I will focus on the sources and reasons of the emergence of referenda and citizen initiatives. The topic will be at first discussed as a part of the first chapter devoted to inclusiveness. The reason is that theories explaining the rise of direct democracy argue that there are certain societal groups that promote this change (and others that do not). According to these explanations of the sources of the rise of direct democracy, it is demanded and supported by particular social groups (young people, low-educated, with extreme political values). The claims about the expansion of direct democracy are thus intertwined with the inclusiveness issue.

However, I will return to the issue of the expansion of direct democracy in the very last section which studies, on the case of the local referenda and initiatives, the reasons and factors of the rising use of local direct democracy in Czech municipalities. The last section will revolve around the question of motivations for using local direct democracy by incumbents as well as citizens.

To sum up, I will analyse the following questions on the case of the development of direct democracy in the Czech Republic over the past 25 years:

² In other words, there might be a kind of “substitution effect”, with direct democracy decreasing the interest and participation in other forms of political decision making.

- 1 What are the reasons and sources of the rise of direct democracy? Who demands and who participates in direct democracy? Are there differences and inequalities in support for and use of referenda and citizen initiatives by various social groups? (*inclusiveness*)
- 2 How do voters form opinions and what are the characteristics of voting behaviour in referenda? Do or can voters form competent opinions? (*considered judgement*)
- 3 What is the effect of direct democracy on other forms of political participation and political engagement? Does it place too much burden on voters, causing voter fatigue and discouraging from further political participation? Or does it stimulate interest in politics and political participation, as the normative (participatory) theories suggest? (*efficiency*)

Existing literature presents quite a rich body of research on each of these topics.

First, the reasons for the rise of direct democracy are interpreted along the lines of modernization theory (Inglehart and Welzel 2010) and the concept of cognitive mobilization (Dalton et al. 2001). The expansion of direct democracy is interpreted from this perspective as caused by increasing political resources and growing interest in direct political engagement. The alternatives, namely a “stealth-democratic” explanation and an alienation hypothesis, see the causes in political disaffection, i.e. distrust in government and political parties (Dalton et al. 2001; Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2002).

All of these theories argue that direct democracy is not inclusive, but each in different way. According to the stealth democracy perspective, the extremely high support for direct democracy that exists in many developed countries (see, for example, Bowler et al. 2007) is not genuine (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2002: 214–215), and adopting institutions of direct democracy would lead to reproduction of existing inequalities in political participation. The alienation hypothesis argues that direct democracy is mostly supported and promoted by rather cynical citizens at the extremes of the right-left value spectrum because it bypasses distrusted political elites and parties. Eventually, it could contribute to inclusiveness by mobilizing these groups that usually do not tend to participate in elections (but see also Webb 2013). Finally, modernization theory and the cognitive mobilization hypothesis argue that such opportunities for political participation would be used by the young, educated and politically sophisticated people who are dissatisfied with democracy but committed to the democratic ideal.

Second, voting behaviour in direct democracy is usually analysed using Zaller’s approach (1992) based on the idea that information has a moderating role for voters in crystallizing their

opinions. From this perspective, direct democracy campaigns serve an educational role and may be necessary for voters to form their opinions. Importantly, if by acquiring information in campaigns voters can form more competent opinions, than one can argue that direct democracy can serve as a relevant form of democratic decision making, provided voters get enough information (Hobolt 2007). Most research on voting behaviour in referenda is informed by this perspective, according to which voters can vote competently and often actually do so.

Last, the consequences of direct democracy have been researched especially in the U.S., where many states provide the option of organizing direct democracy in the form of referenda or citizen initiatives, and in Switzerland. The issue is whether direct democracy encourages political engagement or rather decreases interest in political participation. Research from Switzerland (see Freitag and Stadelman-Steffen 2010) suggests that direct democracy brings about disinterest in political engagement due to voter fatigue. On the other hand, extant research from the U.S. (for example, Tolbert and Smith 2005; Childers and Binder 2012; Biggers 2011) has shown that citizen initiatives increase turnout in elections as well as knowledge about politics and political efficacy (Tolbert, McNeal and Smith 2003). However, there has been some discussion about the sources of these effects (see Schlozman and Yohai 2008; Childers and Binder 2012; Biggers 2011), in particular about the effect of direct democracy on turnout in elections, and this debate has been rather inconclusive and has recently come to a stall.

The aim of this dissertation is to critically discuss the three research questions stated above by confronting them with empirical evidence. Although most of the research on direct democracy has been done in the U.S. and Switzerland, this work concerns the Czech Republic and, to a limited extent, also other Central and Eastern European countries. The reason for doing so is twofold. First, I aim to verify the results of the existing body of literature that have been obtained in very different cultural and political contexts. The second aim is to analyze the evolution of direct democracy institutions in the Czech Republic based on the criteria of inclusiveness, considered judgement and efficiency.

1.2 Underlying normative narratives

Scholarly study of direct democracy is, like any other field in social sciences, not free of normative and ideological approaches. The institutions of direct democracy have been widely promoted by the participatory theory of democracy (Barber 1984, Pateman 1970, Saward 1998) as important and essential means of civic education and enhancement of the democratic nature

of Western societies. On the other hand, there are also theories of democracy (for an overview, see Cunningham 2001) that are rather sceptical, if not outright aversive to direct democracy.

It comes, therefore, as no surprise that, these normative approaches infuse much of the empirical research that has been done on questions related to direct democracy over the past decades. In theoretical as well as empirical research on direct democracy, two narratives can be identified. I call them optimistic and pessimistic. These two narratives will not be used as a framework of any type in this dissertation but I wish to briefly mention them as they, in my view, form the assumptions of much empirical research. It will be seen in the literature review starting each section that some literature relies on assumptions about people's increasing cognitive abilities and other emphasizes citizens' innate disinterest in politics and political affairs; both approaches often make statements about human rationality.

The optimistic narrative draws from the idea that the rise and use of direct democracy are driven by people's growing political resources. According to Ronald Inglehart, one of the key effects of modernization is that people are better educated, better informed, and able to process information on their own or more autonomously. This process should free them from dependence on political parties and bring them closer to alternative (non-institutionalized) forms of political participation as well as direct democracy institutions (Alaminos and Penalva 2012; Dalton et al. 2003). In this context it is often argued that the declining trust in politics is also due to increased expectations from critical and demanding citizens (Klingemann 2014) who demand more participatory opportunities. The concept of cognitive mobilization, whereby politically sophisticated and demanding citizens are dissatisfied with representative institutions but committed to the democratic ideal, has been repeatedly used to explain great popular support for direct democracy in European countries (recently, Schuck and Vreese 2011; Leininger 2015). A similar assumption has also driven the research on voting behaviour in direct democracy campaigns (Hobolt 2006; Hobolt 2007; LeDuc 2003; Faas 2015). It is assumed that the more information voters receive, the more competent their vote choice. In other words, voters attain the capacity to make competent choices as a function of available information. Finally, extant research from the U.S. has shown that experience with citizen initiatives and referenda has positive effects on electoral turnout, knowledge about politics and political efficacy. This time the cognitive mobilization explanation is not evoked, but it is rather drawn from participatory theory with its transformation thesis stating that experience with direct forms of decision making has educative effects and enhances general political engagement. In this optimistic narrative, direct democracy is viewed as an unconventional form of political

participation (Fatke and Freitag 2013: 243); it should function as a catalyst (the catalyst hypothesis) because it should develop interest in politics, increase political efficacy and expressive values, thus stimulating protest behaviour and other unconventional forms of political participation.

The alternative to this optimistic narrative is the view that popular support for direct democracy is a mere reflection of dissatisfaction with politics and political parties (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2001), that direct democracy effectively decreases trust in government as it puts the citizens in an adversary position to the incumbent (Dyck 2009) and that direct democracy has no long-term positive effects on political participation and engagement (Biggers 2011). In addition, direct democracy can overburden citizens and cause voter fatigue, as some research suggests in the case of Switzerland. In this perspective, the status of direct democracy is attributed to conventional forms of political participation. It enriches the repertoire of possible forms of participation, it makes the governance system more open to the input of citizen preferences, and it aggregates and channels conflicting interests. However, it should not lead to increased interest in political engagement, support expressive values or lead to more frequent protest behaviour. As opposed to a catalyst, it should work as a valve – channelling existing conflicts (Fatke and Freitag: 243–244).

The structure of both narratives³ is summarized below:

	Optimistic narrative	Pessimistic narrative
Support for direct democracy	Genuine: It reflects growing political resources and interest in direct forms of decision making	Not real: It is only a manifestation of dissatisfaction with political elites and a will to keep political parties under control
Voting behaviour/voter competence	Citizens are rational and competent. The more information they get during campaigns the more competently they vote	Voters decide on the basis of secondary issues (e.g., government popularity)
Effect on political participation	Direct democracy increases political knowledge, political efficacy and turnout in elections	Although direct democracy increases electoral turnout, the effect is merely short-term. Direct democracy also leads to distrust in government.
Status of direct democracy	As an unconventional form of political participation, it leads to enhanced political efficacy, stimulating protest and other unconventional forms of political participation (the <i>catalyst hypothesis</i>)	As a conventional form of political participation, it mitigates conflict by aggregating opinions and preferences (the <i>valve hypothesis</i>)

³ It is important to note that these two narratives are simplifications; the relationships between the concepts within each narrative are loose, rather than clear or causal. If one assumes that people support direct democracy because they are truly interested in direct forms of decision making due to their increased level of political sophistication and awareness (as suggested by cognitive mobilization concept), one can also expect that their vote in direct democracy would be based on their underlying preferences and that they would demand more participatory opportunities in the future. Direct democracy should work here as a catalyst, increasing general interest in political engagement and in turn the desire for direct forms of political participation. And vice versa, if the interest is not genuine, as suggested by the concept of stealth democracy, one cannot expect that people would participate in direct democracy, that they would spend much effort gathering necessary information to vote competently, or that this experience would drive them to desire even more participatory opportunities. From the stealth-democratic perspective, people do not want to be involved in politics in the first place and although they may express support for these institutions, the support is not genuine.

The reason for pointing out and explaining the structure of these two narratives is to highlight the very normative basis of much of direct democracy research.

1.3 Dissertation structure

The structure of the dissertation is as follows:

First, I provide a quick overview of the development of institutions of direct democracy in the Czech Republic.

Second, I focus on the issue of the rise of direct democracy and the criterion of inclusiveness, inquiring what societal groups support it and participate in it. I start the analysis by presenting data from the 2012 European Social Survey on popular support for direct democracy. I focus on the sources of the very strong level of support in the Czech Republic and CEE countries and test three competing hypotheses: the concept of cognitive mobilization, the alienation hypothesis and the stealth democracy perspective. I use regression analysis as well as mixture modelling techniques (a variety of structural equation modelling) to tackle this issue.

Third, I move on to the analysis of actual political behaviour on the example of EU accession referenda (the Eurobarometer survey). I analyse who participated in these referenda and test whether support for the three hypotheses can be found in real political behaviour. The purpose of including this case study is to analyse how expressed values contrast with real political behaviour.

I conclude that no strong support was found for either of the hypotheses. In addition, although there is strong popular support for direct democracy, this support does not seem to translate into participation in direct democracy. The results suggest that participation in direct democracy is strongly associated with socio-demographic variables and as such does not differ much from electoral participation. These results support the finding (Berinsky 2005; Pattie et al. 2005) that expanding opportunities for political participation will be used only by those already politically active and that irrespective of the particular type of political engagement, conventional or unconventional, it is the socio-economic resources (age, education, income, social class) that drive political engagement.

Fourth, I deal with the considered judgement issue. I analyse the actual referendum campaigns and voting behaviour in direct democracy. I challenge the argument in the existing literature that referendum campaigns can be seen as processes of learning in which voters form competent

opinions. I argue that referendum campaigns are much more volatile, that information does not always have moderating effects and that due to unordered preferences, it essentially does not make sense to ask the question whether voters make a competent choice in direct democracy.

Fifth, I focus on the efficiency topic, i.e. on the consequences of direct democracy. Using data about local municipality referenda and citizen initiatives from the Czech Republic, I show that direct democracy enacted at municipal level has a positive impact on turnout in local and national elections and also on the number of candidates running for an office in local elections. I demonstrate that local-level direct democracy does not overburden citizens and does not lead to voter fatigue. On the contrary, the occurrence of local direct democracy is, in the Czech Republic, associated with increased subsequent political engagement.

In these four sections I apply the framework proposed by Smith (2009) with the goal of contributing to the evaluation of direct democracy based on three criteria: inclusiveness, considered judgement and efficiency. In the last chapter I further elaborate on the analysis of local direct democracy from Section 5. This time I focus on the reasons why referenda and citizen initiatives are organized and deal with the more general question about the factors that lead to the occurrence of direct democracy events.

In this dissertation a variety of data sources is used. I use the Eurobarometer survey from 2003 for my analysis of EU accession referenda. Second, I use ESS Wave 2 data from 2012 to analyse popular support for direct democracy. Third, on data about local referenda and initiatives from the Czech Republic (collected by the Ministry of Interior and myself) I examine the impact of local direct democracy on turnout in elections.

1.4 Limitations

This dissertation is strongly limited by the existing data that is available. Therefore, the issues of inclusiveness, considered judgement and efficiency are investigated using only such empirical evidence that is available for the Czech Republic.

- The topic of the sources of popular support for direct democracy is investigated in terms of general attitudes and based on representative survey data (inclusiveness).
- The issues of voter participation in referenda (inclusiveness) and voter behaviour in referenda (considered judgement) are analysed on the cases of EU accession referenda, based on representative survey data.

- Finally, the analysis of the effects of referenda on political engagement (efficiency) relies on cases of local direct democracy from Czech municipalities. This analysis is based on aggregated data and case studies.

I wish to strongly emphasize that I do not aim to make generalizations about direct democracy as such or about every possible institutional version of direct democracy. However, using all the available data there is, I describe and analyze how local and national direct democracy enacted in the Czech Republic fulfil and live up to the three criteria of democratic process described above. The generalizations I make are always related to the particular criterion of democratic process (inclusiveness, considered judgement, efficiency) and the particular case of direct democracy analysed.

In this dissertation I study the effects of several types of direct democracy institutions. Some parts focus on the national referendum, others on the effect of local direct democracy. While it is true that these particular cases of direct democracy use are very different in their nature, the underlying problems studied by this dissertation (competent voting, campaign dynamics, voting behaviour, effects of direct democracy on political engagement) relate to all direct democracy institutions. Also, it has been noted several times that very similar (if not the same) mechanisms (of opinion formation, campaign dynamics, actors' behaviour) take place in national and local referenda. Mechanisms discovered in local referenda are often found to operate in the case of nation-wide referenda and vice versa⁴. It is thus reasonable to study different forms of direct democracy to get an understanding of the mechanisms of how these institutions work. However, this approach has certain limitations that I acknowledge, and thus for each section/analysis, I make only such generalizations that are reasonable given the direct democracy case at hand.

Last but not least, there are also data limitations. While it would be worthwhile to study the effect of direct democracy on the national scale, there was just one nation-wide referendum in the Czech Republic. Similarly, it is difficult to study opinion formation and campaign dynamics on the case of local referenda and initiatives as the data to support such analysis is simply non-

⁴ For example, a pattern of opinion formation identified in the case U.S. local referenda was used to explain a nationwide divorce referendum in Ireland (Darcy and Laver 1990) as well as an Australian constitutional referendum (Higley and McAllister 2002). Ideas about information cues in opinion formation discovered in the context of Californian referenda (Lupia 1994) were used in the context of European integration referenda (Hobolt 2006). Finally, the role of political tactics in referendum initiation was discovered on a national level (Morel 2007) and later applied to a local level as well (Laisney 2012).

existent. This dissertation thus presents such analyses that can be done with the available data to address important questions about the rise and use of direct democracy in the Czech Republic.

Finally, the approach adopted in this dissertation has two goals. I intend not only to study the rise of direct democracy in the Czech Republic by using existing theories and concepts, but also to use the Czech data to critically engage in current scholarly debates. The reader should not only learn about direct democracy in the Czech Republic, but also learn how the Czech case fits and relates to direct democracy research in other countries.

1.5 Development of direct democracy in the Czech Republic

There is a great variety of institutions of direct democracy. Nonetheless, it is usually distinguished between initiatives and referenda. Initiatives allow voters to propose a legislative measure or constitutional amendment by filing a petition with a required number of valid citizen signatures. A referendum is proposed by a legal superior to citizens in order to approve or reject a particular law or statute (Altman 2010: 12). Each of the two institutions can be either binding or non-binding. In addition, some cases may be required by constitution. Finally, an important aspect lies in the fact that direct democracy may concern local jurisdictions (municipality), states (like in the U.S.) or whole countries. All of the factors combined create a great variety of institutions of direct democracy.

Direct democracy has been developing, in some ways or other, in most European countries, but there is no common pattern. In some countries the national referendum was adopted first and an expansion to the local level followed later. In other countries the reverse process took place, with local direct democracy being introduced first. All in all, there has been no clear pattern of development of direct democracy (for details, see Altman 2010).

The institutionalization of direct democracy in the Czech Republic started in 1992 with a law providing for local municipality referenda and citizen initiatives. Although the law was passed in 1992 the first local referendum was only organized in 2000 in Tábor city – it took eight years before the first referendum finally took place. After Tábor's precedent example, the use of local direct democracy has become more frequent, with around 300 cases of municipality referenda taking place until 2014. In some municipalities, local referenda/citizen initiatives were used repeatedly, indicating that there might a process of learning which introduces this institution as a means of problem solving in local affairs.

In June 2003 there was the single national referendum about the accession of the Czech Republic to the EU. This referendum was made possible by a special law adopted for the event only. There has also been a long debate about a general law on national referendum but such a law has never been passed. Although there have been several attempts especially from the left-wing Social Democratic Party, they have been usually thwarted by right-wing political parties, and the ODS in particular (Smith 2011: 34). Nonetheless, the Social Democratic Party has been persistent in its effort to push through the law on national referendum, with the latest bill at the time undergoing the interdepartmental comment procedure.

The attitudes of political parties to direct democracy development were investigated by an opinion survey among party leaders (Špok 2006). The survey indicated that only the ODS had a negative approach to national referendum, viewing it as a threat to representative democracy. Other political parties had a rather positive or neutral approach to national referendum. Concerning local direct democracy, most parties were very positive and supportive, while the ODS took a somewhat underwhelmed approach. Nonetheless the idea of local direct democracy has always enjoyed more support than national referendum and this was also the key reason why the regional referendum/initiative was instituted in 2011. However, until today no direct democracy on the regional level took place, probably due to a high threshold citizen petition signatures.

To sum up, the Czech Republic has witnessed a development towards different institutions of direct democracy. This process has been gradual and is still rather incomplete. Nonetheless, over the last 25 years essential steps towards direct democracy have been taken, to sum up:

- A law on local/municipality direct democracy was passed and hundreds of municipality referenda and citizen initiatives took place.
- A law on regional direct democracy was passed.
- In June 2003 there was one national referendum on EU accession.
- There has been an ongoing debate about a law on general referendum, with a new proposal being in the deliberation process at present time.

Apart from these institutional changes, there are other signs of growing importance of direct democracy in public discourse. First, there has been a very high and stable support for the institutions of direct democracy (about two thirds of Czech citizens are strong supporters, see

Section 3). Second, newly established political parties have over the past couple of years gained popular support and electoral success using the idea of direct democracy (along with the notion that politics should be run like their leaders' successful business ventures).

The present state of direct democracy institutions in the Czech Republic is quite comparable to other European countries. The aim of this dissertation is to use the Czech experience and relate it to the existing scholarly discourse in this field.

2 Rise of direct democracy and its scope – inclusiveness

2.1 Aims of the section

In the following section my aim is to analyse:

- what the sources of the rise of direct democracy are,
- who supports the expansion and use of direct democracy and
- who participates in direct democracy.

These questions are intertwined because scholarly explanations of the rise of direct democracy are often based on assumptions of certain societal groups demanding greater opportunities for direct political participation either due to increased cognitive skills and interest in politics or due to their dissatisfaction with democracy, politicians and political parties.

Some approaches to explaining the rise of direct democracy argue that an important reason lies in the growing popular interest in direct forms of decision making, and emphasize citizens' growing political sophistication (the post-material value hypothesis, the cognitive mobilization thesis). Others (stealth democracy, the alienation hypothesis) argue that the reason is dissatisfaction with democracy and politics. These concepts essentially claim that the growing support for direct democracy can be attributed to disenchantment with the way democracy works (the alienation hypothesis) and/or public sentiment that the political elites are too susceptible to special interests and that their discretionary power should be controlled and limited (the concept of stealth democracy).

The hypotheses stated above will be tested in two steps. First, I will focus on the sources of popular support for direct democracy (who supports direct democracy and why). Second, I will focus on turnout in referenda (who participates in direct democracy).

This analysis will not only help to explain the rise of direct democracy but also measure to what extent and in what way it is inclusive. The existing research shows that direct democracy is not inclusive as the turnout in it is usually the same or lower than in elections (e.g., Quortrup 2005). However, it remains unclear whether direct democracy is more relevant to some groups than to other, or whether for some groups it represents a more attractive form of political decision making than elections. The analysis of who supports direct democracy, who opposes it and who participates in it will shed light on how inclusive it is and what social groups it mobilizes. The

results of the analyses will help to describe and explain the inequalities in political participation direct democracy introduces.

2.2 Changing patterns of political participation

Over the past twenty years, theoretical and empirical studies of democracy have increasingly focused on the emerging forms of citizenship and political participation which constitute alternatives to representative democracy with its alleged failures and externalities.

Changes in the character of political participation (Dalton et al. 2003) are allegedly taking place at three independent levels. First, representative democracy is changing due to the democratization of political participation, rising opportunities for political participation (regional elections, European Parliament elections etc.) and the fact that access to elections has been granted to the widest possible group of citizens (the minimum voting age decreased to 18 years). Second, institutions of direct democracy have been developing at the national and local levels (LeDuc 2003). During the 20th century, application of direct democracy grew rapidly not only in the American but also in the European context. Third, various forms of deliberative democracy have developed, among them innovative models of participative governance such as consultation exercises or citizens' juries (for overview see Smith 2009). Other forms of active citizenship and unconventional forms of political participation are mentioned in this context as well, such as participation in demonstrations, petitioning, active engagement in politically active voluntary organizations or political consumerism (Dalton 2008).

Smith (2009) sees the main innovations to democratic governance, above all, in the institutions of direct democracy and deliberation, accentuating their expected effects on the ways of decision making in society. These institutions allegedly indicate decentralization of power and the fact that citizens are growingly participating in decision making about public affairs directly, rather than through indirect forms of political participation. Studies of such new forms of political participation respond, inter alia, to the finding that over the second half of the 20th century, Western democracies saw a decline of not only voter turnout in representative elections (e.g., Wattenberg 2002; Franklin 2004) but also trust in politicians and the institutions of representative democracy (Norris et al. 1999).

While citizens' dissatisfaction can be explained by their growing competencies and critical thinking (Norris et al. 1999), the declining voter turnout problematizes the very legitimacy of democratic governance. Therefore, the latter has become a widely-debated topic in scientific

discourse. This decline has been interpreted in diverse ways. Its sources have been sought in voters' growing competencies, in the character of political parties and political systems, in demographic dynamics or in different combinations of these three factors. Various versions of this explanation can be found in literature. The decline of voter turnout is allegedly caused by blurred boundaries between political parties (Noel and Therien 2008), less traditional person-to-person campaigning (Carty and Eagles 2006), negative and confrontational campaigning (Lau and Pomper 2001) or decreasing level of competition between political parties (Franklin 2004). In the Czech context, it has been hypothesized that a strong decline of electoral participation after 1998 was caused by situational change in the functioning of the Czech party system and, more particularly, by unexpected collaboration between two main political rivals (Linek 2011).

Other approaches have sought to explain the falling voter turnout by studying the generation of young voters. Empirical studies in many advanced democratic systems have demonstrated that the decline of voter turnout is mainly driven by the youngest voters. This fact is explained by two factors. First, political participation is influenced by the phase of life cycle, with voter turnout growing as the given generation ages. However, international comparative studies have further demonstrated that today's young generations go vote less than the generation of their parents, irrespective of the phase of their life cycle, and this gap has been widening. This empirical finding has been confirmed in many, but not all, advanced democracies (Blais et al. 2004; Smets 2010). Dalton's (2008) hypothesis explains the decline of interest in representative elections by growing resources in the hands of young and educated citizens, who prefer alternative and direct forms of political participation. The fall of voter turnout is further associated with the breakdown of traditional values of obeying the law (Blais et al. 2004; Dalton 2008). Last but not least, the declining voter turnout can be interpreted as due to the processes of socialization and adolescence which are taking longer than in the past—this may be the reason why people start voting at later ages than in the past (Goerres 2007).

Nonetheless, in intergenerational comparison, young people's turnout in representative elections is constantly falling. Considering the growing dissatisfaction with the functioning of and declining trust in the institutions of representative democracy, one might hypothesize, as suggested above, that this process may be caused by growing interest in such forms of political participation that enable citizens to influence politics in direct ways. This hypothesis occurs in different forms but generally stems from Ronald Inglehart's modernization theory and Dalton's concept of cognitive mobilization. This theory draws attention to the development of so-called

post-material values which, among other things, sparks citizens' interest in advancing the democratic ideal. While there is a wide range of alternative forms of political participation (or citizenship), it has been proposed repeatedly that the increased use of direct democracy can be viewed as consequence of this development. This perspective will be further developed in the section that follows.

2.3 Theorizing about the evolution of direct democracy

There are two basic theoretical perspectives on the evolution of institutions of direct democracy. One associates it with citizens' growing demand for new forms of political participation and the other with political parties' activity, i.e. supply. These two perspectives are not mutually exclusive and it is assumed that both are important in understanding of the rise of direct democracy.

The distinction between demand side and supply side follows here the empirical research that also has also made this distinction. Nonetheless, the research that draws from the demand side hypotheses usually uses wide array of representative survey data about people's attitudes and behaviour relating to political participation and engagement. On the other hand, the demand side studies cannot draw from survey data so extensively and are usually based on case studies or ad hoc surveys among political elites. The second reason why the distinction between demand and supply is made is that it reflects the concept of polyarchy that emphasizes the dimension of responsiveness of government to people's preferences.

“A key characteristic of a democracy is the continued responsiveness of the government to the preferences of its citizens, considered as political equals” (Dahl 1973: 1). Although Dahl's theory of democracy was often regarded as elitist and did not place much value to direct popular participation (Krouse 1982) it also assumed essential popular input into elite governance and policy making. Therefore, any form of governance (including direct democracy) can be in the framework of polyarchy viewed as at the intersection between popular and elite power.

Empirical studies and theories interpreting the evolution of direct democracy by changes on the supply side emphasize the role of political parties and their strategies. They analyse the ways political parties structure and influence political processes in order to promote or, in contrast, prevent civic engagement. From this theoretical perspective, political parties fundamentally affect the character of political participation (Scarrow 1999: 342–343). For example, Susan Scarrow explains the development of direct democracy in Germany by political parties'

attempts to increase people's interest in representative democracy and enhance the legitimacy of the political system as a whole (Scarrow 1999). The importance of political actors' position for the evolution of direct democracy is also demonstrated by Bowler et al. (2002) who described and analysed attitudes of political elites to implementing direct democracy in legal systems. Although ideology played some role, they found out that the elite attitudes were strongly influenced by strategic considerations about costs and benefits of introducing more of direct democracy and gaining greater popular support by promoting such institutional change. Smith and Fridkin (2008) provided empirical test based on longitudinal data from U.S. states and showed that citizen initiatives were passed in situations when the incumbent party(ies) faced strong interparty competition and decided to adopt direct democracy (a popular policy close to median voter) in order to gain popular support and remain in the office. Laws allowing for direct democracy institutions thus seem to be passed in these situations mainly because they enjoy such great popular support.

However, the supply side theories are insufficient in explaining the rise of direct democracy without simultaneous demand from the citizens themselves. It is hard to imagine political parties offering or promoting such forms of decision making without any strong citizen interest and demand. Direct democracy policies are passed, based on empirical research outlined above, only because they are so close to the median voter.

When focusing on the demand-side hypothesis, three basic approaches can be distinguished.

The growth of direct democracy has been associated with citizens' attempts to become more engaged in politics and have it more under control. Since the early 1970s, Western democracies have debated the so-called post-material cultural shift. According to Ronald Inglehart's theory of modernization (Inglehart 1990; Inglehart and Welzel 2005), the time period after World War II saw an important break in the history of democratization. The relatively long time period of peace, economic prosperity and expanding education resulted not only in increased material security but also in evolved post-material values, namely higher demands for autonomy, rights and participation in democratic decision making. Goals that had been limited in importance, primarily due to economic reasons and existential insecurities, grew in relevance in the era of prosperity and fulfilment of fundamental existential security. The influence of collective authorities or the government declined and the demands for individual autonomy and political or civic freedoms grew. A key role was assumed by values enabling autonomous expression of

one's own attitudes irrespective of the authority of government or other formerly influential social groups (trade unions, political parties etc.).

According to Inglehart, the growing personal autonomy and emphasis on individuality should change the patterns of political participation. The decline of voter turnout in parliamentary elections and membership in political parties indicate the breakdown of those social commitments that are based on traditional authority and hierarchical structures. These trends transform political institutions, driving citizens away from traditional representative politics and towards direct/alternative forms of political participation that are more in line with their emancipatory tendencies (Inglehart and Welzel 2005: 43–44). Thus, two simultaneous processes are taking place. Citizens are losing trust in traditional institutions and sources of authority, while their ambition to participate in politics directly is growing (Inglehart 1999: 250). The decline of trust in political parties and institutions is, however, not due to declining trust in the democratic ideal as such but rather due to people's dissatisfaction with a specific form of democracy. Dalton (1999: 74–75) argues that citizens' negative evaluations of the quality of democracy are based on their growing critical thinking, competencies and also demand for the expansion of elements of participative democracy (*cognitive mobilization hypothesis*). Citizens' current dissatisfaction with the functioning of democracy does not mean resignation on democratic ideals but rather desire to apply them more thoroughly. "Strengthened commitments to the democratic ideal, and increased skills and resources on the part of contemporary publics, are leading to increased political participation beyond the present forms of representative democracy" (Dalton 1999: 76).

Cognitive mobilization hypothesis, which stems from the idea of post-materialist cultural change, is based on an idea that citizens demand greater opportunities for direct forms of political participation and this desire translates to greater support for direct democracy. Participation in elections no longer fits educated and politically skilled citizenry who seek such forms of political participation that would fit more expressive values. People want to influence politics not by voting in elections but by seeking more direct forms of political participation, such as membership in public interest groups, political consumerism, petition signing etc. For example, Dalton recently argued (Dalton 2010: 5-6) that

"Cognitive mobilization thus means that more citizens now possess the political resources and skills that better prepare them to deal with the complexities of politics and reach their own political decisions without reliance of affective, habitual party cues or other external cues."

This explanation leads to the expectation that the support for direct democracy should come from politically engaged people seeking for even more ways of participating on political decision making.

On the other hand, a less optimistic hypothesis has been presented (Dalton et al. 2001), namely that support for direct democracy is driven by dissatisfied citizens who are neither committed to the democratic ideal nor interested in participating in public decision making (*alienation hypothesis*). Support for direct democracy indicates populism, cynicism, dissatisfaction and lack of interest in politics. Direct democracy is assumed to be supported by less educated, less informed citizens and supporters of political parties at the extremes of the right-left political spectrum. Dissatisfaction with democracy plays a role in both the alienation hypothesis and the cognitive mobilization hypothesis. In the former case, people are dissatisfied with democracy as such and this attitude is held by people outside the political process⁵. In the latter case, people are dissatisfied with a concrete form of democracy (political parties, politicians) and the attitude is held by those seeking more opportunities to participate in the political process.

Third, the concept of *stealth democracy* also argues that the support for direct democracy is linked to public dissatisfaction with politics, but it offers a rather more subtle explanation: It starts from the empirical finding that interest in politics has been decreasing in the past decades (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 2002; Macedo et al., 2005; Putnam 2001) and that people in developed democracies are becoming more and more alienated from politics which in turn leads to decreasing political participation and trust in politics and institutions of representative democracy in general. Next, according to Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002) the core idea of stealth democracy is the following: People are convinced that democratic procedures are counterproductive as political value conflict is unnecessary because all people can agree on overall societal goals. Political conflict is a sign of special interests and corrupt representatives who are self-serving. People believe that the ideal should be that decisions are made efficiently, from objective stance, without corruption and special interests and also without conflicts and disagreements. From this stems the support for non-elected institutions such as courts (and legal system in general) as well as ideas that politics should be run like successful businesses. In this vein, it was argued (Bowler, Donovan and Karp 2007: 353) that dissatisfaction with representative institutions leads naturally to support for direct democracy. However, this strong popular support that is a consequence of popular disenchantment has more to do with people's

⁵ People are supportive of direct democracy because they seek more direct connection political elites via authoritarian rule.

evaluations and assessments of how representative democracy should work, rather than reflecting their willingness to participate in politics more. To tap this citizen sentiment, Hibbing and Theiss-Morse coined the term stealth democracy and argued that it represents an essential element in American citizens' approach to democratic institutions.

To sum up, according to the “stealth democratic” explanation, the public does not demand institutions of direct democracy due to interest in direct forms of political participation as such. The true reason lies in citizens' lack of trust in the government and the political system as a whole. Support for the institutions of direct democracy is motivated by people's attempt to restrict the power of elected representatives and in turn increase public control of the representative democracy and the political accountability of political representatives (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2002).

2.3.1 Empirical evidence for direct democracy theories

In this section I further focus on the demand-side theories explaining the rise of direct democracy. Concerning the supply side, there is no disagreement that political parties often use the ideal of direct democracy to attract voters and to gain voter support. Therefore I now deal only with demand side theories and the relevant empirical tests⁶.

The above-mentioned demand-side hypotheses have been tested empirically in terms of citizens' declared support for institutions of direct democracy. Dalton et al. (2001) tested them on the example of Germany. The authors integrated cognitive mobilization with citizens' growing resources, namely high education, interest in politics, young age and voting for “green” political parties. They associated the alienation hypothesis as people's dissatisfaction with the functioning of democracy and with political parties. The results of their analysis rather speak for the latter explanation because the institutions of direct democracy tended to be supported by dissatisfied citizens with lower education, those less interested in politics and those voting for political parties at the extremes of the political spectrum. The alienation hypothesis has further been confirmed in a study of Dutch voters' attitudes in the context of a European Constitution referendum (Schuck and Vreese 2011).

Both hypotheses have been tested in international comparison of Scandinavian countries, Switzerland, Canada and New Zealand (Donovan and Karp 2006). The cognitive mobilization

⁶ Nonetheless, I still maintain that to explain the rise of direct democracy it is essential to take into account and combine both factors.

theory was tested using the following variables: high education, interest in politics, participation in representative elections and membership in the young generation. In order to test the alienation theory, a variable representing satisfaction with the functioning of democracy and belonging to the extremes of the political values spectrum in a given country was applied. The results of the analysis supported the cognitive mobilization hypothesis, rather than the alienation hypothesis. Nevertheless, the cognitive mobilization hypothesis was not confirmed unambiguously either. The authors finally emphasized the effect of citizens' general interest in politics and interest in participation in political decision making.

Schuck and Vreese (2011: 197) attempted to address the inconclusive results of the testing of both hypotheses. They proposed an explanation that the validity of both hypotheses depends on the actual context. In countries with strong tradition of direct democracy (relatively frequent referenda), support for direct democracy should be better explained with the cognitive mobilization theory. In contrast, the alienation hypothesis should find more support in countries where referenda take place relatively exceptionally and mostly at the initiative of government parties.

A different approach to the inconclusive results was adopted in a comparative survey of sources of support for direct democracy in 16 countries, including post-communist countries (Bowler et al. 2007). They rather speak for the cognitive mobilization hypothesis. However, although the empirical results on the face value support the cognitive mobilization theory, the authors strongly favour a third, alternative explanation based on the concept of stealth democracy (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2002). They take the stance that support for direct democracy is not necessarily the same as demand for participation in democratic governance, but that it rather expresses a feeling that political parties (representative democracy) should be subject to stronger democratic controls in order to work better. Bowler et al. argued that (Bowler et al. 2007: 360)

“Our evidence demonstrates that citizens see participation via direct democracy as a check on government generally (in our cross-national data) and a check on the power that narrow interests have over representatives (in the California data)”.

The authors argue that although the data may seem to suggest that citizens truly desire more opportunities for direct political participation and that the results support cognitive mobilization hypothesis, a more detailed analysis shows that the support is not genuine and that it is rather

driven by a specific kind of disenchantment with political elites. These results thus present quite strong support for the stealth democracy perspective.

Drawing from the concept of stealth democracy and explanation of great popular support for direct democracy based on this concept, recent studies (see Bengtsson and Matilla 2009) focused on the exact nature of the interconnection between stealth and direct democracy. They concluded that although there is simultaneous support for both direct and stealth democracy (there is a correlation between support for direct and stealth democracy), these two ideals are not perceived by citizens as identical. Stealth democracy is more associated with right side of the political scale, while support for direct democracy with the leftist one. Bengtsson and Matilla (2009) thus showed that both concepts are at least theoretically mutually exclusive and emphasized that they represent different democratic ideals.

However, in this context Webb (2013) pointed out that even though stealth and direct democracy are not identical, the connecting link between them is the populist world-view. Both concepts might be different in theory – stealth democracy representing political distrust and direct democracy call for more direct input in political process – but what connects them is a link to and a support for authoritarianism and thus represent an anti-democratic ideal very different to what normative participatory theorists (Pateman 1970; Barber 1984) originally emphasized. This finding, that support for direct democracy may also include support for authoritarian features of governance, has been also discussed by Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002) in their book on stealth democracy. They emphasize that citizens are essentially uninterested and do not understand the democratic process that include deliberation and value conflict. Citizens are generally baffled and disapproving of the standard democratic processes which may eventually lead them to sympathize with more simple solutions, which may include authoritarian and demagogic rule.

To sum up, the prevailing view (but not general consensus) seems to be that strong popular support for direct democracy does not mean general willingness to participate more, but rather concern that the elected representatives are too much influenced by interest groups and therefore their power should be limited. Popular support for direct democracy thus means rather distrust in political elites that manifests itself in the sentiment that there should be more direct opportunities for political participation, which would essentially limit the discretion power of political elites. However, this does not mean genuine motivation to actually participate when the opportunity would be available. Nonetheless, it is important to note, that although the

empirical evidence tends to support the stealth democratic explanation, there is no uniform pattern in multi-country comparison⁷.

These three approaches/hypotheses discussed above will be tested jointly in the next two sections which will deal with the sources of support for direct democracy and also with the analysis of participation in referenda in the Czech Republic and CEE countries. These two dimensions (support as well as real behaviour) will be studied because the hypotheses mentioned above (explanations of evolution of direct democracy and the inclusiveness problem) do not only cover and make claims about the declared support for direct democracy but also actual participation in referendum voting.

1. Inglehart's theory of modernization and the cognitive mobilization hypothesis should not only translate into popular support for direct democracy but also into the actual political behaviour (turnout in referenda). This is because it emphasizes growing cognitive skills, competencies and genuine interest in direct participation in democratic decision making.
2. In contrast, the alienation hypothesis was formulated mainly in the context of studying popular support for direct democracy. Since it emphasizes that the support for direct democracy comes from less educated citizens at the extremes of political spectrum, it will can be investigated whether this may translate to referenda turnout; i.e. whether direct democracy mobilizes those outside the political process.
3. According to stealth democratic explanation, support for direct democracy should not (or need not) translate into actual political participation because it primarily expresses dissatisfaction with the quality of representative democracy, rather than active interest in participating in direct forms of voting.

2.4 Popular support for direct democracy in the Czech Republic and CEE countries

In highly developed countries, there is very strong popular support for the institutions of direct democracy – the referendum and the citizen initiative. A number of recent studies (e.g., Bowler et al. 2007; Donovan and Karp 2006) have shown that in all studied countries the popular

⁷ For example, there are recent studies (Schuck and Vreese 2011; Leininger 2015) that ignore the stealth democratic perspective and argue for the concept of cognitive mobilization.

support for direct democracy has been very strong in the long term. In Table 1, I show current levels of popular support based on European Social Survey (ESS) data from 2012. The variable of support for direct democracy is measured on a scale ranging from 0 to 10, where 0 indicates no support and 10 great support. For each country I counted the proportion of people scoring 8, 9 or 10 as those strongly supporting the use of direct democracy as a way of decision making in democracy. Once again, Table 1 shows very high levels of popular support in essentially all European countries. The majority of citizens in every country are strong supporters of direct democracy.

Table 1: Support for direct democracy in European countries (ESS 2012)

Albania	90%	UK	71%	Poland	82%
Belgium	60%	Hungary	79%	Portugal	64%
Bulgaria	82%	Switzerland	83%	Russia	72%
Czech Republic	65%	Ireland	76%	Sweden	68%
Denmark	78%	Israel	66%	Slovenia	67%
Estonia	74%	Iceland	85%	Slovakia	66%
Spain	84%	Italy	80%	Ukraine	85%
Germany	71%	Lithuania	72%		
Finland	67%	Netherlands	52%		
France	68%	Norway	74%		

Nonetheless, what has been unclear is the reason for such high levels of support. Three explanations have been briefly outlined in the previous sections. In this section I present these hypotheses in more detail and test them on the case of popular support for direct democracy in the Czech Republic and, to provide reasonable comparison, in other Central and Eastern European countries.

The goal of the following analyses is not only to test the above-stated hypotheses but also to determine the patterns of support for and participation in direct democracy. The analysis will thus aim to unravel the inequalities in political participation that direct democracy introduces.

2.4.1 Measuring sources of support for direct democracy

To evaluate the extent of inclusiveness and to analyse the sources of popular support for direct democracy in the Czech Republic and CEE countries, three concepts will be tested: cognitive mobilization, the alienation hypothesis and the concept of stealth democracy.

The concept of cognitive mobilization states that due to the decreasing costs of acquiring political information through the expansion of mass media and, above all, due to citizens' growing political interest and increasing ability to process such information, there has been an increase in the public's political sophistication. Cognitive mobilization argues that citizens have acquired skills and political resources that should allow them to make their individual political decisions without reliance on political parties and party cues. This growth of citizens' political resources independent of political parties should be exhibited by the better educated, younger and politically sophisticated (Dalton 2000; Dalton 2010). These three variables (age, education and interest in politics) will be used to operationalize the cognitive mobilization hypothesis. The concept of cognitive mobilization is usually operationalized using the variables of education and interest in politics. However, in the context of the study of direct democracy, Dalton also included young age as a proxy for post-material values, as young people should show a greater degree of cognitive mobilization (Dalton et al. 2001; Donovan and Karp 2006; Dalton 2006; Alaminos and Penalva 2012). This approach will also be used in the analysis presented below.

The concept of stealth democracy, as proposed by Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002), is based on an observation about people's perception of the political process, public policies and elected officials. It was originally measured by three questionnaire items evaluating the ideas that (a) independent experts rather than elected officials should do the decision making, (b) elected representatives are too reluctant to take sensible political action and (c) compromise is just selling out one's principles (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2002: 143).

However, these variables are not available in the ESS datasets, which does not allow to test the concept of stealth democracy directly⁸. Nonetheless, the hypothesis of stealth democracy predicts also dissatisfaction with and distrust in political elites and political parties (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2002: 124). Bowler et al. (2007) argued that it is the distrust in political elites in general and the image of corrupt politicians that drive a stealth democracy sentiment and support for direct democracy. Therefore, these variables will be included in the analysis. Hibbing and Theiss-Morse also argued that citizens expect things to work without them taking care of them, that the politicians should bring about the "end goals" without exposing people to

⁸ Stealth democracy is a concept that is very difficult to operationalize. Bowler et al. 2007 deal with this situation by using the following item: "How important is it to keep a watch on government?" This item is available in the ESS data. When used in regression models it is significant and explains a large amount of variance. However, in my opinion, it measures overall democratic values, rather than a stealth democracy sentiment, and therefore I decided not to use it.

politics (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2002: 133). They thus emphasize the importance of institutional performance in people's evaluations of politics. It is satisfaction with the economy that has been found to play a key role in popular perceptions of institutional performance (e.g., Castillo 2006). Satisfaction with the economy can be viewed as a measure of satisfaction with political output and as such, it was included in the analysis as well. I do reflect that this operationalization of the original concept is not perfect and measures it only very indirectly. But if the above-mentioned variables (trust in politicians, trust in political parties and satisfaction with the economy) were found to be associated with support for direct democracy, then this would be some evidence in favour of the stealth democracy hypothesis.

The concept of alienation is usually tested using the following variables: satisfaction with democracy, satisfaction with government, position on the left-right scale, and low education (Bowler et al. 2007; Donovan & Karp 2006; Dalton et al. 2001). These measures will also be used in the following analysis.

To test the hypotheses, OLS regression could not be used due to the fact that neither the variable measuring the support for direct democracy nor the residuals have normal distribution. Therefore, I opted for an ordered logistic regression model, with support for direct democracy (on a scale of 0–10 points) as the dependent variable.

Several groups of variables were included in the regression model:

First, the model worked with socio-demographic variables including gender, age (with two groups: 18–24 years and 25–30 years), education (with two groups: primary education and university education based on the ISCED scale). In accordance with the cognitive mobilization theory, younger age and higher education should be linked with support for direct democracy. The alienation hypothesis predicts low education to be associated with support for direct democracy.

Second, I included political variables including placement on the left-right scale (with two groups, extreme right and extreme left, represented by the extreme three values at each end of the scale), interest in politics (on a 5-point scale), satisfaction with democracy and satisfaction with the government (on a 0–10 point scale for each of these). The cognitive mobilization theory expects interest in politics to be correlated with support for direct democracy. According to the alienation hypothesis, it is satisfaction with democracy, placement on the extremes of the right-

left political scale and satisfaction with government that should be associated with support for direct democracy.

Third, I brought in variables to test the concept of stealth democracy. Again, the measures selected are not perfect but they tap the key consequences of a stealth democracy sentiment. They include trust in politicians, trust in political parties and satisfaction with the economy (a 0–10 point scale for each of these).

The results of the regression models for five CEE countries are shown in Table 2. There are several important findings. First, in all countries the models explain only a small part of the variance of the dependent variable. The explained variance ranges only from 3 to 8 percent, depending on the particular model. This actually indicates that the tested hypotheses are not very relevant explanations of the support for direct democracy variable. However, because the ESS data does not contain the right variables to measure the concept of stealth democracy directly, it is possible that the effect of the stealth democracy sentiment is rather underestimated in the analysis presented.

In general, the cognitive mobilization hypothesis does not find much support in the data. It predicts that young age, high education and interest in politics should be correlated with support for direct democracy. The pattern cannot be identified in any of the CEE countries. Interest in politics is statistically significant in the Czech Republic and Poland, and it is young age that is somewhat significant in Slovakia and Slovenia. Higher education was not found to be significant in any of the countries. Overall, also due to the low explained variance, the support found for the cognitive mobilization hypothesis is quite weak.

The empirical support for the alienation hypothesis is also rather weak. Here, support for direct democracy should be associated with dissatisfaction with democracy, dissatisfaction with the government, low education and being on the extremes of the left-right political scale. In the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovenia, the variable representing satisfaction with the democracy is significant but in the opposite direction than the theory predicts. Low education was found to be significant only in Slovenia. As for satisfaction with the government, it is significant only in the cases of the Czech Republic and Slovenia, in the predicted direction. Last, being at the extremes of the left-right political scale is in all analysed countries, despite Slovakia associated with support for direct democracy, as recent research has suggested (Webb 2013; Bengtsson and Mattila, 2009).

Finally, neither the stealth democracy hypothesis was corroborated by the empirical analysis. Dissatisfaction with the economy is a significant cause of support for direct democracy, but only in the cases of Hungary and the Czech Republic. As for trust in politicians and political parties, it was only in the case of Hungary where it was negatively associated with support for direct democracy. However, the results are only tentative because the existing data does not allow precise operationalization of the concept and only approximate measures were used.

On the whole, the results do not lend support to neither the cognitive mobilization nor the alienation hypothesis. Stealth democracy was also not corroborated by the data, whereas this result is only tentative due to measurement issues.

When evaluating the results, two findings seem to be consistent when looking at all the 5 CEE countries. First, the support for direct democracy comes more likely from those who tend to be at the extremes of the left-right political scale. Second, it is mostly only political variables that are significant, suggesting that socio-demographic variables are rather unimportant in explaining the dependent variable.

The reasons why the tested hypotheses seem rather irrelevant in explaining popular support for direct democracy are fourfold. First, the models explain only a small proportion of the variance of the dependent variable, suggesting the existence of other, unobserved variables that could explain the support for direct democracy. Second, although some relevant variables were significant, in neither of the countries did the pattern of results reflect what any of the three tested theories predicted. Third, the results of the five models are very different between the studied countries, suggesting that there is no uniform international pattern. It is likely that attitudes to direct democracy are culturally determined (Schuck and Vreese 2011). Fourth, an important reason for the rather inconclusive result is that there might be different causes and sources of support for direct democracy in different subpopulations, which might run in opposite directions. This issue will be further addressed in the following section.

Table 2: Sources of popular support for direct democracy in CEE countries (ESS data; ordered logit regression)

	Czech Republic	Hungary	Poland	Slovakia	Slovenia
Demographic variables					
Gender	0.08	-0.14	0.07	0.00	-0.14
18-24 years	-0.18	0.06	-0.25	0.58*	0.30
25-30 years	-0.11	-0.24	-0.13	0.08	0.35*
Elementary education	-0.21	-0.18	-0.15	0.19	0.25*
University education	-0.01	-0.04	-0.17	-0.26	0.12
Political variables					
Interest in politics	0.25**	0.07	0.14*	-0.11	-0.08
Trust in political parties	0.03	-0.02	0.06	-0.03	0.08
Trust in politicians	-0.03	-0.11*	-0.08	0.07	-0.01
Satisfaction democracy	0.09**	0.19**	-0.14*	-0.07	0.14**
Satisfaction government	-0.10**	-0.05	-0.08	-0.05	-0.15**
Satisfaction economy	-0.09**	-0.23**	-0.03	-0.05	-0.05
Political left	0.30*	0.37*	0.36	0.10	0.09
Political right	0.07	0.41**	0.38**	-0.19	0.34**
Nagelkerke pseudo R ²	0.06	0.08	0.04	0.03	0.06
N	2009	1790	1645	1257	1702

Source: ESS 2012; ** significant at 0.01; * significant at 0.05.

2.4.2 Mixture modelling approach – latent class analysis

The above analysis, performed using a standard regression procedure, did not yield conclusive results – just as were the results of other studies dealing with the sources of popular support for direct democracy (Bowler et al. 2007). The key reason for this is very likely the fact that the additive effects of the regression models conceal a heterogeneous nature of the data. For example, there might be subpopulations for which the cognitive mobilization hypothesis is valid and others for which the stealth democracy explanation is more appropriate.

In what follows I use a mixture modelling approach to deal with this issue. The approach is typically used to identify subpopulations within the overall population based on an unobserved latent variable. The empirical analysis uses the latent class approach (LCA – Muthén and Muthén 2009; Muthén 2001), a method that enables us to identify unobserved latent classes based on observed manifest variables (indicators). Unlike the similar cluster analysis, LCA is based on a probability statistical model and probability relations between manifest indicators and latent variables. It is also based on the assumption of conditional independence, which means that determination of each class aims to minimize, within each class, direct associations between the manifest indicators, as any relationships between them should only be caused by direct associations with the latent class itself.

LCA is based on the assumption of a probabilistic relationship between the latent construct and manifest variables – indicators. The manifest indicators (political variables in Table 2) represent only a highly general picture and conceal the unobserved heterogeneity. For cross-sectional data, a latent class variable represents a construct measured by the manifest indicators. The aim of latent class analysis is to identify the manifest variables that indicate the classes, estimate class probabilities and assign individuals into classes (Muthén 2001: 5–6).

In this analysis, the classes are the patterns of attitudes to democracy. All the presented hypotheses (cognitive mobilization, disaffection and stealth democracy) are essentially unobservable latent constructs, values that represent certain attitudes to governance, political elites and direct democracy. We cannot directly identify cognitive mobilization or stealth democracy sentiment with one concrete variable but it is assumed that these are rather values that manifest themselves in different attitudinal variables.

The strategy for the empirical analysis is the following. In the first step, I will take the value-attitudinal variables that are used by the three mentioned theories, including that measuring support for direct democracy, and treat them as indicators of the underlying latent variable that represents values associated with politics, direct democracy and governance. I will identify the best number of classes of the underlying latent variable. In the second step, I will fit a logit regression model to see what other indicators (predominantly demographic) are associated with the various classes.

This approach enables us to overcome the weaknesses of existing approaches to the analysed problem. It will show how support for direct democracy is intertwined with other value-attitudinal variables (satisfaction with politics, satisfaction with democracy etc.). It also helps us identify subpopulations with distinct democratic values and in the second step also link particular classes to other variables (such as gender, age, education etc.) that are associated with them.

As manifest indicators I included the following variables that were also used as independent variables in the regression analyses: interest in politics, satisfaction with democracy, trust in political parties, trust in politicians, satisfaction with the government, satisfaction with the economy and support for direct democracy,

Interest in politics was included as it represents one of the key variables associated with cognitive mobilization. Satisfaction with democracy and satisfaction with the government were

associated with the political alienation hypothesis. Stealth democracy is a concept that is impossible to operationalize with the available data. However, it emphasizes lack of trust to political elites and to political parties, and dissatisfaction with institutional performance. Therefore three variables were included: trust in politicians, trust in political parties and satisfaction with the economy.

The indicators included in the analysis are continuous and therefore a latent profile analysis was performed. The analysis was done using the M-Plus software package.

Table 3: Model fit for the optimal number of classes

Number of latent classes	Entropy	Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC)	P-value ⁹
1	1.000		
2	0.909	54542.920	0.000
3	0.831	53180.712	0.000
4	0.847	52298.636	0.000
5	0.854	51802.274	0.000
6	0.866	51530.683	0.001
7	0.878	51550.081	0.152

The most difficult part of doing latent class/profile analysis is selecting the optimal number of classes. To choose the best model, there is a number of criteria. Entropy, which runs from 0 to 1, refers to the quality of assignment of individuals into classes. The higher the entropy measure, the better the classification. The BIC (Bayesian Information Criterion) represents another possible criterion for model selection. BIC is based on a likelihood function and one should select the model which minimizes the BIC value (i.e. the smaller, the better). The p-values are the result of a hypothesis that a model with k latent classes fits the data better than one with

⁹ P-value represents the values of the Vuong-Lo-Mendell-Rubin test.

$k - 1$ latent classes. For example (see Table 3), the zero p-value for the 4-class model indicates that 4 classes fit the data better than 3 classes. This is not the case for the 7-class model. In this case the hypothesis is rejected that the 7-class model fits the data better than the 6-class model. Therefore the model with 6 classes was selected. The structure of the classes with respect to the six variables is given in Table 4.

Table 4: The structure of latent profiles – means of indicator variables

INDICATORS	LATENT PROFILES					
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Interest in politics	3.1	2.6	3.3	3.1	3.1	3.0
Satisfaction with democracy	3.0	3.9	5.7	5.7	8.1	6.3
Support for direct democracy	8.7	8.6	7.2	7.2	8.6	7.6
Trust in political parties	0.6	3.2	0.4	2.4	7.5	5.1
Trust in politicians	0.5	2.7	0.3	2.3	7.6	5.1
Satisfaction with government	1.6	2.2	5.2	4.7	7.6	5.2
Satisfaction with economy	1.0	1.6	5.5	4.3	7.9	5.2
Proportion in the sample	34%	11%	7%	20%	10%	18%

Source: ESS 2012; values represent means on 1-4 scale for interest in politics variable and means on 0-10 scale for all the other variables.

The structure of the latent profiles was obtained using the *mixture* and *model* procedures in M-PLUS. I simultaneously identified the latent classes (*mixture command*) as well as a logistic regression model with covariates (*model command*). The covariates included in the model were the same as the ones used in the ordered logit models: age < 25 years, age < 30 years, elementary education, university education, gender, extreme left and extreme right. In what follows I describe every latent class with respect to the individual indicators and also with respect to covariates – the independent variables in the regression model.

Table 5 shows the results of the regression models with covariates, with class VI being the reference category. Class VI was chosen as such due to its rather average scores for all of the

manifest indicators.

Table 5: Logistic regression with covariates and latent classes

	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV	Class V	
Constant	0.732**	-0.390	-0.503	0.161	0.567	
Covariate variables						
Gender	0.043	0.030	-0.183	0.075	-0.730	**
Age<25yrs	-1.540**	-1.417	-0.876	0.203	-0.650	
Age<30yrs	-0.337	-0.495	0.275	0.004	-0.043	
Education elementary	-0.094	0.031	0.400	-0.082	0.518	
Education university	-0.782**	-0.503	-0.527	-0.162	0.291	
Political left	0.962**	0.556**	0.015	-1.789	-1.820	**
Political right	-0.639**	-1.378**	0.163	-0.199	-0.618	**
Group size	648	211	150	408	198	

Source: ESS 2012; ** significant at 0.01; * significant at 0.05.

Class I is the most common of all the classes, making up 34% of the whole sample and of the whole population. This group has on average the highest support for direct democracy (a mean of 8.7 on a 0 to 10 scale). On the other hand, the trust and satisfaction variables are extremely low, indicating extreme distrust in political parties, distrust in politicians and dissatisfaction with democracy and government. The members of this class are rather those who do not belong to the young age groups, do not have university education and are more likely to be affiliated with the political left (Table 5; Class I). The class thus consists of people whose strong support for direct democracy is associated with extremely high distrust in political parties, politicians, government, democracy in general as well as dissatisfaction with institutional performance. The structure of opinions in this group corresponds, although not perfectly¹⁰, to what is predicted by the stealth democracy and political alienation hypotheses.

Class II is makes up 11% of the sample and is rather similar to the first class. The main difference is that although the level of support for direct democracy is high again, the support for and trust in political institutions and democracy is slightly higher compared to Class I (yet still much below average). Although the members of this class are not as critical towards democratic institutions as the members of the Class I, their values can also be best explained

¹⁰ The alienation hypothesis predicts that support will come from those will low education, which is not exactly the case. Neither does it come from those at both extremes of the right-left value spectrum, but rather from those on the left only. In support of the stealth democracy perspective speaks the fact that the very support for direct democracy is associated with complete distrust to political elites, democracy as such as well as institutional performance.

by the stealth democracy and political alienation sentiment.

Classes III and IV have lower support for direct democracy (both 7.2, on average), which is associated with average support for democratic institutions and rather very low trust in political parties and politicians. From Table 5 it can be seen that no particular covariates are linked to membership in these two groups. However, when Class I is set as the reference category (tables not reported here), it shows that these two groups rather tend to be associated with the political right).

Class V contains people who are, on average, not only very supportive of direct democracy, but are also satisfied with democratic institutions and trust political parties as well as politicians. These people trust and are satisfied with democratic institutions not only relatively to other groups, but also substantively (with means of around 8 on the 0 to 10 scales). Compared to Class VI (the reference category set for the logistic regression models), these people are likely to have centrist political values.

The analysis shows a number of important findings. First, attitudes to direct democracy (and support for direct democracy) cannot be explained by a single theory, namely either cognitive mobilization, alienation or stealth democracy. The greatest support for direct democracy comes from those who are disenchanted with politics and democratic institutions as well as from those who are satisfied with democracy in the Czech Republic and trust political parties and politicians. The former group makes up 45% of the Czech population (Classes I and II) and the latter (Class V) makes up 10%. Although Class V seems to support the cognitive mobilization hypothesis, Table 5 shows that membership in this group is not associated with the predicted demographic traits of low age and higher education. In addition, cognitive mobilization predicts that support for direct democracy should be associated with distrust in political elites but a commitment to the democratic ideal. The traits of Class V do not support this hypothesis (see Table 4).

To sum up, the analysis shows that there is strong heterogeneity in attitudes towards direct democracy. For some people, strong belief in direct democracy is associated with extreme distrust in representative democracy, whereas the exact opposite is true for others: Support for direct democracy is associated with trust and satisfaction with politicians, political elites, the economy as well as democracy as such. In addition, looking at Table 5, socio-demographic variables are mostly insignificant which suggests that support for direct democracy is related more to evaluations of representative democracy rather than socio-economic resources.

To conclude, the analysis of the ESS data based on a latent class approach shows that for the Czech Republic, the very high support for direct democracy can be best explained by the stealth democracy and political alienation hypotheses, which are the most relevant (although not perfect) explanations for almost half of the population (classes I and II)¹¹.

However, some arguments proposed by the cognitive mobilization hypothesis also find some support in the data. The hypothesis argues that support for direct democracy should be linked to interest in politics, distrust in political elites but at the same time dedication to the democratic ideal. Class V (Table 4) lends only weak support to this idea since for these people great support for direct democracy is associated with satisfaction with all aspects democracy. These people are enthusiastic about democracy as such.

The results thus show that very high levels of support for direct democracy may be associated with very different evaluations of democracy and democratic institutions.

2.4.3 Discussion

The direct test of the three hypotheses using standard regression (see Table 2) did not yield any conclusive result. The results of the regression analysis did not provide strong support for any of the three tested hypotheses.

A key reason for the overall inconclusive results could be that different explanations could be valid for different subpopulations. Therefore, for the case of the Czech Republic, I used the latent class modelling approach with the aim to find out how support for direct democracy is intertwined with and related to other political values such as satisfaction with and trust in various institutions of representative democracy.

The results show that for a substantial part of the sample (45% – Classes I and II) high support for direct democracy is associated with almost complete distrust in political institutions, political parties and politicians, and dissatisfaction with the economy (a measure of institutional performance). This result can be best (approximately) interpreted by both the alienation and the stealth democracy hypotheses. As for cognitive mobilization, there is some weak support for this concept. What speaks in favour of cognitive mobilization is the fact that there is a subpopulation (10% – Class V) committed to democratic institutions and ideals. Support for

¹¹ Due to the absence of ESS items that would allow measuring the concept of stealth democracy, I am unable to argue precisely whether stealth democracy or alienation is a better concept to explain the empirical results.

direct democracy in this class is associated with high levels of support for all democratic institutions measured.

Regarding inclusiveness, the analyses of popular support for direct democracy do not indicate any strong inequalities in terms of demographics. There is strong support for direct democracy irrespective of gender, age or education. So the predictions of cognitive mobilization and alienation hypotheses that support for direct democracy should be associated with certain demographic traits were not confirmed.

However, based on the data from the Czech Republic, high support for direct democracy is associated with specific attitudes to the institutions of representative democracy. Those most supportive of direct democracy are either extremely satisfied with the institutions of representative democracy or greatly dissatisfied and alienated. So the self-selection bias that direct democracy introduces is, at the level of attitudes to direct democracy, not based on demographic variables, but rather stems from evaluations of representative democracy and its institutions.

2.5 Participation in EU accession referenda

In the previous section I analysed the sources of support for direct democracy and concluded that there was not much empirical evidence for the concept of cognitive mobilization and that the data rather supported the concept of stealth democracy and alienation hypothesis. In this section I will test the cognitive mobilization hypothesis and the alienation hypothesis on actual turnout in direct democracy. Stealth democracy hypothesis will not be tested directly as it has no particular predictions linked to turnout in direct democracy.

The previous section provides some support for the concepts of stealth democracy/alienation hypothesis and no support for cognitive mobilization, but it could be argued that the actual participation in direct democracy is a different matter and the concept of cognitive mobilization may find support here. For the purposes of this analysis, the hypothesis will be tested on the example of European Union accession referenda in five Central and Eastern European countries. As in the previous section the analysis will help to answer the question of how inclusive direct democracy is. Whether it mobilizes social groups standing outside the political process, reproduces the existing biases in political participation, etc.

Second, attention will be paid to voting by people aged 30 or younger because the theory of cognitive mobilization predicts the highest support for alternative forms of political decision making among the youngest citizens. In this sense, Dalton et al. (2006: 10) describe new patterns of political participation observed in the young generation as follows: “their participation repertoire includes more direct and individualized forms of action. The cognitively mobilized, engaged citizen is more active on referenda than elections, and direct action over campaign work, volunteering is preferred to party activity”.

The EU accession referenda should represent suitable cases for testing this hypothesis. European integration is most supported by young people and research on European identity shows that young people are increasingly embracing the European identity. Moreover, according to Inglehart there should be a link between post-material values and support for European integration (the latter should represent a post-materialist aim). A combination of direct democracy and the issue of European integration might result in higher turnout by young voters.

It is fair to acknowledge that the following analysis has strong limitations and should be viewed as a case study. Above all, it could be argued that the turnout in EU accession referenda might

be very specific and distinct with strong limitations for generalizations. This issue – the generalizability of the results will be elaborated on in the discussion section.

In what follows I first provide an empirical test of the cognitive mobilization and alienation theories. The hypothesis of stealth democracy cannot be really tested directly as it predicts that the structure of political participation in direct democracy should in no way differ from other political processes (turnout should be the same). So any empirical support for the concept of stealth democracy can be only indirect. Second, I focus on political participation of younger age groups because the combination of a direct form of decision making and positive attitudes to the EU should give rise to a best case scenario for the cognitive mobilization hypothesis.

2.5.1 Data and hypotheses

The first aim of the empirical part is to test the cognitive mobilization and alienation hypotheses. It follows from the above discussion that these theories have been tested mostly at the level of declared support for institutions of direct democracy. In contrast, the present analysis tests to what extent these theories explain actual referendum participation or turnout.

The second aim is to establish the participation levels of young voters aged 30 or below in EU accession referenda in Central and Eastern European countries. Given the decline of young voters' turnout in representative elections (Fieldhouse et al. 2007), direct democracy may pose a more acceptable alternative for their political participation, and as a result, their referendum participation might be higher. Moreover, studies on European identity demonstrate a diminishing importance of national identities and a growing commitment to the European integration project, especially in the young generation. As analyses of age cohorts (Lutz et al. 2006) show, the young generation's value socialization also results in weaker commitment to the nation-state and higher emphasis on a European identity. This evolution has been observed in the young populations of advanced Western European countries as well as post-communist countries. Young people are also among the social groups most likely to support the European integration process (McLaren 2004: 901). Moreover, it was proposed by Inglehart that there should be a direct relationship between post-material values and support for European integration (for recent empirical evidence, see Kennedy 2013) because support for the EU represents a post-materialist goal (Rhodes and Mazey 1995). To sum up, the reason for including this hypothesis is that EU accession referenda represent the best-case scenario for the post-materialist and cognitive mobilization hypotheses: a) direct form of decision making, b)

commitment of younger generation to the EU project and c) strong EU support among younger people due to post-material values.

I start by presenting data from turnout in EU accession referenda and compare these results to turnout in parliamentary elections in the respective countries. In the next step I continue with regression analysis.

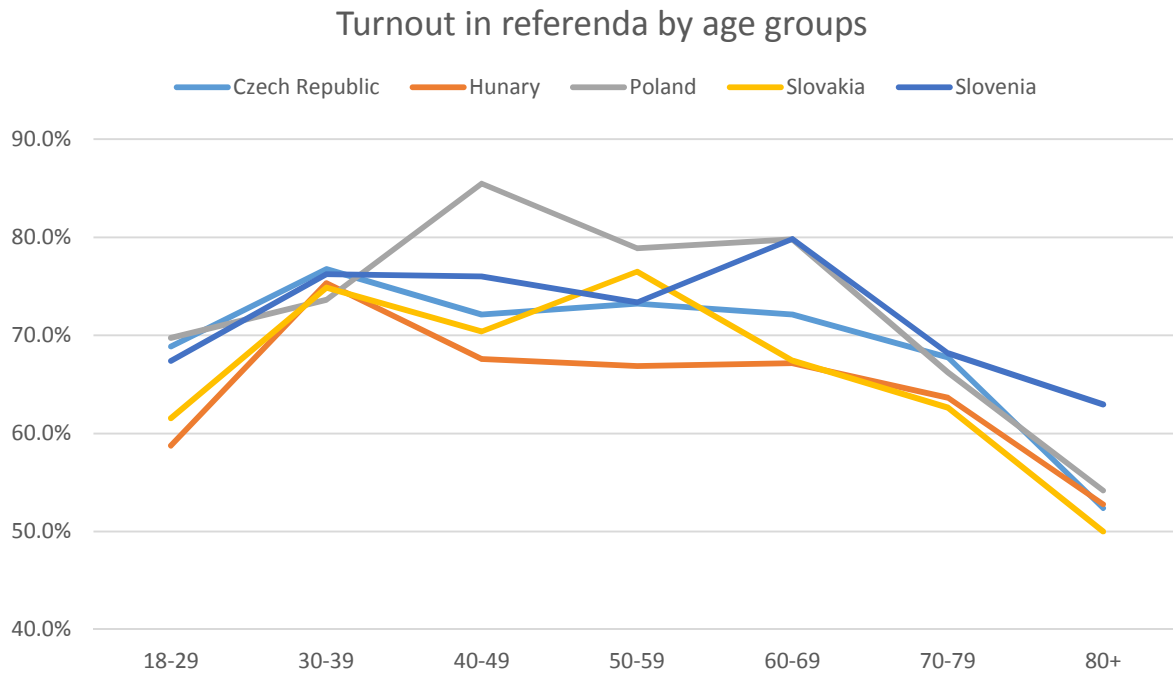
The analysis was based on data from the Eurobarometer 2003.4 survey which was conducted shortly after the referenda in which the citizens of Central and Eastern European countries decided about accession to the EU. Referendum participation (1 = yes, 0 = no) was set as a dependent variable in the regression model. In line with the cognitive mobilization theory, referendum participation should be associated with interest in politics, high education level and membership in young age groups. Interest in politics was measured as intensity of following politics in the news media, namely television, daily press and radios (the variable was constructed as an index). Furthermore, tertiary education, primary education and membership in the young generation (in the age groups of 18–24 and 25–30 years) were distinguished. All variables were dichotomous. The alienation theory was measured by satisfaction with the functioning of democracy, also a dichotomous variable, and satisfaction with the government. Further variables in the model included attitudes to the EU and factual knowledge about European integration. The former was measured on a 5-degree attitude scale, the latter by nine questions focusing on information about the EU.

2.5.2 Results – comparison with parliamentary elections

Before testing the hypotheses, I will shortly discuss turnout in EU accession referenda. The following levels of turnout were achieved in these referenda: 55% in the Czech Republic, 59% in Poland, 52% in Slovakia, 46% in Hungary and 60% in Slovenia. Although it would be best to compare the levels of turnout of young people in parliamentary elections and in the referenda, the latter levels based on self-reported Eurobarometer data are significantly inflated (68% for Czech Republic, 72% for Poland, 66% for Slovakia, 63% for Hungary and 70% for Slovenia).

This shows that Eurobarometer significantly overestimated the number of people who voted in the referenda – by 10–17 percentage points, depending on the particular country. Due to this fact, it does not make much sense to compare how turnout in referenda and parliamentary elections differs between age groups. However, it makes sense to look at turnout in referenda alone with respect to different age categories (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Turnout in CEE referenda by age groups



Source: Eurobarometer CCEB 2003

In Figure 1 it can be seen that the turnout was low among young people (18–29), then increased for the middle-aged and decreased in the older age groups. Importantly, for all the studied countries the levels of turnout for the age group of 18–29 years were below the national average.

The comparison to turnout in parliamentary elections is not possible due to the fact that the numbers for referenda are inflated. However, both in the case of referenda and in Parliamentary elections the turnout has an inverted U shape¹².

2.5.3 Results – regression analyses

Table 6 presents the results for the test of cognitive mobilization and alienation hypotheses.

No support for the alienation theory was found. The key variables of satisfaction with democracy and satisfaction with the government were either statistically insignificant or positively correlated with referendum participation (in Slovenia). Low education did not mobilize voters to participate in referenda either and had a negative effect on turnout in

¹² In an analysis not reported here I compared the level of turnout in EU referenda with turnout in elections (based on European Election Study 2004). The turnout of young age groups was higher in the referenda. However, the turnout in referenda was inflated significantly in the Eurobarometer study; by 10–17 percentage points. So when the turnout rate in referenda was “naively” adjusted by this differential, the resulting turnout levels among young people were almost the same as in the elections.

referenda. Thus, the hypothesis that direct democracy mobilizes citizens dissatisfied with the quality of democracy and those with lower education levels was not confirmed. Dalton et al. (2001) argued that direct democracy would be also promoted by the supporters of populist parties at the extremes of the left-right political spectrum or by supporters of anti-establishment parties. Eurobarometer data does not contain the item measuring placement on the left-right scale. However, it does contain a question about support for various political parties in the upcoming elections. In regression models not reported here, I also included variables representing support for non-establishment parties with no representation in the parliaments of all the countries at the given time. But none of these variables had any statistically significant effect on the turnout in referenda.

The cognitive mobilization hypothesis found more support. In all five countries under investigation, referendum participation was positively correlated with interest in politics. As for the effect of education, in all five countries, people with primary education indicated lower referendum participation than people with higher education levels. People with low levels of formal education were less likely to vote in all countries. In contrast, the effect of tertiary education proved statistically significant in Hungary, Poland and Slovenia. However, the cognitive mobilization theory was contradicted by the relatively lower referendum turnout of members of the young generation under 30 years of age. While this effect ran in the negative direction but was statistically insignificant in all countries for the age of 25–30, it was significant in all countries for the 18–24 age group.

Table 6: A model predicting participation in EU accession referenda (logistic regression; beta coefficients)

	Czech Republic	Hungary	Poland	Slovakia	Slovenia
Constant	-1.51	-2.55**	-1.22	-2.23**	-2.14**
Demographic variables					
Gender	0.03	0.13	0.18	-0.05	-0.23
Primary education	-1.25**	-0.79**	-0.18	-1.00**	-0.38*
University education	0.11	0.73**	0.41*	0.21	0.47**
Age 18–24	-0.08*	-0.78**	-0.70**	-0.54*	-0.39*
Age 25–30	0.00	-0.31	-0.05	-0.41	-0.27
Political context					
Interest in politics (media)	0.39**	0.31*	0.37**	0.20**	0.40**
Satisfaction with democracy	-0.08	0.04	0.13	0.22	0.40**
Satisfaction with government	0.16	0.12	-0.04	-0.02	-0.08
Knowledge about the EU	0.08	0.10**	0.07	0.19**	0.15**
Attitudes to the EU	0.27**	0.59**	0.27**	0.58**	0.40**
Pseudo R ²	0.14	0.19	0.10	0.24	0.17
N	945	936	917	1018	945

*Source: Eurobarometer CCEB 2003; ** significant at 0.01; * significant at 0.05.*

The results of the analysis suggest that interest in politics, high education and not belonging to the young age groups were among the main factors mobilizing voters to participate in the referenda. These characteristics and mechanisms of political participation in referenda are, however, similar to representative elections (e.g., Verba et al. 1995; Nevitte et al. 2009) where education and interest in politics play key roles and the youngest generation of voters exhibits the lowest turnout: turnout in elections increases with age, education and interest in politics. Thus, model results do not provide strong support for the cognitive mobilization hypothesis that direct forms of political participation should be most utilized by young citizens who are interested in politics and seek new opportunities for influencing politics. It is important to note that my operationalization of the concept of cognitive mobilization links it to high education, interest in politics and young age (Dalton et al. 2001; Donovan and Karp 2006).

While the variables of interest in politics proved statistically significant, the results did not seem to conform to the logic of this theory insofar as membership in young age groups had actually negative effects. The results rather point to the fact that turnout in the referenda was driven by the same factors as turnout in elections, pointing to a key role of socio-economic status (Verba et al. 1995).

The analysis further aimed at establishing the level of referendum participation of young voters. According to the above-presented hypothesis, the issue of European integration might strongly mobilize young citizens for three reasons. It follows from Inglehart's theory and the cognitive mobilization concept that direct democracy should mobilize primarily young voters (Alaminos and Penalva 2012). European identity studies demonstrate that young people are increasingly embracing a European identity at the expense of national identities. Furthermore, members of the youngest generation have traditionally been the strongest supporters of European integration and the EU and, according to Inglehart (1990), European integration represents a "post-materialist" goal. The combination of these three factors gives rise to the hypothesis of young people's stronger voter turnout.

As Dalton et al. (2006: 10) argued, young people could favour participating in direct democracy because they are in a better position to decide independently, without reliance on any cues. This is because they are able to process political information and have political resources to do so.

Therefore, we can expect that young age will have a positive effect on turnout in the referendum. However, at the same time, this positive effect of young age should be moderated by political knowledge and sophistication. To test this hypothesis, an interaction between the variables “knowledge about the EU” and “aged 30 or younger” was added to the model (Tables 7 and 8). The expectation is that the positive effect of young age on turnout will be moderated-strengthened by political knowledge (and *vice versa*).

Second, because the issue on the ballot (EU integration) should be of strong relevance to younger people’s post-materialist goals and identity, it can also be expected that younger people, due to these reasons, will be more likely to participate in these EU accession referenda. With decreasing age, the weight of EU attitudes – issue preferences – in explaining referendum turnout should increase. Therefore, an interaction between the measures of attitudes to the EU and young age was included.

Interestingly, the young age groups of 30– years were better informed about the EU (scoring on average one out of the 9 factual questions better than the older groups) and had also more positive attitudes to the EU (on average by 0.5 point more on a 5 point scale compared to the other age groups).

These two hypotheses were tested on another regression model. Referendum participation became once again the dependent variable. As opposed to the above model (Table 6). The two young age groups were merged into one (18–30 years)¹³. On the other hand, an interaction of the variables “attitude to the EU” and “aged 30 or younger” was added to the model. In order to simplify interpretation, the variables “attitude to the EU” and “knowledge about the EU” were transformed into dichotomous variables¹⁴. The results of the regressions are shown in Tables 7 and 8.

¹³ The age groups were merged because of the relatively lower representation of the youngest age group which made it impossible to test the relationships of the age variable with the level of knowledge about and attitudes to the EU.

¹⁴ Attitude to the EU: 1 = positive attitude to the EU, 0 = other; knowledge about the EU: 1 = above-average knowledge about the EU, 0 = other.

Table 7: A model predicting participation in EU accession referenda (logistic regression; beta coefficients) – interaction age x attitudes

	Czech Republic	Hungary	Poland	Slovakia	Slovenia
Constant	-1.80	-2.68**	-1.23	-2.26**	-2.01**
Demographic variables					
Gender	0.03	0.14	0.22	-0.05	-0.17
Primary education	-1.25**	-0.78**	0.11	-0.99**	-0.43
University education	0.10	0.71**	0.39*	0.76*	0.44**
18-30 years	-0.43	-0.01	-0.55	-0.08	-0.30
Political context					
Interest in politics (media)	0.38**	0.31**	0.37**	0.20**	0.41**
Satisfaction with democracy	-0.08	0.04	0.12	0.22	0.49**
Satisfaction with government	0.16	0.14	-0.03	-0.02	-0.08
Knowledge about the EU	0.08	0.10**	0.07	0.18**	0.13**
Attitudes to the EU	0.21*	0.61**	0.26**	0.62**	0.42**
Interactions					
18-30 years*EU attitudes	0.42	-0.15	-0.06	-0.13	-0.11
Pseudo R ²	0.15	0.19	0.10	0.24	0.16
N	945	936	917	1018	945

Source: Eurobarometer CCEB 2003; ** significant at 0.01; * significant at 0.05.

Table 8: A model predicting participation in EU accession referenda (logistic regression; beta coefficients) – interaction age x knowledge about the EU

	Czech Republic	Hungary	Poland	Slovakia	Slovenia
Constant	-0.19	-2.67**	-1.23	-2.01**	-1.87**
Demographic variables					
Gender	0.03	0.14	0.22	-0.05	-0.17
Primary education	-1.25**	-0.77**	0.12	-1.02**	-0.43
University education	0.13	0.72**	0.38*	0.75*	0.45*
18-30 years	-0.04	-0.07	-0.22	-1.05*	-0.52
Political context					
Interest in politics (media)	0.39**	0.32**	0.37**	0.20**	0.41**
Satisfaction with democracy	-0.09	0.04	0.11	0.22	0.49**
Satisfaction with government	0.16	0.02	-0.03	-0.02	-0.08
Knowledge about the EU	0.08	0.12**	0.08	0.17**	0.12*
Attitudes to the EU	0.27**	0.58**	0.27**	0.57**	0.38**
Interactions					
18-30 years*knowledge EU	0.00	-0.08	-0.03	0.12	0.09
Pseudo R ²	0.14	0.19	0.10	0.24	0.16
N	945	936	917	1018	945

Source: Eurobarometer CCEB 2003; ** significant at 0.01; * significant at 0.05.

Tables 7 and 8 demonstrate that the variables used in the first model continued to be statistically significant in the second one. The interaction between the variables “attitude to the EU” and “aged 30 or younger” did not prove statistically significant. Thus, the hypothesis that positive

attitudes to and evaluations of the EU had stronger mobilizing effects on young people was not confirmed. In other words, young age did not increase the role of (positive) attitudes to the EU. Similarly, the interaction between the variables “knowledge about the EU” and “aged 30 or younger” did not prove statistically significant.

Thus, the hypothesis that knowledge about the referendum issue and support for the issue/proposal motivate young voters to participate in the referendum was not confirmed. While young people tended to have above-average knowledge about European integration and more positive attitudes to the EU, compared to other age groups, this fact did not translate into higher referendum participation. These results provide some evidence against the theories of post-material values and cognitive mobilization. To conclude, young people’s behaviour during EU accession referenda was investigated as a highly favourable case for testing the post-materialist hypothesis. However, the results do not support this theory in any of the CEE countries.

The results of the analyses dealing with turnout in CEE accession referenda suggest that participation in the referenda tends to reproduce the existing inequalities and does not bring about greater inclusiveness in political engagement. First, the overall turnout in these referenda was rather low. Second, it was the variables associated with socio-economic status that best explain the pattern of participation in referenda (see Nevitte et al. 2009¹⁵). Neither the cognitive mobilization nor the alienation hypotheses found much support in the data. The results show indirect support to the stealth democracy hypothesis that argues that the pattern of participation should not differ from elections and that expanding the scope of political participation would have only limited effects.

2.5.4 Discussion

Studies of democracy often note the empirical fact that the character of democratic governance is changing. Dissatisfaction with the functioning of democratic institutions is growing and voter turnout in representative elections is diminishing, especially among young people. On the other hand, new direct forms of political participation are emerging which might constitute alternatives to the traditional forms. One relevant interpretation of this trend thesis is to hypothesize that the decline of electoral participation and of critical citizens’ trust in institutions of representative democracy indicates their interest in such forms of political participation that

¹⁵ Based on comparative research, the key variables predicted by SES theory to be associated with voting are age, education, religious activity and income (Nevitte et al. 2009).

enable direct participation in democratic decision making and autonomous expression of political preferences. Another approach emphasizes that it is dissatisfied citizens outside the political process and with rather extreme political values who are interested in direct democracy.

These hypotheses were tested on the example of EU accession referenda in Central and Eastern European countries. Those referenda were chosen for two reasons. First, direct democracy represents a clear alternative to representative democracy and existing analyses of public support for institutions of direct democracy often use Inglehart's theory of post-material values and Dalton's concept of cognitive mobilization to explain the popularity of this institution. Second, it was expected that the EU accession referenda mobilized young people to a larger extent than other citizens, namely due to several factors: young people's strong support for the EU, diminishing commitment to nation-states, strengthening European identities and good knowledge about the EU.

The results show that neither the cognitive mobilization nor the alienation hypotheses explain well the nature of political participation and turnout in the CEE referenda. In line with Donovan and Karp's (2006: 683) finding about declared support for the introduction of institutions of direct democracy, it was found out that lowering barriers to or increasing opportunities for political participation mobilizes primarily those citizens who already indicate interest in politics (Berinsky 2005). Thus, the turnout in these referenda is best explained by individual resources, interest in politics and standard SES theory which draws from demographic and socio-economic variables to explain the patterns of political participation.

The second aim of the analysis was to test the hypothesis that an institution of direct democracy combined with the issue of European integration increased the young generation's voter turnout. The results did not confirm this hypothesis. Young people's participation in the referendum was below the average and their high support for the EU and above-average political knowledge did not have any significant effects.

The analysis presented here has clear limitations. Determined by the nature of the particular event of EU enlargement, it is rather a case study of patterns of political participation. There could be some concerns about the generalizability of the results due to the very specific nature of the issue on the ballot. As for the case of referenda on the topic of European integration, there is evidence that the popular interest in EU referenda is driven by two variables (Rose and Borz 2013): evaluations of the EU and satisfaction with national governments. These two variables were found to be the key drivers of interest in EU-related referenda. However, in the

regression analysis I was able to control for the effect of both of these variables. So in spite of the various levels of satisfaction with the government and attitudes to the EU, the results still refute the cognitive mobilization hypothesis as well as the alienation hypothesis and show a pronounced effect of the variables related to SES theory. Importantly, these results confirm the results of previous studies showing that when focused on conventional as well as unconventional forms of political participation, it is the socio-economic resources that consistently prove to be the key driver of political participation (e.g., Pattie et al. 2005; Smith 2009). So even given the limitation of the particular case, the results are in line with the existing scholarly research.

2.6 Expansion of direct democracy: section conclusion

The aim of the section was to analyse the sources of the rise of direct democracy. Two research questions were studied: (a) what are the sources of popular support for direct democracy and (b) who actually participates in direct democracy. The underlying aim was to find out how inclusive direct democracy is. Is direct democracy supported by those with rather extreme political values standing outside the political process? Or is it promoted and used by the generation of young people dissatisfied with representative democracy and eager to participate in direct forms of political decision making? Or is it so that every expansion of opportunities for political participation will be used only by those already politically active, as Berinsky (2005) argued?

The results show that at the level of popular sentiment there is an overwhelming support for direct democracy. Those in favour are not confined to some specific groups as, e.g. suggested by the cognitive mobilization hypothesis. The attitude is very general and, in addition, it is not specifically associated with any demographic variable such as gender, age or education. It stems mainly from dissatisfaction with politics, political institutions and political elites.

However, when we look at the pattern of participation in referenda, the key variables that explain turnout are linked to demographics and socio-economic status. This suggests that despite the overwhelming popular support for direct democracy, being in favour does not always translate to real behaviour. In other words, turnout in referenda tends to reproduce the existing inequalities in political participation. So while support for direct democracy seems to be driven mainly by evaluation of institutions of representative democracy and not by demographic variables, in actual turnout in referenda it is the resources linked to SES that start to play a much more important role.

The empirical evidence from the different analyses shows rather little support for the theories of post-material values and cognitive mobilization. Neither the pattern of support for direct democracy nor the pattern of turnout in the CEE referenda analysed provide very strong support for this concept.

As for the alienation hypothesis, the results of the analysis of voter turnout in referenda provide no evidence for this concept. On the other hand, the analysis of popular support, based on regression and LCA analyses, did lend some support to the hypothesis. Support for direct democracy is associated with dissatisfaction with politics and political elites. In addition, it comes more often from the extremes of the left-right political spectrum.

The concept of stealth democracy could not be tested directly. However, the analysis based on latent class modelling did show some empirical evidence on favour of this concept. Also the results of analysis of turnout in referenda can be regarded as supportive of this concept..

To sum up:

1. There is great universal support for the idea of direct democracy that is not confined to some specific particular social groups and is not associated with demographic variables. The high level of support was found to be driven by evaluations of institutions of representative democracy.
2. When it comes to participation in referenda, the turnout in the CEE referenda studied deviated in no significant way from standard patterns of political participation predicted by SES theory, which puts emphasis on demographic and socio-economic variables.
3. At the level of popular support, direct democracy can be regarded as inclusive – there is no variation that would be caused by demographic or socio-economic variables, as suggested by the cognitive mobilization and the post-materialist hypotheses as well as concept of alienation. However, when it comes to participation in referenda, demographic and socio-economic variables linked to SES theory¹⁶ begin to play a very important role in explaining the turnout.

The key results of all the analyses presented in this section is that there seems to be a gap between support for direct democracy and real political participation in referenda that is often

¹⁶ However, I wish to emphasize that the results concerning participation in referenda refer only to specific cases of direct democracy and should not be generalized.

not acknowledged in the existing research. The drivers of popular support for direct democracy do not seem the same as the drivers of turnout and predictions only based on declared support should not be used to make claims about participation in referenda (for this kind of reasoning see Rose and Borz 2013).

The key limitation of the results is that they apply to government-initiated nationwide referenda and should not be applied to local direct democracy, where participation often stems from local circumstances. However, the results are consistent with the findings of Donovan and Karp (2006: 683), who argued that “when democratic institutions require additional effort from citizens, those institutions will elicit less support from people with low levels of interest in politics than from those with more interest [greater resources]”.

3 Voting behaviour in CEE referenda – considered judgement

3.1 Aims of the section

The previous section was concerned with the sources of support for direct democracy and the issue of inclusiveness. In this section I turn to the key issue in direct democracy research, namely how voters make up their minds in direct democracy campaigns and whether they vote competently, i.e. in agreement with their underlying preferences. Smith (2009) discusses this issue in terms of considered judgement and Dahl (1998: 37) uses the concept of enlightened understanding. Either way, this criterion refers to the capacity of citizens to make coherent political judgements (Smith 2009: 15). It is exactly this issue that was used by the elitist theories of democracy to criticize direct and unconventional forms of political engagement (Cunningham 2001).

In the previous section it was shown that the very high support for direct democracy does not very likely mean real interest in participation in direct forms of decision making. Nonetheless, it does not mean that when direct democracy takes place people will not vote competently and make rational and coherent choices.

The existing research shows that direct democracy campaigns can be regarded as processes of learning in which citizens use available information to crystalize their opinions. Direct democracy campaigns are depicted as “learning experiences” and it is argued that voters can form competent opinions (in line with their underlying preferences) if they are provided with enough cues in information intense campaigns. This perspective supports the optimistic narrative about the role of direct democracy outlined in the introduction. It is also in line with participatory theory of democracy (Barber 1984; Pateman 1970) which emphasizes the citizen capability of autonomous decision making.

The analysis provided in this section further develops and elaborates on the test of cognitive mobilization hypothesis from the previous section. Although the existing research about voting behaviour in direct democracy does not directly stem from cognitive mobilization, this concept likewise argues that the citizens should possess the skills and ability to reach their own competent political decisions based on available information and also emphasizes the citizen capacity for autonomous decision making (Dalton 2010: 5-6).

Next I provide an analysis of voting behaviour in EU accession referenda from 2003 in CEE countries and also use Australian Constitutional referendum data. This case goes beyond the

analysis of direct democracy in the Czech Republic and CEE countries. Nonetheless, it is used as it represents a quite rare case of campaign dynamics that is not accessible in the EU context. Based on this data, I will argue that the existing perspective on voting behaviour in direct democracy that emphasizes the importance of political awareness, information and information-intensive campaigns for autonomous and competent vote choice is exaggerated. I will show that due to framing effects (an interpretation of the issue on the ballot based on certain value interpretation) political awareness and information sometimes do not play always an important role in decision making and that due to the important role of values in decision making the question of voter competence sometimes ceases to make sense. In conclusion of this section I discuss the results with respect to the issue of considered judgement: I also show that voter decision making in direct democracy is inevitably linked to influence, power and framing strategies through public discourse and that the ideas that information leads to informed choices and autonomous decision making is not always adequate.

3.2 Introduction

Over the past two decades, there has been a major debate about how voters make decisions in direct democracy. This debate first revolved around the question whether the electorate decides according to the issue as such (Siune et al. 1994; Svensson 2002) or whether voters make up their minds on the basis of government popularity and political party affiliation, i.e. secondary preferences (Franklin et al. 1994). Later, the debate abandoned this black-and-white perspective and shifted to the question under what conditions and to what extent voters decide on the basis of secondary and issue preferences (Franklin 2002). The decisive role of campaign intensity and electorate knowledge about the issue at stake was often emphasized. For example, Sara B. Hobolt's (2005, 2009) formal model claimed that campaign intensity and political awareness not only induce competent vote choices, but also influence the relative weight of secondary and issue considerations. Intensive campaigning provides information that increases issue voting and *vice versa*. A very similar kind of reasoning led many researchers to base the analysis of voting behaviour in direct democracy on Zaller's model of opinion formation (Zaller, 1992) which emphasizes the moderating role of information. Information-rich campaigns should lead to stable attitudes and make value predispositions more relevant in decision making (LeDuc, 2002, 2007; Hobolt, 2005, 2007). It follows from these considerations that when campaigns are intense and voters are well informed about the issue, voters should form stable, competent and accurate attitudes. This essentially means that the more informed (politically aware) voters are, the more competent their vote choice will be.

Nonetheless, there are also examples of campaigns that seem to contradict this idea. Even though voters were reasonably well informed and there was a long-lasting public debate about the subject matter, just shortly before the end of the campaign a new interpretation of the issue emerged and swayed public opinion in an unexpected direction. LeDuc explains these framing effects in the following way: “In some instances, even when a referendum involves an issue on which there are strong predispositions, the nature of the campaign may be such that the existing division of opinion on the underlying issue may not be the key factor in determining the outcome...” (LeDuc, 2007: 26–27). Although such (re-)framing effects in direct democracy campaigns have been acknowledged, it has been argued that they were related to low campaign intensity. They could occur when voters were rather confused and uninformed about the issue at stake (Marsh, 2007: 63; LeDuc, 2002, 2007). Thus, very often research on direct democracy campaigns tends to reduce framing effects to a result of lack of information about the underlying issue. On the other hand, Darcy and Laver (1990) suggested an opposite explanation of opinion shifts and reversals. Intensive campaigns that bring a range of important values into public discourse often cause polarization and, in turn, voter confusion, elite withdrawal and shift in support for the proposal. This approach is not based on the assumption of Zaller’s moderating role of information, but rather suggests a decisive role of political elites and value conflict in heated campaigns. Opinion reversals are not interpreted as associated with a lack of information, but rather with intense and conflictive campaigns.

Taking this controversy as a starting point, this section will discuss the moderating role of information, framing effects and the interconnections between these two. The aim will be to show that *(a) framing effects are not always linked to voter lack of information or/and weak campaign intensity and that (b) political awareness does not always make value predispositions in decision-making more relevant (as is suggested by the hypothesis of the moderating role of information)*. Both claims are interrelated. If campaign intensity and political information induce issue voting and if we assume that voters have unambiguous and ordered preferences it also follows that information should mitigate framing effects (Zaller, 1992: 54-55). These two claims strongly relate to the ideas of competent and autonomous voting. It is assumed that when voters are well informed, they will base their decisions on their true underlying preferences.

Models of opinion formation in direct democracy thus interpret referendum campaigns as processes of learning and framing effects are interpreted as related to voters’ lack of information about the issue. Many studies of electoral behaviour (Alvarez, 1997; Holbrook, 2006; Delli

Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Tolbert et al., 2002) indeed show that campaigns increase the amount of factual information voters hold about party candidates or the issue at stake. Nevertheless, it is an entirely different matter whether campaign information makes value predispositions more relevant in decision making. Although both aspects are essential to the study of democracy, only the latter is the subject of this article.

The analysis is organised in the following way:

1. I review the existing models of voting behaviour in direct democracy and focus on how they explain framing effects.
2. I propose an alternative explanation of direct democracy campaign dynamics based on the assumption that framing effects are caused by value ambiguity/inconsistence.
3. I discuss framing effects with respect to empirical evidence. I focus on campaigns with significant shifts in public opinion as well as rather stable campaigns.

3.3 Recent research on direct democracy campaigning

First I summarize the existing understanding of voting behaviour in direct democracy. My discussion of models of voting behaviour in direct democracy campaigning will focus on the work of LeDuc (2002, 2003, 2007) and Hobolt (2005, 2007, 2009). Both authors interpret framing effects in a similar way.

When assessing the role of campaigning, LeDuc (2002, 2007) draws from Zaller's (1992) model of public opinion formation. There are other scholars who used this model for the analysis of voting behaviour in direct democracy (for the Swiss context: Marquis and Sciarini 1999; Bützer and Marquis 2002), but since the logic is the same, I will follow LeDuc's example.

LeDuc asserts that when a referendum campaign involves social cleavages and ideology and political parties take well-known and predictable positions, there should be the least campaign volatility and potential for opinion change. Moreover, when strongly held predispositions are reinforced by the campaign, referenda begin to take on some of the characteristics of elections, in which traditional ideologies and cleavages play a crucial role. But when the campaign involves a new or previously undiscussed issue, or when parties line up in a non-traditional way, there should be more potential for short-term campaign effects and campaign volatility

(LeDuc, 2002: 714; LeDuc, 2007: 25). Voters in such cases “need” the campaign to form an opinion on the issue (a kind of a learning process).

This argument is in line with Zaller’s theory and the assumed importance of information cues. However, as LeDuc occasionally points out, the nature of some campaigns is such that the referendum result does not reflect the existing division of public opinion because the proposal is strategically linked to other, often rather irrelevant issues. Some actor succeeds in making voters view the issue as something different than traditional ideology or partisan cleavage (LeDuc, 2007: 26). This, however, seems to be in contradiction with the general idea of Zaller’s model because such reframing of the issue can make previous campaigning and information received by voters meaningless.

Such framing effects can be explained in the logic of Zaller’s model only when the issue is rather unknown and has not been intensively debated before the start of the campaign. Framing effects should occur in the circumstances of a generally rather low awareness about the issue. Therefore, it can be regarded as a temporary effect of a lack of information about the proposal. As Zaller points out, his model implies that individuals can hold inconsistent ideas about a particular issue. However, politically knowledgeable people should be able to form crystallized opinions “with respect to every aspect of that issue, so that every consideration that comes to mind impels them toward the same opinion statement” (1992: 54–55). Evidently, the majority of individuals do not have such clear-cut opinions. Nevertheless, a clear relationship between information, attitude stability and susceptibility to framing is indicated. To sum up, LeDuc claims that voters’ lack of information about the issue leads to increased probability of framing effects and campaign volatility.

An elaborate account of voting behaviour in referenda is given by Hobolt (2009) in her spatial rational choice model in which voters decide according to the perceived utility of the ballot proposal. The model has four key components:

1. The utility of the proposal depends on the proximity between the perceived position of the proposal and voters’ ideal position (there is a single underlying value dimension).
2. The model includes considerations that are not related to the ballot proposal (second order” domestic political matters).

3. Political information influences the relative weight of proximity versus “second order” considerations. The more knowledgeable a voter is, the more proximity considerations matter and vice versa.
4. The expected utility is reduced by informational uncertainty (variation in voter perception of the location of the ballot proposal).

Information influences voter choice in two ways. First, the more information a voter has, the more he votes according to his underlying preferences toward the issue (issue voting) rather than relying on secondary considerations not related to the proposal. Second, because the utility of the proposal is based on the perceived distance between the proposal and voter values, uncertainty in the perceived proposal position decreases the utility of the proposal to the voter. The less we are certain about the proposal relation to our attitudes, the less utility it has for us (Hobolt, 2009: 42–43). Hobolt’s model is also inspired by Zaller’s approach. She argues that political awareness moderates the impact of value predispositions. Together with the assumption of one single underlying value dimension this leads to the idea that political awareness should mitigate framing effects. Politically aware people should resist arguments inconsistent with their political values. The more information one has, the more considerations inconsistent with one’s value predispositions one filters out. Those not well informed tend to base their choice on values inconsistent with their predispositions and vote rather randomly (Hobolt 2005: 89–90)¹⁷. This essentially leads to considerations similar to LeDuc’s.

To sum up, both models share similar premises. It is assumed that information cues have moderating effects. The more intense the campaign is (the more information voters get), the more voters tend to decide on the basis of issue preferences and the more competent their choice is. This means that direct democracy campaigns can be seen as processes of learning in which voters use available information cues to crystallise their attitudes. Framing effects are regarded as related to low political awareness; lack of information about the underlying issue and uncertainty in the perceived position of the proposal.

¹⁷ In Hobolt’s other work (2006; 2009), framing effects are also linked to political parties’ ability to exploit limited voter knowledge (uncertainty) about the proposal and influence its perceived position on the underlying value dimension. However, more informed voters are more likely to ignore political parties’ endorsements and base their vote on their own preferences even if these contradict what political parties say (see Hobolt, 2007b).

Nevertheless, this interpretation of framing effects does not settle the paradox mentioned by LeDuc in the introductory section (as well as a number of examples given by Darcy and Laver 1990). If framing is linked to low information, how do we explain opinion reversals in rather intense campaigns? Also, how do we explain different outcomes in repeated referenda which were preceded by similarly intense campaigns (Hobolt, 2005)?¹⁸ The logic of formal models reviewed here suggests that the only viable explanation lies again in the lack of information. We arrive in an impasse, as the explanation of framing effects seems to stem from model assumptions. Any framing effect or opinion reversal can be interpreted as related to low information.

Important empirical evidence supporting this approach came from studies of European integration referenda. For example, the repeated referenda on Maastricht in Denmark and Nice in Ireland have been often analyzed in this respect (Hobolt, 2005, 2009; Marsh, 2007). Hobolt argued that the different results of the second vote were caused by more intense campaigning and an increased role of issue preferences; information and knowledge about the underlying issue had moderating effects. Marsh arrived at similar findings. However, there are also some hints that the different outcomes of both cases of second vote were brought about also by framing effects. In other words, people voted differently not only because they were better informed, but also because the proposal had been reframed in the public debate.

In the first Danish Maastricht referendum of 1992, the treaty was rejected by a narrow majority of voters. However, the treaty was accepted in the repeated vote a few months later. There is evidence that this shift was caused by a change in the proposal's framing (see Hobolt, 2006: 636–640). In 1992, the treaty was rejected because it was presented as a step forward in the political integration of the EU, which enjoyed little support among the electorate at that time. Also, the rejection of the treaty was not presented as a problem in terms of EU-Denmark relations. Before repeating the referendum in 1993, the government adopted a different strategy. The benefits of the treaty were presented in terms of economic, rather than political integration. Also, the potential consequences of the second “no” vote were presented as rather severe. The underlying positive attitudes to the common European market, as indicated by opinion polls, did not change.

¹⁸ Moreover, how can we meaningfully decide whether or not voters were well informed?

In the first Nice Treaty referendum of 2001, the proposal was rejected. After a minor amendment, it was accepted in the second vote a year later. Marsh (2007) suggests that this shift was caused by two sets of factors. First, higher intensity of the second campaign induced issue voting and second, there is evidence of a shift in perceived issue importance. The proponents framed the treaty referendum as concerned with the future of the EU – particularly EU enlargement – and less with the issue of political integration and restriction of Ireland’s neutrality.

Although analyses of the Irish and Danish cases suggest that the opinion shift was related to more intense campaigning and an increased role of issue preferences, it was also affected by a qualitative change in the proposals’ interpretation. Marsh concludes that “...change between Nice I and II seems to have been due to a greater weight of issue considerations, but there is also clear evidence that the issues that were important for the two votes were not always the same ones” (Marsh, 2007: 79). Similarly, Hobolt (2009: 191) admits that the shift was caused by reframing from political integration to the economy.

The discussion of the Irish and Danish referenda indicates that two different mechanisms of opinion formation were present. (1) There is evidence that political awareness and campaign intensity had moderating effects and induced issue voting. (2) The interpretation of the underlying issue changed qualitatively, and these framing effects were not directly related to the level of political awareness¹⁹.

In the next section, I will consider a revisionist explanation of framing effects. I will present the expectancy-value model, a kind of rational choice theory that builds on the value ambiguity assumption and assumes that attitudes can also change on the basis of shifts in value relevance. Predictions derived from this model will be used to make sense of framing effects in both rather stable campaigns and those with significant opinion reversals.

3.4 A model of framing effects

Current research on the effects of framing often refers to the psychological studies of Kahneman and Tversky (1979). According to Druckman (2004), the main implication of these studies is

¹⁹ As regards the Danish case, a decision based on economic framing does not constitute a more competent vote than a decision based on a political frame. Concerning the Irish case, a decision based on the EU enlargement frame is not more “correct” than a vote based on the political neutrality frame.

that the same information can be presented either in a positive or negative light. The resulting framing effect is that the opinion maker faces two logically equivalent options. Chong and Druckman (2007a) call this *equivalence* framing effects. They also identify *issue* framing effects which are caused by two qualitatively distinct interpretations of the same issue.

Many instances of empirical research in the past decades have documented the fact that emphasis on a particular *issue (value)* consideration may sway public opinion and that contrasting frames have significant opposing effects (Sheufole, 1999). However, past research on this matter has been criticised (Chong & Druckman, 2007a) for focusing only on framing effects in uncontested settings. By contrast, there has been little research on framing effects in competitive environments where individuals receive numerous frames representing distinct values. This observation is particularly important to referendum campaign analysis because referendum campaigning can be regarded as intense and systematic efforts by various actors to push through such interpretations of the issue as would be favourable to their particular interests.

To elaborate on the notion of value ambiguity and to discuss framing effects in the competitive context of referendum campaigns, I will draw from studies based on the expectancy-value model of attitudes (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1975, 1980), which is used conventionally in framing research (Ajzen, 2001). Attitude is defined as the weighted sum of distinct considerations about some object:

$$Attitude = \sum v_i \times w_i$$

where v_i is the evaluation of the object on attribute (value, belief) i and w_i is the salience weight associated with that attribute. Attitude can change either when the weight (w) of some consideration changes or when there is a change in the evaluative component (v). Thus, an analytical distinction can be made between persuasion and framing (Nelson and Oxley 1999). Framing refers to the reweighting of considerations, changing the value of salience weight. For example, when evaluating a new welfare measure, a communication about a welfare law has a framing effect if a consideration about personal responsibility becomes more important (in its effect on attitude to the proposal) than a frame emphasising the law's threat to poor children. On the other hand, persuasion means change on a given value dimension, e.g. in opinions about the impact of the measure on poor children. It follows from the expectancy-value model that

people may hold mutually inconsistent values and that attitudes are not regarded as stable; framing can change the weight of a particular value.

It is important to note that the expectancy-value model is a kind of rational choice theory. It assumes that various value dimensions can be subsumed under and reduced to one dimension. Nevertheless, it does not suppose that people have ordered preferences. On the contrary, it is argued that preferences can be inconsistent, unstable and ambiguous (March 1978). This does not mean that people are irrational, but rather that their attitudes and behaviour may result from conflicting values and ongoing weighing and reweighing of the importance of competing concerns.

According to the extended expectancy-value model (Chong and Druckman 2007a; Chong and Druckman, 2007b), individuals use their knowledge selectively and consider only a subset of the information they possess. They use considerations that are *available*, *accessible* and *applicable*. Availability refers to the understanding of and familiarity with a particular statement – to the ability to link it to existing attitudes. For example, if an individual does not comprehend the meaning of the concept of national identity, it will not become one of her available considerations and she will not be influenced by the frame emphasizing it. Accessibility means that individuals have to be exposed to the given consideration regularly to become affected. According to Zaller (1992: 81–86, 311), this is exactly how framing works. In competitive environments it is the relative volume of competing messages and their loudness that have, all else equal, the greatest effect on decision making. “People simply embrace the frame they hear most often” (Chong and Druckman, 2007c: 639). Politically sophisticated individuals should, however, not be affected by framing. Accessibility, however, is often not a sufficient condition for influence.

Applicability refers to whether a certain consideration is judged as relevant or irrelevant in forming an attitude (Chong and Druckman, 2007a: 108–109). Criticising approaches that highlight merely accessibility in attitude change, Druckman (2001: 1043) points out that “framing effects do not work by altering the accessibility of different considerations... (but) individuals consciously and deliberately think about the relative importance of different considerations... frames work by altering belief importance” (similarly Nelson et al., 1997; Price and Tewksbury, 1997). Especially in competitive contexts there is a broader sample of beliefs in the public discourse which increases the probability of framing effects and attitude

change. This does not mean that people would form biased attitudes, but rather that their “true preferences can reflect multiple values and conflicting considerations about the issue” (Chong and Druckman, 2007c: 656). Such framing effects and the resulting attitude change are not caused by a lack of information, but rather by a combination of intense campaigning and the availability of a greater number of beliefs in the public debate and peoples’ minds.

Chong and Druckman also focus on the impact of frame strength on attitude stability and analyse rather non-competitive situations, when one strong frame dominates the public debate over weaker frames. They define frame strength on the basis of availability and applicability. “Strong frames emphasise available and applicable considerations...weak frames focus on unavailable considerations or are judged inapplicable...” (Chong and Druckman 2007c: 640). Drawing from experimental evidence, they demonstrate that in uncontested environments strong frames influence politically knowledgeable people just as much as those less politically informed. Also, the magnitude of this influence was found to be independent of the level of political awareness. This casts some doubt on the assertion that politically aware individuals should always rely on their attitudes more than those who are less aware.

The idea of the moderating role of information is based on the assumption that when voters are uncertain, they use available contextual information to find out how their preferences relate to the issue at stake. However, when just one interpretation of the issue is judged as applicable and individuals tend to ignore other information flows (Chong and Druckman 2007c: 647–648), i.e. they are convinced about how the proposal relates to their preferences, knowing more or less will not change the way they relate the proposal to their underlying values. Therefore, it can be hypothesised that in campaigns dominated by a single interpretation of the issue political information will not have any moderating effects, i.e. political awareness will not induce issue voting.

Chong and Druckman thus arrive at conclusions which are useful for the analysis of referendum campaigning and will be evaluated on the basis of (1) referendum campaigns with significant opinion shifts and (2) rather stable campaigns.

1. According to the expectancy value model, attitude change can be caused by change in value relevance. This occurs either when the importance of a particular attitude dimension changes or when a new value is brought to the campaign discourse. *The*

resulting framing effect and attitude change are not related to the lack of information but to the re-weighted importance of particular considerations. This mechanism will be discussed on the example of Australian and Irish campaigns with significant opinion reversals. According to the LeDuc model, framing effects that are associated with opinion reversals should be related to low political awareness and low intensity campaigns. This assertion follows from Zaller's model in which susceptibility to framing effects is related to the level of political awareness (Zaller 1992: 54–55)²⁰. The aim of the analysis will be to show that political awareness played no role in the attitude change which, as will be argued, was caused by introduction of a new value dimension to the campaign discourse.

2. Second, the models of LeDuc and Hobolt imply that the key mechanism of opinion formation in direct democracy campaigns should be the moderating role of information. The more informed about the issue people are, the more they rely on their value predispositions. However, it will be shown on the example of reasonably stable Central and Eastern European referendum campaigns that this mechanism did not work. *Information did not have any moderating effects.* In addition, it will be shown that political awareness did not mitigate framing effects. This will be explained with reference to the expectancy-value model's explanation that when one is convinced about a certain interpretation of the issue (strong framing), being exposed to more or less information or knowing more or less about the subject matter will not make a difference.

The following analysis has clear limitations. It is based only on a limited sample of referendum campaigns and thus the possibility of generalisation is rather restricted. Nonetheless, by bringing some additional empirical evidence into the debate about the dynamics of referendum campaigning I am able to argue that the existing models of voting behaviour in direct democracy tend to neglect some effects of framing - an important dimension of voter decision making. This is not to argue that these models are wrong, but rather to suggest how they could be extended. The following analyses not only explain the experience with the only nation-wide referendum in the Czech Republic, but the results have also important consequences of voter opinion formation.

²⁰ Hobolt's model is based on similar assumptions – see the theoretical discussion in the previous section.

3.5 Data & methods

For the empirical analyses, I have first considered referenda in which a significant shift in public opinion formation occurred. I have included the Irish divorce amendment and the Australian republic referenda (both were constitutional amendments). The Australian republic referendum is analysed in more detail, because it represents a very distinct case of the effects of framing on the referendum outcome.

Second, I have focused on campaigns without much volatility and with expected outcomes. Cases of rather stable campaigns were chosen from among the EU accession referenda that took place in 2003 in Central and Eastern Europe. Related surveys were conducted as part of the Central and Eastern Eurobarometer series. Four countries were included in the analysis: the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia and Poland. I have studied the case of the Czech referendum further in more detail.

Generally, I have drawn most examples from European integration referenda, but also included referendum campaigns which were not concerned with the EU. I have assumed that shifts in public opinion formation in campaigns are not a function of the referendum topic.

The distinction between stable and volatile campaigns is considered here as a matter of degree; stability and volatility are not viewed as polar opposites. The reason for distinguishing between rather stable and rather volatile campaigns is the idea that framing effects can be found not only in campaigns where a significant turn in public opinion took place but also in campaigns with stable poll results, without any substantial swings in public opinion.

3.6 Framing effects in rather volatile campaigns

Two examples of opinion shifts in referendum campaigns caused by framing effects will show that although voters may have strong opinions and be well informed about the issue, a shift in the definition of the situation may reverse the expected outcome.

An example of a strong framing effect is the 1999 Australian republic referendum (Higley and McAllister, 2002). The issue was whether Australia should be transformed from a monarchy into a republic. The constitutional change had been discussed for a long time before the

referendum took place and a stable and clear majority had favoured abolishing the monarchy for 5 years prior to the campaign. The campaign was rather intense. The Australian government funded the “yes” and “no” campaigns by providing each side A\$7.5m. In addition a neutral educational campaign was launched. Each household received a material that included arguments for as well as against the proposed constitutional changes. Until 1999, the idea of replacing the monarchy by a republic enjoyed strong support. However, roughly from the beginning of 1999 the opinion polls began to signal a shift in public opinion, leading to a clear defeat of the proposal. The polls indicated that republican support shrank by 10 percentage points and the opponents of the proposal won by 55 % to 45 %. As Warhurst (1999) has shown (based on polls undertaken before the referendum), there was a strong preference to direct presidential election even before the referendum question was framed. But only after the question on the ballot was set and introduced in the public discourse, in the beginning of 1999, did the public opinion shift in favour of monarchy.

The reason for this was a change in framing. For a substantial part of the electorate, it became no longer a choice between monarchy and republic, but rather between the ways of electing the head of state. Higley and McAllister demonstrated that the proposal was rejected by voters who favoured republic to monarchy but strongly opposed the indirect appointment of the head of state. They attributed this shift to an effective “no” campaign that interpreted the proposal as an elitist project that was not genuinely democratic. Higley and McAllister showed that support for the proposal decreased abruptly after the question on the ballot was framed as choice between retaining monarchy and a republic with indirectly elected president (Higley and McAllister, 2002: 852). But was this change in public opinion caused by framing effects brought about by the lack of information and low awareness?

The 1999 Australian Constitution Referendum Study is used for the analysis. In the regression model, vote in the referendum (1 = for proposal, 0 = against proposal) is the dependent variable. The main independent variables include political awareness, media exposure, attitude to political independence and way of electing the head of state. The political awareness variable was created as a summated index of correct answers to four items, two of which covered general knowledge about Australia’s constitutional system and two dealt with knowledge about the proposal. The media exposure scale was measured using items on media exposure and attention to campaign news. Attitude to political independence was created on the basis of 3 questions about keeping/cutting constitutional ties with Britain ($\alpha=0.78$). Concerning the way of

electing the head of state, three dummy variables representing three possible choices were created: directly elected president, indirectly elected president and retaining the Queen.

An interaction term between attitude to independence and political awareness was added to indicate whether the impact of attitudes increases with political awareness. In a number of studies (Hobolt, 2007: 106; Hobolt, 2005), the interaction between attitudes and political awareness was found statistically significant and regarded as evidence that information induces issue voting. Finally, an interaction between media exposure and attitude to independence was also included. Although political awareness is sometimes measured by combining items on factual knowledge, interest in politics and media exposure (Hobolt 2005: 93), Zaller (1992) strongly argues for using just factual political knowledge. On the other hand, game theoretic models (Lupia 1992) suggest that non-factual strategic media information may be essential. Therefore, a distinction is made between factual knowledge and media exposure.

Results are presented in Table 9. Variables associated with attitudes about keeping links with Britain (attitude to independence) as well as opinions about the way of electing the head of state were significant. The interaction term between attitudes about independence and political awareness was not significant indicating that knowing more about the Australian constitutional system and the referendum proposal did not induce issue voting (Model 2). However, the interaction between media exposure and attitudes (Model 1) was significant, suggesting that campaign information induced issue voting. Models 3 and 4 include only those who favoured the republic. Supporters of the monarchy were excluded for the sake of simplicity. Instead of using the three dummy variables for different ways of electing the head of state, only a dichotomous one was used (0=favouring indirectly elected president; 1=favouring directly elected president). Thus, only those who favoured the republic irrespective of the way the president should be elected were kept in the sample. Interactions between ways of electing the president and political awareness/media exposure were included so as to determine whether the preference for direct election (the framing effect that caused the change in public opinion) was associated with lack of information about the constitution system (referendum proposal) and would disappear with additional knowledge or more intense campaigning. These did not prove significant, rejecting the link between framing and information.

The way of electing the head of state represented a very strong framing effect. To see the size of this effect, all variables in Model 3 were kept at mean values and the impact of (in)direct

president choice variable was measured. A very strong effect of as much as 35% was found: All else equal, those who thought that the president should be elected directly were 35% less likely to vote for the proposal than those favouring indirect election.

Table 9: Australia's republic referendum (logistic regression; beta coefficients)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Constant	-2.58**	-5.80**	-7.60**	-8.60**
Age	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.01
Gender	0.24	0.23	0.17	0.17
Political awareness	0.00	-0.26	-0.07	0.03
Media exposure	-0.32*	-0.01	-0.01	0.01
Independence attitude	0.16	0.59**	0.68**	0.68**
President directly elected	0.73**	0.72**		
President elected by Parliament	2.95**	2.94**		
Retain Queen	-2.25**	-2.22**		
President dir/indirect			1.96**	2.80**
<i>Interactions</i>				
Political awareness*Independence attitude		0.03		
Media exposure*Independence attitude	0.04**			
President dir/indirect*Political awareness			0.09	
President dir/indirect*Media exposure				-0.05
Pseudo R ²	0.61	0.61	0.41	0.41
N	2985	2985	2121	2121

Source: ACR Study 1999; ** significant at 0.01; * significant at 0.05.

The results show that the opinion reversal happened due to issue framing, not directly related to low information. For a substantial part of the electorate, the way of electing the head of state became more important than political independence. It constituted a distinct value (issue frame) that was irreducible to the underlying issue (political independence) and had a distinct effect on the vote of a substantial part of the electorate. Also, it was not associated with lack of information as republican supporters' preference for direct election did not disappear with increasing political awareness or media exposure (interaction terms in Models 3 and 4 were not significant). These framing effects cannot be in this case ascribed to lack of information or low campaign intensity. Even if the level of political knowledge and campaign intensity had been higher, it would not have prevented the opinion reversal from taking place. This campaign represents a straightforward example of dynamics associated with the expectancy-value model,

especially its applicability dimension. A new value was brought to the campaign discourse that swayed public opinion.

This finding of the analysis shows that some part of voters held contradictory and irreconcilable opinions not due to lack of information but because of conflicting values. A similar pattern of opinion reversal took place during the final stage of the Irish referendum campaign on divorce legalization (Darcy and Laver, 1990). Although clear support for permitting divorce had been signalled by opinion polls months before the voting, an abrupt shift occurred in the very final stage of the campaign. Although the majority of voters supported legalisation, the opponents of this proposal raised other matters such as the legal status of children, alimony, inheritance or adverse impact on women. Consequently, as Darcy and Laver (1990: 13) argue, the shift away from the support for divorce legalisation was a shift away from the proposal and not from divorce itself, the same pattern as in the case of the Australian constitutional referendum.

It seems that the opinion shifts in the Australian and Irish cases were not primarily related to lack of information but to changes in the perception of the issue. Their campaign dynamics strongly resemble those discussed by Darcy and Laver (1990). When some salient campaigns get to their final stage, a multitude of interpretations appears in the public discourse that may change the expected referendum outcome. In these cases, campaign volatility might not be the consequence of lack of information and low campaign intensity, but rather the result of intense public controversy about substantial values.

3.7 Framing effects in rather stable campaigns

Using data from rather stable campaigns, I will now discuss the mechanism of the moderating role of information. I will show using the example of Central and Eastern European accession referenda that information did not have any moderating effects in some rather stable campaigns: those who were politically informed did not rely on their attitudes more than those who were politically less aware. Also, it will be shown that political awareness did not mitigate framing effects. It will be proposed that these framing effects played an important role: when there is one dominant interpretation of the issue viewed as applicable, it may prevent the moderating effects of information from taking place.

The campaign before the Central and East European enlargement referenda can be regarded as rather stable. Opinion polls did not show any substantial changes in public opinion and support for EU accession was stable for many months prior to the vote. For example in Hungary and the Czech Republic it was stable for years and remained at 60% during the last 6 months before the referendum. In Slovenia it gradually increased during the year before the referendum, but no opinion shift or reversal took place. In Poland the opinion polls indicated stable support for many years. While support for EU membership was strong and stable, the turnout was relatively low (only 52% in Slovakia and even below 50% in Hungary) and the campaigns were rather uninteresting (Szczurbiak and Taggart, 2004). This may have been caused by a broad consensus among political elites and low level of contestation at elite as well as mass levels.

Regression models were created where the dependent variable was the yes/no vote in the referendum. The models included variables that were shown to affect voting behaviour in European integration referenda. Besides an EU attitude variable, there was also EU awareness (a summated scale of correct answers to 9 EU-related questions), government satisfaction, satisfaction with the quality of democracy in the given country and demographic variables. An interaction term between the EU attitude variable and the EU awareness variable was added as well. The results are shown in Table 10. The interaction term between attitudes and knowledge about the EU explains no additional variance in either of the countries. In an analysis not reported here the EU awareness variable was substituted by a news media exposure variable as a proxy for campaign exposure. Neither the media exposure variable nor the interaction term between media exposure and EU attitudes were found significant.

Table 10: Issue voting in EU accession referenda (logistic regression; beta coefficients)

	Czech Republic	Hungary	Poland	Slovenia
Constant	-9.28**	-4.31	-0.85	-9.67
Age	0.01	0.23*	-0.01	0.03*
Gender	0.35	-0.32	-0.09	0.32
Government satisfaction	0.03	-0.88*	-1.28**	-0.35
Satisfaction with democracy	1.66**	-0.10	1.14**	0.42
EU attitudes	2.83**	2.10**	0.92**	2.80**
EU awareness	0.19	0.26	-0.24	0.58
EU attitudes*EU awareness	-0.11	-0.05	0.11	-0.10
Pseudo R ²	0.66	0.51	0.47	0.55
N	645	566	606	644

Source: Eurobarometer CCEB 2003; ** significant at 0.01; * significant at 0.05.

The analysis shown in Table 11 is based on the assumption of a single underlying EU attitude dimension. In the following analysis (Table 11), the case of the Czech referendum is chosen and analysed in more detail. Instead of using the general EU attitude variable, variables of economic integration and national identity were constructed. These two frames were chosen since EU integration has been shown to be framed in referendum campaigns either in terms of economic integration or as political integration (e.g. loss of national identity). Economic versus national identity considerations have been identified repeatedly as the main narratives structuring the public discourse on European integration (Vreese and Semetko 2004). The economic frame was constructed as a six-item index of perceived association between the EU and economic development and prosperity ($\alpha = 0.78$). The identity frame was constructed in a similar way and inquired whether the EU accession would entail a loss of national identity, culture and sovereignty ($\alpha = 0.73$).

Table 11: Frames and issue voting in the Czech accession referendum (logistic regression; beta coefficients)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Constant	-2.78	-7.82**	-9.10**	-11.26**
Age	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Gender	0.22	0.29	0.31	0.27
Government satisfaction	-0.42	-0.33	-0.34	-0.20
Satisfaction with democracy	1.90**	1.47**	1.50**	1.50**
Media exposure	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.20
EU awareness	0.00	-0.13	0.02	-0.13
Economic frame	1.25**	0.93**	1.20**	2.33**
Identity frame	-0.35**	0.03		
EU image		3.08**	3.01**	3.17**
Economic frame*EU awareness			-0.06	
Economic frame*media exposure				-0.15*
Pseudo R ²	0.71	0.79	0.79	0.80
N	649	627	627	627

Source: Eurobarometer CCEB 2003; ** significant at 0.01; * significant at 0.05.

In Table 12, the first model includes both the economic and the identity frame, instead of a general attitude to the EU. Both variables are statistically significant in predicted directions. Thinking about the EU in terms of economic benefits lead to higher probability of voting “yes” and thinking about the EU in terms of national identity and sovereignty had the opposing impact. Finally, satisfaction with democracy was a positive predictor of support for the “yes”

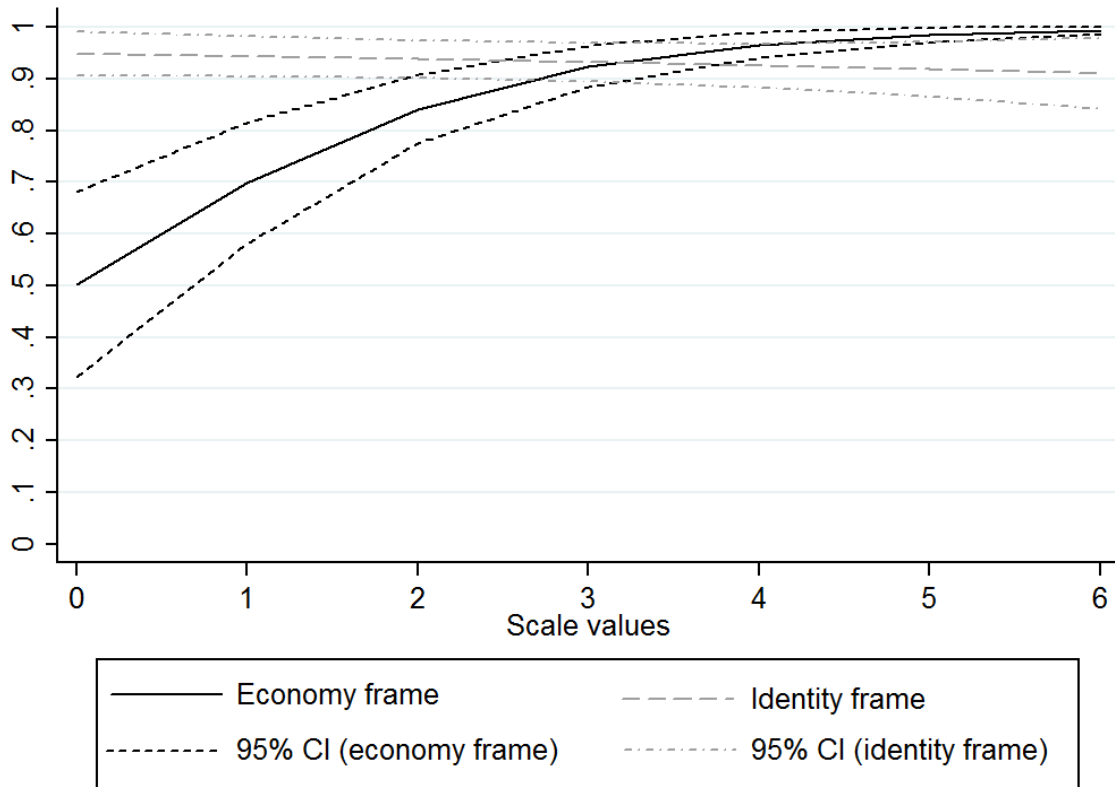
vote. Next (Model 2), a variable indicating EU image was added to measure general EU evaluation – whether it was perceived in negative, neutral or positive terms. This predictor was introduced in order to determine whether the economic and identity considerations actually worked as frames even when controlling for the general EU evaluative attitude. When this variable was included and collinearity diagnostics were performed, no multicollinearity was found²¹. After including the EU image predictor, the significance of the identity frame disappeared. Nevertheless, the economic frame still remained significant, meaning that thinking about the EU accession in terms of economics, was a positive predictor for voting “yes” despite the general EU attitude. Finally, two interaction terms were added. Interaction between the economic frame and EU awareness was not significant, whereas interaction between media exposure and the economic frame had some effect on voting “yes”.

Figure 2 shows the relative strength of the economy and identity frames. The vertical axis represents the probability of voting yes in the referendum and the horizontal axis represents the values of the economy and identity frame scales (ranging from 0 to 6). The curves show how the probability of voting “yes” changes with different values of the economy frame and the identity frame – all other variables in the equation (Model 2) set at their mean values. In Figure 1 it is also shown the confidence intervals for the predicted probabilities²². Figure 1 shows that when controlling for the EU image evaluation, the identity frame ceases to have any impact on voting “yes”. However, the effect of the economic frame is very strong. All else equal, a positive answer to one question concerning the EU’s association with the economy increased the chances of voting yes by as much as 20% (a shift from 0 to 1 on the economy scale frame).

Figure 2: The economy and identity frames’ impact on the probability of voting yes (based on Table 8, Model 2)

²¹ The tolerance was not less than 0.4 and VIF did not exceed 2.5.

²² The predicted probabilities and the corresponding confidence intervals were obtained using STATA command *margins*.



Source: Eurobarometer CCEB 2003.

The Czech EU accession referendum provides an example of a campaign where knowledge about the subject matter did not have any direct impact on vote choice: information did not induce issue voting and mitigate framing effects. It rather seems that the key factor in this case was a strong conviction that EU membership would bring about prosperity and economic welfare. This belief was probably so strong that it did not allow for any effects associated with political awareness. These findings are in agreement with the expectancy-value model outlined in previous sections. Although there is some evidence that accessibility had some impact on the process of opinion formation (the interaction term between the economic frame and media exposure), the strongly-held value of economic prosperity played the key role (the dimension of applicability). Also, it follows from the logic of the expectancy-value model that the reason why political awareness played no substantial role was because there existed just one strong frame in the public debate. When there was just one belief viewed as applicable to the issue at stake, political awareness ceased to have any moderating effects.

3.8 Discussion

The aim of this section has been to discuss the role of framing effects in direct democracy campaigns. Because much research on direct democracy campaign dynamics stems from

Zaller's idea of a moderating role of information, it has been often argued that intense campaigning makes issue preferences more relevant. In this vein, direct democracy campaigns have been described as processes of learning and opinion crystallisation. There is no doubt that research stemming from this perspective explains a great deal of the dynamics of direct democracy campaigning. Nevertheless, this approach has not been able to properly explain framing effects appearing in some campaigns. To address this issue, an alternative framework has been proposed. Since opinion reversals have been caused by qualitative changes in the perception of the proposals, it has been hypothesised that these shifts were caused by a change in weight attached to particular value. It was also argued that this re-weighting is quite independent from Zaller's model because its occurrence is always possible, no matter how well-informed the voters are. This is not to argue that it is wrong. Rather, the models explaining voting behaviour in direct democracy could be extended to include the applicability dimension proposed by the expectancy-value model.

The relations between framing effects, political awareness, campaign intensity and opinion formation have been discussed on the basis of two distinct types of direct democracy campaigns: campaigns with significant opinion reversals and campaigns that are rather stable. The underlying logic of the standard models of voting behaviour in direct democracy implies that framing effects are linked to uninformed and confused voters and that opinion stability is linked to intense campaigning and crystallised opinions. It has been argued in this article that this account may be too simplified and that other mechanisms of attitude formation are also essential.

3.9 Voting behaviour in direct democracy: section conclusion

The analysis suggests that one cannot always claim that voters can vote competently provided they have enough information and cues. Asking what a competent choice is ceases to make sense as the question on the ballot can be linked to any number of values and value perspectives (no matter how well informed voters are) and there is no way to find out which one is right; for example, whether one should assess the EU in terms of economic or political integration. No amount of information will tell us which perspective is the right one. This uncertainty that stems from value ambiguity also sets limitations to the alleged processes of learning and opinion crystallization.

These results have important implications for evaluating direct democracy based on the criterion of considered judgement. Even voters with high levels of political sophistication are susceptible to framing effects and therefore also to strategic discourse manipulation by political parties or any other groups with the power to sway the public agenda. No matter how well informed voters may be, how much factual knowledge they may hold about the issue at stake, or how informationally intense the campaigns preceding the vote may be, framing strategies and effects are ubiquitous in direct democracy campaigns and show that when people choose about political affairs directly, their choice is subject to influence and power. This also has consequences for the concept of autonomy proposed by participatory theories (Warren 1992). Opinions and choice cannot arise solely from given preferences of individuals. Autonomy in the context of direct political decision making rather means that these opinions are formed on the basis of public discourse that is indistinguishable from power, influence and discursive framing.

The analysis brings two important findings. One concerns the Czech experience with the first nationwide referendum and the other concerns voting behaviour and opinion formation in direct democracy in general. As for the former, the Czech vote was strongly influenced by and based on economic considerations. The economic frame about the benefits of EU membership dominated the vote choice irrespective of the levels of voter political awareness and sophistication. EU membership was viewed mainly through the lens of economic benefits and this strongly influenced the vote choice. Nonetheless, the results do not indicate that people voted irrationally. Their vote was based on some underlying values and represented their concerns. However, it cannot be claimed that voters can make autonomous vote choice as a function of information and be left uninfluenced by strategic public debates and discursive framing.

4 The effect of referenda on political engagement - efficiency

4.1 Aims of the section

This section focuses on the efficiency criterion proposed by Smith (2009). Efficiency relates to the question whether direct democracy may have an adverse effect on political engagement by being too demanding of citizens or, *vice versa*, a mobilizing effect by enhancing interest in politics and increasing political engagement.

There is evidence from Switzerland that direct democracy leads, in the long term, to voter fatigue and decreased turnout in Swiss elections. It is argued that direct democracy may result in turning people off politics and voting insofar as it places too many demands on voters and consequently reduces the salience of elections. This could eventually lead to a decrease in overall political engagement (Beetham 1992, Hill 2003: 505–506; Altman 2010: 58).

In contrast, empirical research from the U.S. has supported the argument that direct democracy has positive impacts on political engagement. It should increase political sophistication, political efficacy and also overall political engagement. Proponents of participatory theory have argued that experience with direct forms of decision making should lead to greater political engagement. Evidence that this is really the case would suggest that direct forms of political decision making have the capacity to transform popular attitudes to democracy.

In the analysis that follows I draw from data about Czech local direct democracy. The reason for this is that if we want to investigate the effects of direct democracy on political engagement on the national level, there was just one referendum which is insufficient also because there is no data source for the individual data. On the other hand, on the local level, there have been hundreds of municipality referenda since 2000. Also, in studying the effects of direct forms of political participation it is often encouraged to study rather smaller democratic settings and arrangements. The theory of participatory democracy argues (Pateman 1970) that the positive effects of these institutions should be stronger when enacted on local levels, due to face to face contact, deliberation and the fact that the issues on the ballot are closer to the citizens' problems.

To sum up, the aim of the following section is to find out whether direct democracy has positive or negative effects on political engagement. A negative effect is predicted by theories of voter

fatigue with empirical evidence coming from Switzerland. On the other hand, a positive effect of direct democracy was identified in the U.S. and was also proposed by the theories of participatory democracy.

4.2 Introduction

One of the key non-policy consequences of direct democracy is whether ballot initiatives and popular referenda have a positive effect on voter turnout. The idea that direct democracy should bring about increased participation in the electoral process stems from participatory theories of democracy (especially Pateman 1970 and Barber 1984; but see also Fatke and Freitag 2013). Direct experience with effective political decision making, unmediated by political parties, should be a learning and educative experience, leading to an increased interest in politics and an increase in political efficacy, as well as higher electoral turnout. This line of research was done especially in the U.S., due to frequent popular referenda and ballot initiatives.

The debate on this issue in the U.S. is, however, rather inconclusive and the empirical evidence is somewhat contradictory. Although there is general agreement that direct democracy increases turnout at least in some types of elections, the so-called ‘mid-terms’ in particular (for a thorough discussion see e.g., Schlozman and Yohai 2008)²³, it is not clear exactly what it is about direct democracy that leads to enhanced turnout.

Two explanations are conceivable. First, the process of direct political participation as such causes increased turnout (Tolbert and Smith 2005: 290–291; Bowler and Donovan 2002; Tolbert et al. 2003). Second, the particular campaign (and/or the underlying issues) leads to voter mobilization and causes election-specific effects (Smith 2001; Childres and Binder 2012; Biggers 2011; Schlozman and Yohai 2008). The former explanation emphasizes the process itself, and is more akin to the logic of participatory theories of democracy, presenting a story of direct democracy that transforms the attitudes of citizens to politics. The latter explanation argues that the driving forces of increased turnout are competitive direct democracy campaigns and burning social issues, which are election- and issue-specific.

²³ But see Keele (2009) who challenged the consensus, arguing that the effect is generally just an artifact of improper statistical analysis and design.

Because empirical research has been largely unable to establish a clear causal effect of direct democracy on political efficacy (e.g., Dyck and Lascher 2009; Schlozman and Yohai 2008), and because recent research somewhat favours explanations based on social issues and competitive campaigns (Childres and Binder 2012; Schlozman and Yohai 2008; Dyck and Seabrook 2010), the participatory theory explanation seems somewhat less likely. However, as argued by Schlozman and Yohai (2008: 472), direct democracy in the U.S. is not really the best example to support the participatory hypothesis, because for direct political participation to have a permanent attitude-changing impact it should involve smaller democratic arrangements, enabling face-to-face contact and public deliberation.

On the other hand, there is also empirical evidence that direct democracy can lead to decreased political participation and have a negative effect on turnout in elections. Research based on Swiss experience with direct democracy has argued that direct democracy, in the long term, induces voter fatigue (e.g., Buhlmann and Freitag 2006; Buhlmann, Nicolet, and Selb 2006). Voting in frequent referenda should decrease the salience and significance of regular elections. Nonetheless, also other arguments have been raised emphasizing potentially adverse effects of direct democracy on political engagement. It may undermine trust in government (Dyck 2009) or even aggravate a democratic deficit by putting under-deliberated issues on ballot (Hill 2003).

I herein intend to re-examine the link between direct democracy and turnout on the case of the Czech Republic. In the analysis, I focus on local/municipality level in the Czech Republic, a small- to medium-scale democratic setting. Over the past decade, there have been about two hundred local referenda and citizen initiatives in the Czech municipalities, which constitutes a sufficient basis for an empirical analysis of their effects on turnout.

The first aim of this section is to ascertain whether local direct democracy in the Czech Republic have a positive or negative effect on turnout in local as well as national elections. The positive effect is predicted by the normative participatory theory, a negative one by voter fatigue hypothesis. Given that previous research was almost exclusively concerned with Swiss and U.S. cases, I investigate the link between direct democracy and turnout in a completely different cultural and institutional setting. A significant advantage of the Czech case is the fact that referenda are not tied to elections, which makes it possible to isolate the unique effect of direct democracy on turnout in subsequent elections. The second aim of this section is to focus in more detail on the theory of participatory democracy and its predictions. Although this theory

was refuted for the Swiss case and there is not much evidence for it in the case of direct democracy in the U.S. either, in this case I focus on the municipal level, which represents a small- to medium-scale context. This context should be more conducive to direct political participation, having carryover and lasting educative effects, as the theory of participatory democracy predicts.

Therefore, the main aim of this section is to find out whether direct democracy in the Czech Republic has positive or negative effects on turnout in elections. If the effect is positive, I intend to find out whether the results support the claims of the theory of participatory democracy. My focus on local democratic arrangements meets the claims of participatory theory, which emphasizes the importance of smaller democratic settings for direct political participation having educative effects. I elaborate on the theory of participatory democracy because it represents the exact opposite of the voter fatigue hypothesis. Instead of overburdening citizens it assumes that direct democracy could educate and empower citizens and as a result increase their interest in politics.

The remainder of this section proceeds as follows. First, I explain why the theory of participatory democracy predicts that direct forms of political participation should lead to a greater interest in politics and political participation in general. I also present the critiques of this theory including voter fatigue hypothesis. In the following section, I summarize the existing empirical evidence about the positive/negative effect of direct democracy on turnout. Next, I formulate the hypotheses and explain the institutional set-up of local direct democracy in the Czech Republic. I conclude with the presentation of the empirical analysis and discussion of the results.

4.3 Participatory theory of democracy and its critics

Direct political participation is viewed by some political theorists to be the remedy to the shortcomings of representative democracy (Mansbridge 1983; Barber 1984; Pateman 1970). Rather than delegating their power to representatives belonging to political parties, citizens should engage in politics directly and participate in politics in full and unmediated ways. Notions of self-government and autonomy are common to advocates of various forms of participatory democracy. However, democratization, in which the scope of political participation expands, should not just lead to greater empowerment and autonomy, but should

also enhance citizenship values and improve the functioning of representative institutions (Warren 1992: 8).

For Barber (1984) the idea of participatory democracy involves not just the isolated act of participation, but also deliberation and collective action. It is these that connect individuals to the larger community. Participatory democracy engages them in political discussions about their rights, various political issues, and even the political system itself (Weitz-Shapiro and Winters 2008). The act of political participation, i.e., collective action, should thus increase political knowledge, confidence, and consciousness of one's own interests and competence (Mansbridge 1983).

Barber explains that political order has an epistemological nature, with each form of politics representing a distinctive form of "epistemology" that works as a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy (Cunningham 2002: 42; Barber 1984: 255). Through effective political participation, citizens learn about and recognize themselves as being politically active. When political action does not lead to empowerment it becomes useless, as citizens recognize themselves only as politically passive actors. Attitudes to politics and the desire for political participation are not fixed and predetermined, but are rather a product of the existing political order (Warren 1992). Similarly, based on the same logic Bachrach and Botwinick (1992: 29) argued for the introduction of direct forms of political participation on all possible levels (from local communities and neighbourhoods to workplace democracy), and emphasized the transformative consequences of direct citizen involvement. Political participation leads not only to self-empowerment but also to group empowerment, because any political action necessarily involves interaction, deliberation about communal values, and the subsequent revision of participants' values, interests, resources and capacities. Political participation should thus transform citizens and lead to a revised sense of identity, interests, etc. For these reasons participatory theorists have generally held the view that small-scale democratic arrangements are the most conducive to civic education. Smaller settings should enable the most face-to-face deliberation (Pateman 1970).

Although there is strong popular support and approval for direct democracy in many affluent democracies (Bowler et al. 2007), there are nevertheless also those who argue against the benefits of direct forms of political participation, disputing the positive attitude of citizens to direct participation in decision making. Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002), for example, used

the concept of stealth democracy to propose that what Americans really wanted was not direct political participation but rather the existence of decision makers who did not act out of self-interest. The concept of stealth democracy essentially predicts very small interest of citizens in participatory and deliberation procedures and institutions. They contended that citizen engagement is not something that citizens naturally prefer, and deliberatory and participatory institutions and processes are not matters with which citizens would normally wish to be concerned. They argued that strong declaratory support for direct democracy did not imply that people wanted to be more involved in politics, but rather that there was an expectation that representative democracy should work better. If citizens really do not want to participate in politics more, it cannot be expected that granting more opportunities for political participation should lead to increased interest in politics.

On a more specific level, several other arguments against the positive effect of direct democracy on political engagement have been raised (see Altman 2010; Hill 2003). It has been argued that direct democracy may discourage people from politics by raising under-deliberated issues, leading to heated and contentious campaigns and bringing about lack of accountability related to the final outcomes. Researchers analysing the use of Swiss direct democracy have argued that the use of direct democracy brings about voter fatigue and decreases electoral turnout (e.g., Freitag and Stadelmann-Steffen 2010).

Additionally, Dyck (2009) argued that in the U.S. direct democracy had a negative influence on political trust, because it places citizens in an adversarial relationship with governments (Dyck 2009: 559). This contradicts the expectation from participatory theory that direct democracy should generate positive attitudes to all effective forms of political participation, and represents a negative unintended consequence of direct democracy. Rather than integrating citizens by direct democracy into the political process, it alienates them from it by decreasing trust to institutions of representative democracy; the opposite of what participatory theory predicts.

4.4 Examining the effect of direct democracy on turnout: U.S. and Swiss evidence

The potentially edifying effect of direct democracy on turnout has mainly been investigated above all in Switzerland and in the U.S., where in many states there is the opportunity for

citizens to become directly involved in the political process through citizen initiatives and legislative referenda.

As for the European experience, studies from Switzerland, with its unique experience with direct democracy institutions, have not shown that direct democracy would lead to increased interest in politics and political engagement. Studies at state level (Freitag and Stadelmann-Steffen 2010) and local level (Ladner and Fichter 2012) have instead demonstrated a negative effect. The existence of direct democracy strongly embedded in the Swiss institutional system has been used to explain the rather low turnout in Swiss elections²⁴.

However, the empirical evidence for this type of effect in the U.S. is rather mixed. Analyses of individual-level data have shown that the positive effect of ballot initiatives can be seen in the results of U.S. midterm elections. However, for presidential elections the evidence is rather ambiguous and contradictory (Tolbert et al. 2003; Donovan et al. 2009; Scholzman and Yohai 2008). Aggregate-level analyses, on the other hand, have shown this effect to be present in both kinds of elections, midterm as well as presidential, albeit stronger in midterm elections (Tolbert and Smith 2005), because presidential elections are more competitive and in such heated campaigns ballot initiatives play a less important role. On the other hand, in midterm elections, ballot initiatives play a more important role in the campaign and therefore the effect of these would be expected to be stronger (Biggers 2011; Tolbert and Smith 2005).

Nonetheless, it was also argued that it is not the initiative as such that causes an increase in electoral turnout, but rather the nature of the underlying issue (Smith 2001; Grummel 2008; Biggers 2011). Biggers (2011) argued, based on multi-level analyses, that ballot measures concerned with social issues (such as abortion, gay marriage, legalization of marijuana, etc.) result in higher turnout. A similar finding was presented by Childres and Binder (2012) who argued that it was campaign competitiveness that drove turnout.

The analyses of the effect of direct democracy on turnout in the U.S. thus offer two explanations. First, it is the salience and competitiveness of the ballot measures of individual campaigns that mobilize voters and drive turnout. The second explanation emphasizes the importance of the process itself, in citizen learning and the educational consequences of direct

²⁴ While direct democracy decreased electoral turnout in Switzerland, it was also shown that it increases overall satisfaction with democracy (Stadelmann-Steffen and Vatter 2012).

democracy.²⁵ Nonetheless, recent empirical findings somewhat disprove the participatory justification and favour the explanation based on campaign competitiveness and social issues. The reason why direct democracy increases turnout is not that the process as such brings about a permanent change in the attitudes of citizens to politics, but that increased turnout is more likely to be election-specific, caused by competitive campaigns/burning issues that fade away soon after the election. Analyses that explicitly test whether there is any carry-over to subsequent elections (Childres and Binder 2012; Schlozman and Yohai 2008) have found no strong evidence supporting the participatory hypothesis. Moreover, Schlozman and Yohai (2008: 478) argued that because the effect of ballot initiatives on turnout was identified only in some midterm elections, it very much seems to decrease the general effect of direct democracy on citizenship. If we suppose that direct democracy has transformative effects along the lines suggested by normative participatory theory, we would expect to see the effect in all midterm elections (and not just some) and also in presidential elections.

In addition, since the participatory theory places a fair degree of emphasis on the effect of direct political participation on political efficacy (Pateman 1970, chap. 3), it could be argued that if this participatory line of reasoning is valid, direct democracy should increase not just turnout but also political efficacy. Although there is some evidence that direct democracy does indeed do this (Bowler and Donovan 2002; Hero and Tolbert 2004), more recent studies (Dyck and Lascher 2008; Schlozman and Yohai 2008) have suggested that there is only weak evidence for an increase in political efficacy caused by direct democracy. Despite using a range of data and sampling techniques, Dyck and Lasher (2008) failed to identify a generally positive correlation between direct democracy and (either internal or external) political efficacy. In particular, they found that direct legislation enhanced efficacy for politically aware voters but decreased it for politically uninformed ones and for non-voters. In addition, Schlozman and Yohai (2008: 482) found no positive effect on political efficacy in elections since late 1980s.

To conclude, the existing empirical evidence of the effect of direct democracy on turnout in the U.S. somewhat favours the “campaign competitiveness/social issue” justification. Specifically:

²⁵ Importantly, advocates of the participation hypothesis have acknowledged that the mobilization explanation is valid, and have argued that both mechanisms work together to increase turnout (Tolbert and Smith 2005: 303–304).

There is strong evidence that the presence of campaign competitiveness and/or social issues on the ballot increases turnout. In addition, it has not been confirmed that there is any carry-over effect to subsequent elections, nor is there any evidence of the transformation of citizenship values.

Empirical evidence suggests that although the effect seems to be strong in the case of midterm elections, it is much weaker or non-existent in the case of presidential elections. According to the theories of participatory democracy, the effect of direct political participation should be transformative, leading to changes in identity and attitude. If ballot measures increase political interest and engagement, neither the type of political process nor the level of competitiveness should matter.

In addition, the effect of ballot measures on political efficacy seems ambiguous, if not absent.

4.5 Aims & hypotheses

The dual aims of this section may be described as follows. First, I wish to discover whether in the Czech Republic, in a very different social and political context to the U.S. and Switzerland, I can find out what the effect of direct democracy on turnout is. Second, I wish to contribute to the debate on the underlying causes of the effect of direct democracy on turnout. Although research from the U.S. as well as Switzerland did not find any evidence for the participatory hypothesis, the data about local democracy in the Czech Republic provide an ideal opportunity for reinvestigating it on a case of local direct democracy that is be very favourable to what participatory theory emphasized.

Despite the foregoing, I suggest that the findings from the U.S. and Switzerland do not imply that the genuine educational effects of direct political participation as predicted by participatory theories are non-existent. I consider different, medium- or small-scale democratic arrangements in order to unravel this effect. I formulate three hypotheses that can be derived from the theory of participatory democracy.

H1: The effect of direct democracy on turnout is greater when it is citizen-initiated rather than initiated by the incumbent.

The first hypothesis is based on the fact that citizen initiatives are a spontaneous deliberative process (e.g., citizens must collect signatures) rather than a ‘one-shot’ exogenous event.

H2: There are positive effects of local direct democracy increasing turnout in elections in different types of political processes (i.e., direct democracy has a positive effect on turnout in parliamentary elections, in local elections, and in the number of candidates running for an office in local elections)²⁶.

The second hypothesis is based on the assumption that direct democracy should have a positive impact on various (or even all conceivable) forms of political processes. In addition, I consider not just turnout in (national/local) elections but also the number of candidates running for office. The reason for including the ‘decision to run for office’ variable (see Fox and Lawless 2005) is that this is not only related to sociodemographic variables (such as age, income, minority status) but also on the sense of efficacy and interest in politics, which are related to the participatory explanation and should be supported by experience of direct political participation.

H3: The effect of direct political participation is long-term, i.e., not confined to one occasion but lasting longer, even beyond one election cycle.

The third hypothesis predicts that the effect on political participation is long-term, and not just associated with particular elections, possibly even lasting longer than one²⁷ election cycle. Here we test the effects of local referenda and initiatives on subsequent elections.

I wish to emphasize that the value of the data we use lies in the fact that direct democracy in the Czech Republic is not usually tied to elections. In the case of the U.S. where direct democracy and elections happen at the same time, it is almost impossible to disentangle the effects of the two. There might be people who would not have voted in elections at all had this not been tied to the direct democratic ‘event’, and might only have voted in the referendum/ballot initiative. There might be some interested only in elections and not in the direct democracy. Discerning the real causality is highly problematic in this context.

²⁶ This hypothesis reflects the fact that the U.S. research has demonstrated a different effect of direct democracy in Midterm compared with Presidential elections.

²⁷ The socioeconomic variables are controlled for in the empirical analysis. See the data and methods section.

4.6 Czech Republic: local direct democracy

The use of local/municipality referenda and citizen initiatives in the Czech Republic is regulated by a law passed in 1992 (for a general overview of all the developments, see Smith 2011). The law specifies the legal requirements and provides the basic regulations: (i) local direct democracy can only relate to an issue in the competency of the local government, (ii) only referenda and initiatives with turnouts of at least 35% are valid (this threshold was originally 25% before being increased to 35%), (iii) local direct democracy can be initiated either by the local government or by a citizen initiative. In the latter case, the law specifies the minimum number of signatures (varying according to the population size of the given municipality) needed to call a vote. After collecting the required number of signatures and framing the question on the ballot, the proposal is submitted.

Interestingly, although the law enabling local direct democracy has been effective since 1992, the first local referendum was only organized in 2000. This has been explained by the reluctance of local governments to organize local referenda and their tendency to thwart efforts to organize them. However, the example of the first successful local referendum as well as an amendment that clarified the previously somewhat ambiguous 1992 law induced and brought about quite an intense use of local direct democracy in the years that followed (Smith 2011: 37–38).

To sum up, Czech local referenda and initiatives constitute a form of direct democracy employed in a small- to medium-sized democratic decision-making setting. It concerns local affairs in the authority of the local government but there is no other limitation concerning the issue on the ballot. After the introduction of the legislation in the early 1990s it took about a decade before municipalities learned how to use and adopt this direct form of citizen involvement in local politics. Nonetheless, from 2000 until the end of 2012 there were about two hundred local referenda and initiatives.

4.7 Data and methods

The empirical analysis proceeded in two stages. In the first stage, I carried out an exploratory analysis of local direct democracy in the Czech Republic to describe and clarify contextual issues and the extent and nature of the process. I used cluster analysis to identify the basic types of local direct democracy in the Czech Republic according to the issue on the ballot, the means of initiation, voter turnout, the margin of victory, and the population size of the municipality.

The rationale here is that different types of direct democracy may affect local political processes in different ways, and this stage of analysis provides us with a fundamental classification.

In the second stage, I tested the hypotheses using a series of regression models explaining the impact of local referenda and initiatives on citizen participation in the election process. The main features of the models are as follows: (i) several alternative measures of participation in the election process are considered, (ii) the direct democracy effect is allowed to vary across the types identified in the exploratory analysis, (iii) it is directly accounted for possible changes in demographic and socio-economic conditions in individual municipalities over time, and (iv) it is applied panel data methods that allow for time-constant unobserved heterogeneity among the municipalities.

The remainder of this section proceeds as follows: first, I describe our data sources; second, I introduce the variables used in our regressions; third, I specify the functional form of our regression models.

4.7.1 Data

A combination of existing data collected by the Interior Ministry and an extensive web-based survey was used to collect comprehensive evidence about local referenda and initiatives in the Czech Republic. For each referendum/initiative I recorded the actual question on the ballot, the means of initiation, the number of eligible voters, voter turnout, and the margin of victory. I collected information about 199 local referenda between 2000 and 2012.

The database of the Interior Ministry served as the core data source. Unfortunately, the data did not usually indicate whether the particular case of direct democracy was initiated by citizen initiative or by the incumbent. It was therefore necessary to study records from local authorities' meetings that took place before each vote to identify the mechanism of initiation. In most cases I was able to identify whether the vote was initiated by citizens or by the incumbent. In a few cases (about 8%) this information was unavailable so the respective variable was coded as a missing value. To ensure the completeness of the database I conducted extensive web-based searches (based on key words such as local referendum, municipality referendum, local direct democracy, etc.) and identified several cases (about 5%) of cases that were not included in the official dataset.

The topics (i.e., the questions on the ballot) were coded into two basic categories²⁸ according to the underlying issue, namely (1) votes concerned with a major exogenous threat, such as the construction of nuclear waste storage, airports, military bases etc., and (2) cases dealing with internal affairs linked to municipality development, such as local development plans, housing construction, the construction of wind power plants or water purifying plants, the management of municipality property and assets, etc.

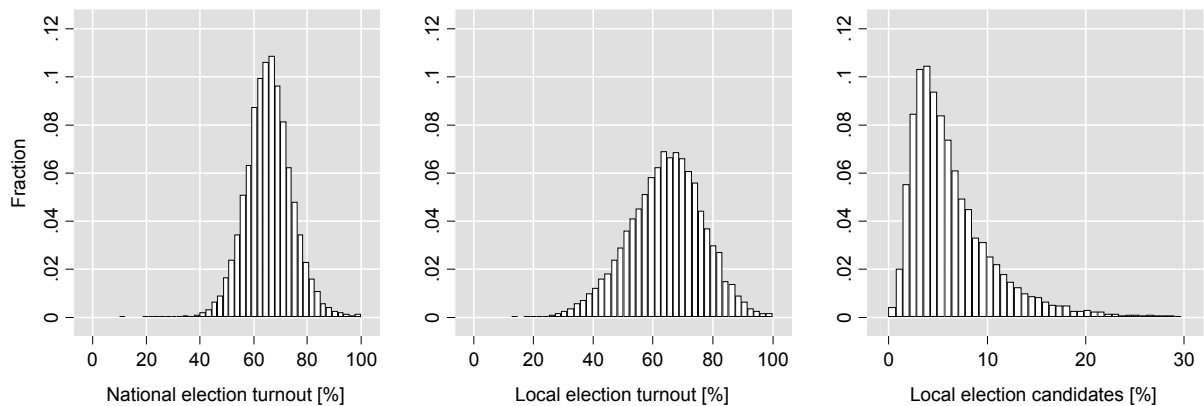
Apart from the information on local direct democracy, we used data related to all Czech municipalities, namely data on election outcomes and the municipalities' characteristics (e.g., population size, age structure). These data were provided by the Czech Statistical Office.

4.7.2 Dependent and independent variables

Three different measures of citizen participation in the election process were considered as the dependent variable: (i) turnout in national (parliamentary) elections, (ii) turnout in local elections and (iii) the number of candidates running for office in local elections. Dependent variables for both national and local election turnout were expressed as the ratio of ballots cast to the number of eligible voters. The number of local election candidates entered the regressions in the form of the ratio to eligible population. The unified scale of all the dependent variables enabled to use identical methodology in all three cases, and made the results directly comparable. For each municipality, I used data from three successive election years: 2002, 2006 and 2010. Figure 3 shows the distributions of the dependent variables.

²⁸ The coding of the issue on the ballot is always to some extent an issue of subjective choice. We could not repeat the coding from the U.S. based on social issues. In our case the diversity of issues was considerable and the only emerging pattern was the distinction between great external threat to the municipality and issues concerned with internal affairs.

Figure 3: Distribution of dependent variables; observations are pooled across years and panels



The main independent variable was a dummy indicator of the presence of a local direct democracy in the respective inter-election period. As a refinement, I paralleled the analysis that included the basic dummy with an alternative specification that distinguished the types of direct democracy identified in the exploratory stage, and used a corresponding set of additional dummies instead. Due to the assumption concerning the long-term effects of local referenda and initiatives (hypothesis H3), both analyses included lags of the direct democracy indicator(s).

Furthermore, I considered several confounding factors that could significantly influence the change in citizen participation in the election process between successive rounds of elections. Given the data available, it was possible to control for the municipalities' characteristics indicating changes in demographic and socioeconomic conditions, namely age structure, net migration rate,²⁹ and unemployment rate. These factors roughly correspond to individual resources linked to socioeconomic status in the SES model (Brady, Verba and Schlozman 1995), which is mostly based on demographic and socioeconomic indicators. Age structure was measured as the share of a municipality's population in three bands: 18–44, 45–74, and 75+, in each election year; net migration rate and unemployment rate express the changes over the entire inter-election period.

²⁹ Currently the most important process that is significantly changing the social composition of municipalities in the Czech Republic is suburbanization. Smaller municipalities surrounding big cities are affected by the intensive inflow of new inhabitants from urban cores. The process is characterized by high net migration gains.

Admittedly, it is not possible to account for other factors that could drive political participation, such as social capital (Putnam 2000) or social networks (McClurg 2003; Mutz 2006). However, I believe that these properties (i) do not change rapidly over time, and (ii) may be at least partly captured by (i.e., correlated with) the control variables. Finally, the panel data setup allowed to use regression models that eliminated time-constant unobserved heterogeneity, i.e., the estimates were unaffected by unobserved factors that did not evolve over time (see below).

4.7.3 Regression models

Due to the fractional character of dependent variables, i.e., values limited to the interval $[0, 1]$, I ran two alternative model specifications in parallel, with a simpler linear model being complemented by a more elaborate nonlinear model that directly accounted for the fractional nature of our data.

In general, the use of a linear model for fractional data leads to inconsistent estimates of parameters. That said, linear models can provide good approximations of average partial effects (APEs) of the covariates, with the additional advantage of fewer distributional assumptions (Wooldridge 2010: 579, 625). Moreover, the dependent variables (especially the turnout data) seem to be well suited to linear regression analysis, as they exhibited a unimodal distribution with few values being located at or near the endpoints of the $[0,1]$ interval (Figure 2). Therefore, it is considered standard panel data linear regression with two-way effects (i.e., both panel- and time-specific). I used two of the usual estimation methods: the fixed-effects estimator (FE) and the first-differencing estimator (FD).³⁰ I only report results from FE, which was slightly favoured by the criterion based on the Wooldridge (2010: 320) test for serial correlation of FD residuals: the estimated serial correlation varied from -0.22 to -0.44 for the different model specifications, suggesting that FE was likely to be more efficient than FD. Nevertheless, the results from the FE and FD regressions were qualitatively very similar, leading to identical conclusions about variable significance, and the coefficient estimates for significant variables typically differed by less than 20%.

³⁰ I also considered the random-effects estimator, even though its additional assumptions were not expected to hold; this expectation was confirmed by the results of the Hausman test in the alternative model specifications, leading to discarding the random-effects model.

Several alternative nonlinear modelling approaches for a fractional dependent variable exist. In this case, I needed a model that (i) allows the observed fractions to attain the 0/1 bounds (see Figure 2), and (ii) is suitable for short panels and accommodates any unobserved heterogeneity correlated with explanatory variables. I chose the fractional probit model proposed by Papke and Wooldridge (2008), which utilizes the Mundlak (1978) and Chamberlain (1980) approaches to model the distribution of the unobserved effect conditional on observed covariates. The key result of Papke and Wooldridge (2008) is that if the probit response function is used for the conditional mean of the dependent variable, model parameters are identified up to a common scaling factor, which in turn is sufficient to estimate APEs of individual independent variables. The restricted (Mundlak) version of Chamberlain's device was used in our model specification, and estimation was carried out using the method of generalized estimating equations (GEE). The short panel setting allowed to increase estimator efficiency by leaving the variance structure (or "working correlation matrix") in GEE unrestricted, without excessive loss of degrees of freedom.

4.8 Results

4.8.1 Exploratory analysis of data on local direct democracy

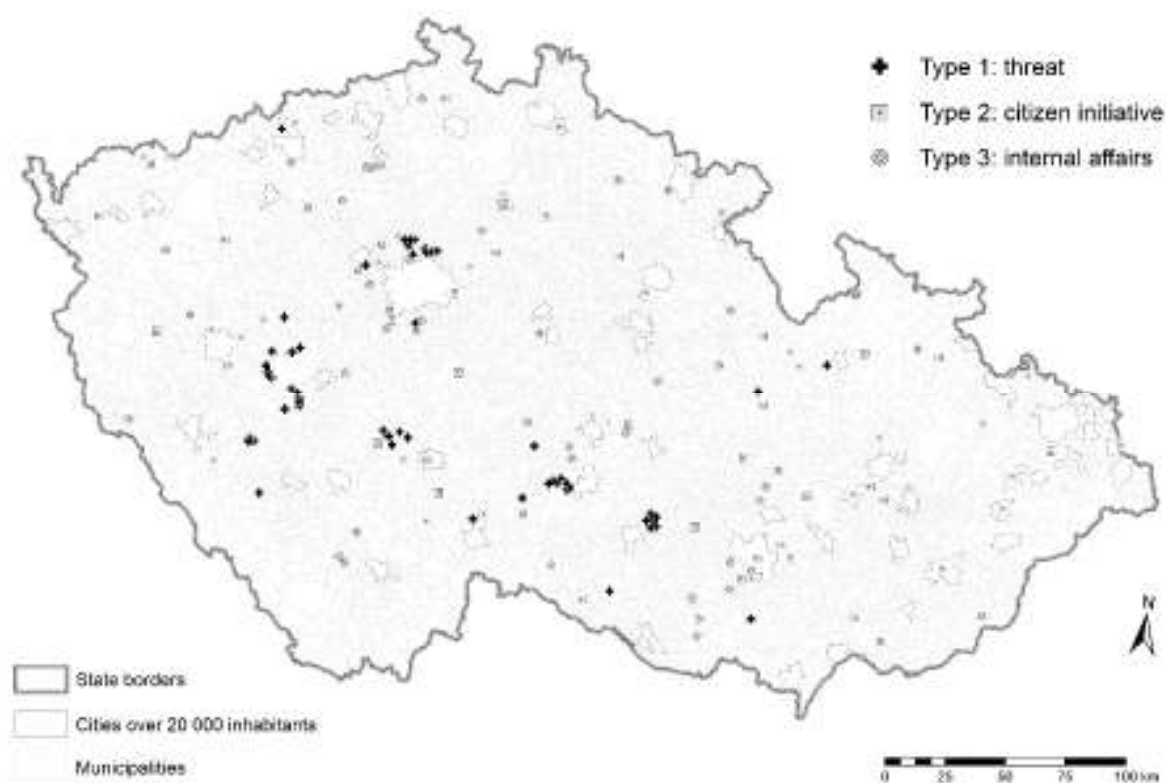
The aim of the exploratory part of the empirical analysis was to describe the nature of the direct democracy process in the Czech Republic and to create a basic typology. Of all 199 referenda and initiatives, in the exploratory analysis it was included only the 176 that took place before the elections in 2010. The general characteristics of these cases are given in Table 12, column All (for locations see Figure 4).

Table 12: Local direct democracy: descriptive statistics and classification into types (two-step cluster analysis)

	All	Type 1 Threat	Type 2 Citizen initiative	Type 3 Internal affairs
Turnout (% , mean, range)	57 (12–97)	67 (26–97)	52 (12–94)	50 (18–89)
Victory margin (% , mean, range)	81 (51–100)	94 (60–100)	79 (51–99)	72 (51–94)
Local population (median)	800	492	1745	1042
Initiated by				
– Incumbent (%)	62	100	0	100
– Citizens (%)	38	0	100	0
Issue				
– Exogenous threat (%)	36	100	5	0
– Internal issue (%)	64	0	95	100
Collective votes				
– Collective (%)	30	93	2	2
– Individual (%)	70	7	98	98
Observations	193	57	66	55

Note: 15 cases not clustered due to missing values in the clustering variables. Source: The Interior Ministry of the Czech Republic and own data.

Figure 4: Spatial distribution of local direct democracy by type



Turnout refers to the level of participation, and the victory margin refers to the percentage of votes gained by the winning side. Interestingly, the turnout was in some cases almost as high as it could be, with nearly every eligible citizen participating. Also, in some cases one side gained all or almost all the votes (Table 12). The median municipality size was around 700, indicating that local referenda and initiatives mostly took place in smaller municipalities, although some of them were also held in larger and more populated urban areas. About 37% of votes were initiated by citizen initiatives and 63% by the incumbent. The collective vote variable (Table 12) indicates the number of cases where more adjacent municipalities responded to some issue by organizing a referendum or initiative (visible in Figure 4). In 36% of cases the particular vote was therefore initiated along with referenda or initiatives in neighbouring municipalities in response to a common issue.

Two-step cluster analysis, based on a log-likelihood distance measure and the BIC clustering criterion, identified three types (i.e., clusters) based on the descriptive characteristics presented above.³¹ Results are given in Table 12.

Type 1 votes are those initiated by the local government. The underlying issue of these referenda was always an external environmental threat. Interestingly, this type of referendum had the highest average turnout (68%), and in these cases the winning side had on average as much as 96% of the votes, indicating landslide victories. The first type thus clearly marks out referenda that were a reaction of the municipality to an external threat in an effort to avoid the construction of a nuclear waste storage facility, an airport, a motorway, etc. In other words, an exogenous threat mobilized the municipalities to defend themselves. This is corroborated by high referendum turnouts and landslide victories. In Figure 4, these collective types of referenda can be characterized by their spatial proximity.

Type 2 votes are initiated by citizens themselves after collecting a sufficient number of signatures. The average turnout in these cases was around 50%, and the winning side usually won by a substantial margin. These initiatives were not triggered by serious exogenous threats, but were rather linked with issues of internal municipality development. While in the case of

³¹ I excluded the municipality size variable from the analysis. With this variable the two step cluster analysis produced one more cluster but this did not in any way differ from cluster 1 (see below) apart from in terms of the municipality size. Therefore, municipality population size variable was excluded from the analysis for the sake of simplicity.

type 1 the municipality defended itself against the legal superior, in the case of type 2 it was the citizens who wished to defend themselves against the local government decision they opposed (e.g., building wind farms).

Finally, type 3 votes were initiated by the local government rather than by citizen initiative as in type 2. For type 3 the structure of the issues was similar to type 2 – these cases were concerned with internal development issues.³² However, the margin of the winning side was lower, indicating that these votes were more competitive, with the “yes” and “no” views being more balanced than in types 1 or 2. These cases strongly resemble a type of referendum usually organized by a government that is in internal dispute over some issue (Budge 1996; Laisney 2012; Morel 2007). Unable or unwilling to resolve the issue, the incumbent crowds or forces out the issue from the representative decision-making process to direct democracy. In such cases, direct democracy serves to resolve conflict and/or as an effective means of dealing with complex issues.

4.8.2 Regression results

The regression analysis proceeded in two steps. In the first step (Model 1), I included in the analysis the dummy variable indicating the existence of *any* direct democracy process (1 = yes; 0 = no), ignoring for the moment the three types identified in the exploratory analysis. The estimated impact of a direct democracy event on all considered forms of election processes (i.e., dependent variables) is given in Table 13.

The direct democracy variable is statistically significant in the case of all three forms of political process. The (non-lagged) effect is strongest in the case of local elections where a single direct vote caused an increase in turnout of as much as 2.7 percentage points (pp). The effect for a single vote in the case of national elections was about 1.8 pp and in the case of the number of candidates running for office about 0.6 pp. Importantly, the effect is significant irrespective of the analytical method used (FE/FP) and is of about the same magnitude in both. The size of the effect, which in the case of elections ranges from 1.8 to 2.8 pp, corresponds to the sizes of the effects reported by research undertaken in the U.S. (Tolbert and Smith 2005). The size seems

³² A closer comparison of the underlying issues of cluster 2 and cluster 3 cases (not reported here) did not reveal any differences. Both types contained referenda and initiatives with issues concerning internal municipality development and did not differ in any significant way in this respect.

rather small, but as Childers and Binder (2012) have shown, the effect of multiple referenda and initiatives are reinforcing, in other words with greater intensity of use, direct democracy also increases the overall effect on turnout in elections.

Table 13: The effect of local direct democracy on turnout and number of candidates

	National election turnout		Local election turnout		Local election candidates	
	FE	FP	FE	FP	FE	FP
<i>Model 1 (direct democracy yes/no)</i>						
Direct democracy	1.890 ^{**} (0.408)	1.662 ^{**} (0.400)	2.762 ^{**} (0.748)	2.587 ^{**} (0.712)	0.597 ^{**} (0.203)	0.603 ^{**} (0.243)
Direct democracy, lagged	1.431 [*] (0.668)	1.308 [*] (0.663)	0.577 (1.146)	0.643 (1.093)	0.127 (0.336)	0.213 (0.379)
Observations	18712	18712	18624	18624	18642	18642
R ²	0.158		0.051		0.015	
<i>Model 2 (direct democracy types)</i>						
Type 1: threat	2.071 ^{**} (0.786)	1.935 [*] (0.770)	2.106 [†] (1.277)	1.836 (1.213)	0.199 (0.322)	0.0311 (0.311)
Type 2: citizen initiative	1.919 ^{**} (0.657)	1.847 ^{**} (0.600)	2.513 [*] (1.256)	2.438 [*] (1.259)	0.772 [*] (0.320)	1.129 ^{**} (0.433)
Type 3: internal affairs	1.372 [†] (0.708)	1.091 [†] (0.657)	1.913 (1.492)	2.072 (1.512)	0.332 (0.340)	0.440 (0.422)
Type 1, lagged	3.301 ^{**} (1.169)	3.005 [*] (1.231)	0.409 (2.683)	0.130 (2.753)	-0.0187 (0.789)	-0.0950 (0.765)
Type 2, lagged	1.463 (1.153)	1.368 (1.093)	2.728 [*] (1.153)	2.557 [*] (1.153)	0.454 (0.365)	0.714 (0.480)
Type 3, lagged	-0.645 (1.022)	-0.676 (1.025)	-1.726 (1.982)	-1.196 (1.881)	-0.265 (0.531)	-0.169 (0.588)
Observations	18695	18695	18605	18605	18623	18623
R ²	0.158		0.051		0.015	

Notes: (i) All regressions included a full set of time dummies and the following controls: population (logged), unemployment rate, net migration, age structure (not reported). (ii) FE = fixed-effects estimator for the linear model specification, FP = fractional probit model. (iii) For FP, average partial effects (APEs) are reported instead of estimated coefficients. (iv) Coefficients, APEs and standard errors are multiplied by 100 to enhance readability; the changes in dependent variables are thus measured in percentage points. (v) Standard errors of FE coefficients, in parentheses, are made robust to arbitrary heteroskedasticity and serial correlation; standard errors of APEs are obtained from 500 replications of nonparametric panel bootstrap. (vi) The R^2 reported for FE is one from the “within” regression, i.e. it shows the proportion of temporal variation within individual municipalities explained by temporal variation in explanatory variables. (vii) [†] $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

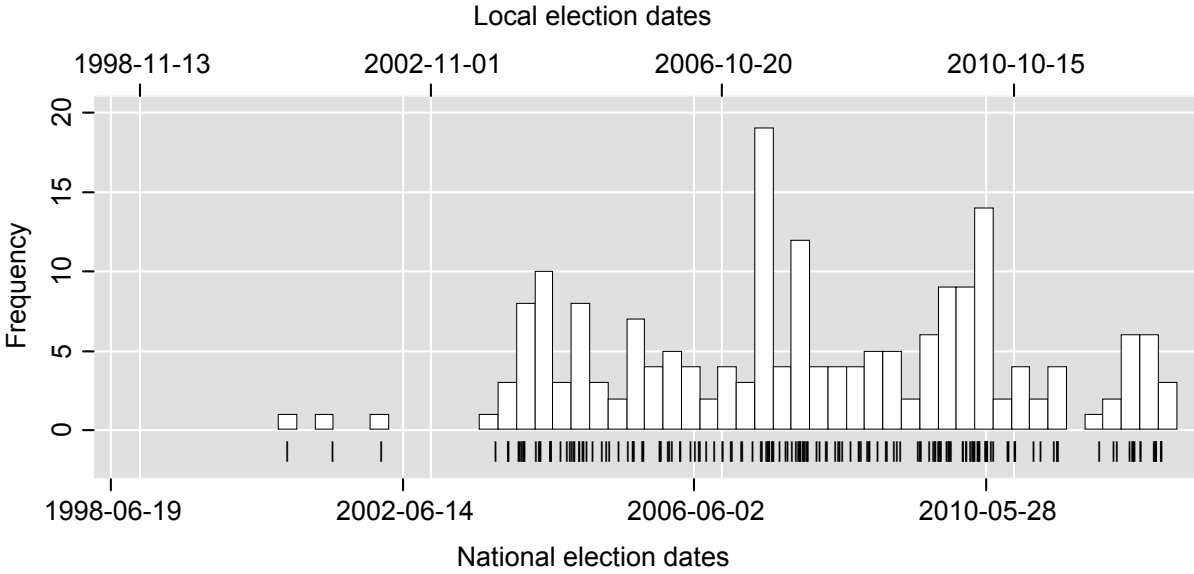
In the second step (Model 2), I replaced the general variable with dummies for the three types of local direct democracy derived from the exploratory analysis. As can be seen in Table 13, the type 1 is significant in the case of parliamentary elections only. In the case of parliamentary elections I also identified a significant carry-over effect to the next election cycle (lagged effect). The carry-over (lagged) effect for this type was found to be quite strong (over 3 pp), and was even stronger than the immediate effect.

The type 2 (citizen initiative) was found to be significant in all three forms of political process, although to varying degrees. As far as election turnout is concerned, the estimated immediate effect was about 2.5 pp in local and 1.9 pp in national elections. In local elections the lagged effect was more pronounced. In terms of the number of candidates running for office, the effect was significant for the next elections (according to the FP model, which presumably is more relevant here), although the effect was weaker compared to national and local elections.

For the third “internal affairs” type, no significant effect was found in either type of election.

Finally I also tested whether there was any effect associated with the time between direct democracy votes and subsequent elections. The time distribution of referenda and initiatives can be seen from Figure 5. However, no effect was found, the time span between direct votes and elections did not matter, and the results are therefore not reported here.

Figure 5: Timing of direct democracy and elections; histogram shows quarterly frequencies of local referenda and initiatives, bar code below the histogram marks dates of individual votes, and vertical grid lines indicate election dates



4.9 Results and hypotheses

On a very general level, the results of the analyses show that direct democracy in the Czech Republic, organized in medium to small settings, increases turnout in parliamentary and local elections, and also increases the number of candidates running for office. The positive effect is thus not confined to just one form of political process but, in agreement with participatory theories, has a very broad-brush effect on political participation.

These findings thus support hypothesis H2. The results show that citizen initiatives had a positive effect on all the dependent variables. This type of local direct democracy involved deliberation and citizen petition (collection of signatures), and thus most resembles the normative ideal of direct citizen participation (H1). It was also this type of direct democracy in which I identified the effect of the lagged variable (for the case of local elections), indicating a lasting effect up to the subsequent election cycle (H3).

This lasting (lagged) effect was also identified for the case of “threat” referenda for parliamentary elections. In cases concerning issues that went beyond local contexts it is conceivable that this general appeal led to a lagged effect on turnout in parliamentary elections. This „threat” referendum type has an effect on turnout in parliamentary elections only. The

reason is clear; these cases were, for example, concerned with the construction of a U.S. Military base or nuclear waste storage facilities, issues with an impact on state-wide politics.

The findings discussed above mostly corroborate all the proposed hypotheses. However, the results of the analysis also indicate, just as in the case of U.S. direct democracy, that not all types of direct democracy increase turnout. In particular, in the “internal affairs” type, no effect was identified in either type of political process. This shows that it is not direct democracy as such, but rather particular characteristics of the process that lead to greater political participation.

Despite the generally positive evidence, there are several caveats. First, it could be argued that the proposed causality of direct democracy-turnout is non-existent. There could be a common reason for both direct democracy and the increased turnout. For example, the respective municipalities were mobilized by a common threat that led to the referendum/initiative and also increased turnout in subsequent elections. However, if this was really so, we would expect primarily type 1 (threat) to have a significant effect. However, it is much harder to imagine a cause that would have led to direct democracy organization by the citizen initiative (type 2) and would simultaneously have effect on turnout in subsequent national parliamentary elections, as the issues on the ballot were usually relevant only to the given, rather small municipalities. Nonetheless, in the next section, which deals in more detail with occurrence of all the types, this issue is further discussed.

Second, it could be argued (as in the case of the U.S. debate) that it is not the process as such but the nature of the underlying issue that leads to competitive campaigns, causing conflict that may also become manifest in subsequent elections in terms of increased turnout. If we use victory margin as a proxy for campaign competitiveness (as per Childers and Binder 2012) we can see that type 3 cases, which are more competitive than type 2, did not have any effect on turnout.

Third, it could be argued that enhanced turnout in elections has something to do with sets of strategic games being played between citizen initiatives and local government (Gregor and Smith 2013). A conflict between the two parties may continue into subsequent elections, which may provide the opportunity for citizens to remove the incumbent from office. This proposition

may well explain the effect of direct democracy on local elections, but does not make sense in terms of national elections, which are unrelated to local affairs.

Finally, although the data provide support for the participatory hypothesis, I cannot provide evidence on where exactly this effect comes from. I see three options. Either local direct democracy has a positive effect on political efficacy and political knowledge, which in turn increase political engagement, or local direct democracy creates greater long term engagement by strengthening social ties, increasing social capital, and creating mutual commitments and loyalties (especially in the case of citizen initiatives where the act of direct democracy is above all an act of collective action). Third, there has been a common cause that has lead both to direct democracy initiation as well as increased turnout.

4.10 Discussion

This analysis contributes to the debate on the effect of direct democracy on political participation in several ways.

First, the main aim of this section was to find out whether local direct democracy leads to increased or decreased turnout in subsequent elections. Solid empirical evidence has been provided that compared to the U.S. and Switzerland this effect holds – local direct democracy increases turnout in subsequent local elections and national elections and also increases the number of candidates running for a local elected office.

These findings invalidate the voter fatigue hypothesis. On top of that, I have presented the following three arguments in favour of the participatory theory. It is shown that (a) local direct democracy has positive effect on many forms of political participation, not just one, (b) this effect is long term, and (c) it is mostly citizen-initiated local direct democracy that has a positive effect on turnout.

Third, I show (confirming the U.S. findings) that not all forms of direct democracy have a positive influence on turnout. Rather than being a feature of the institution of direct democracy, the outcome very much depends on the particular design and nature of the process involved.

4.11 The effect of referenda on political engagement - section conclusion

The aim of this section was to determine the effect of direct democracy on political participation and political engagement. The data and analyses presented here substantiate an argument in support of the participatory hypothesis. Local direct democracy in the Czech Republic has a positive effect on political engagement.

This finding suggests that, based on the case of Czech Republic, local direct democracy does not discourage citizens from further political participation; on the contrary, it seems to stimulate political engagement. In terms of efficiency (Smith 2009), the analysis above shows that local direct democracy can be regarded as efficient.

In a critique of normative theories, Warren (1996: 242–243) argued that “radical democrats almost without exception hold that democratic participation is attractive activity, one that people would naturally choose if only they had the opportunity. They should dispense with this romantic dogma” and that “nor have they conceived the social and psychological difficulties inherent in political engagement, difficulties that make a difference for how we might expect individuals to respond to democratic opportunities”.

Although the elitist critique of normative theories of democracy for overemphasizing citizen interest in and capacity for direct political participation is justified, the above-presented analysis shows that the picture is not black-and-white and that increasing opportunities for political participation may have mobilizing effects in the long term.

However, the argument is not complete. What remains unclear is the exact mechanism of what increases the turnout. In the next section, the possible confounding factors are further elaborated upon in the context of the analysis of the occurrence of all these types of direct democracy. Using a qualitative approach it is examined what may have been the underlying factors leading to the positive effect on political engagement and whether or not this effect is genuine.

So far, it has been shown that not all direct democracy events had an effect on political engagement. In particular, this was the case of incumbent-initiated referenda about internal municipality affairs. The other cases have been shown to have significant and longer-term effects. The next section focuses on the reasons why municipality direct democracy was organized and what factors contributed to its organization. This analysis further helps to interpret the positive effects on local referenda and initiatives on political engagement (see discussion in the next section).

5 The rise of direct democracy

5.1 Aims of the section

The previous sections aimed to analyse and explain the expansion, use and consequences of direct democracy. At the same time they discussed the issues of inclusiveness, considered judgement and effectiveness, based on a framework for evaluating democratic innovations proposed by Smith (2009).

I provided answers to the following questions:

- Why is there such a high popular support for direct democracy? Who supports and participates in direct democracy? How inclusive is it?
- Why do the political elites propose legal acts that provide for direct democracy institutions?
- What is the voting behaviour in direct democracy like? Do voters decide on the basis of informed opinions?
- What are the consequences of direct democracy for political participation and political engagement? Does it increase or decrease political engagement?

Nonetheless, there is also one missing piece required to explain the rise of direct democracy as an institutional innovation. It is the issue of why political elites or citizens resort to direct democracy institutions and procedures. There is always an opportunity to solve the respective issues in different ways and by different means and therefore it is necessary to explain what makes citizens or incumbents use direct forms of decision making. The previous section was concerned with the effect of local referenda and initiatives on political participation. In this section I will focus in more detail on the reasons why these local referenda and initiatives were organized, with the aim of analysing the causes of the use of local direct democracy in the Czech Republic. In the discussion part I will also come back to the effect of direct democracy on turnout (analysis in Section 4) and will interpret the results using the evidence obtained in Section 5.

This final section introduces a different methodological approach compared to the preceding sections. In the foregoing sections I typically used quantitative methods and individual survey data. This was because I essentially studied the (broadly defined) demand side of direct democracy: popular attitudes to direct democracy, citizen turnout in direct democracy and citizen voting behaviour. In the following analyses I rather turn to the supply side or the reasons

for the occurrence of direct democracy. These issues cannot be analysed from the demand perspective and therefore I use a case study approach like other studies of the occurrence of direct democracy (Laisney 2012; Morel 2007). The aim is here to clarify, based on rather qualitative reasoning, the sequence of events, motives and accounts that lead to the organization of direct democracy events. Therefore, the change in methodological approach here is required by the research question analysed.

5.2 Introduction

The growing use of referenda and ballot initiatives is usually either understood as a consequence of citizens' growing *demand* for new forms of political participation or it is associated with political parties' activity – *supply*. These two approaches are not mutually exclusive and it is reasonable to assume that both explanations are valid. Political parties take advantage of popular support for direct democracy and propose the implementation of institutions of direct democracy in order to increase the chances of electoral success (Scarrow 1999; Bowler et al. 2002; Smith and Fridkin 2008).

Nonetheless, these theories do not fully explain the rise of direct democracy. The fact that there is an opportunity to hold a referendum does not necessarily mean that one will be held. *To explain the expansion of direct democracy, it is thus important to deal with the issue of when and under what conditions direct democracy is used and referenda are organized.*

There have been three approaches to this question. First, a structural explanation focuses on the structural features governing access to initiatives and referenda. For example, it is analysed how different institutional settings of direct democracy influence the occurrence and outcomes of referenda and initiatives (Hug 2004). The second explanation (Banducci 1998) emphasizes the role of political factors linked to interest groups' strength, their numbers and the existence of "issue activists". This approach is mostly linked to the U.S. experience with citizen initiatives. Third, the key causes of direct democracy initiation are also seen in political tactics and in the pursuit of certain political functions. This perspective has been elaborated by Morel (2001; 2007) in his typology of the functions of referenda (and direct democracy in general).

In general, these three explanations are not regarded as contradictory. It is often assumed that all of them may have an effect on the occurrence of direct democracy (Banducci 1998) and the question is rather about the particular interplay of the different factors in a given institutional environment. It is thus assumed that all of these factors (institutional setting, interest groups as

well as political tactics) play some role but the weight of each factor depends on the particular case at hand.

Despite these “analytical” approaches there is also a normative view that has emphasized that on local level people should be given bigger say in politics, that citizen initiatives are more democratic and valuable than incumbent-initiated local direct democracy (Buček and Smith 2000) and that on a highly general level, local direct democracy (or participatory institutions in general) has mainly a beneficial impact on citizenship (Michels and Graaf 2010). This approach does not directly deal with the causes of the occurrence of local direct democracy but it will be addressed because it provides a narrative that encompasses and infuses important parts of existing research on local direct democracy.

As will be shown, the kind of local referenda and initiatives that were analysed in the previous sections was mostly concerned with environmental threats, i.e. “not in my backyard” (NIMBY) problems. The “threat” referenda and “citizen initiatives” were essentially conflicts about the siting of such projects that are usually beneficial to the wider community but rejected by the local community. In this section I will focus on the events that lead to these referenda and initiatives. Using short case studies I will show that the decisions to organize them were a part of rather long-term conflicts regarding NIMBY situations in Czech municipalities. Drawing on previous literature (Budge 1996; Morel 2007; Laisney 2012) I will show that the reasons behind these referenda and initiatives were predominantly tactical and strategic in nature. They were used as a means of power struggle in long-term heated conflicts. I will argue that these conflicts were essentially explicit or implicit contracting/bargaining situations and that big part of local direct democracy in the Czech Republic could be understood as consequences of conflict with failed or non-existent deliberation. However, I will also show important structural-institutional issues – namely regulation – that strongly influenced the occurrence of local direct democracy in the Czech Republic. Last, I will briefly discuss the third factor – the role of interest groups.

The findings of the analysis that follows will show that:

- The reasons for the use of local democracy (also in the Czech Republic) are often linked to political tactics (pursuit of certain political functions).
- The occurrence of local referenda and initiatives (in the Czech Republic) is contingent on existing regulation of NIMBY problems.
- The positive effect of local direct democracy on political participation (identified in the

previous section) is likely not attributable to direct democracy as such but rather to heated conflicts where direct democracy is used as a means of power struggle.

This section is organized in the following way. First, I focus on normative assumptions linked to theories of (local) political participation. Second, I focus on a model proposed by Morel (2001; 2007) that explains the occurrence of direct-democracy-based strategic functions. Third, I discuss the fact that most referenda and initiatives were concerned with environmental (NIMBY) issues that refer to the aspect of existing regulation. Fourth, on examples of the three types of direct democracy identified in the previous section I explain their occurrence. The results of the analysis as well as related theoretical considerations are summarized in the concluding section.

5.3 Local direct democracy – causes of occurrence

Local political participation is often approached from the normative perspective, as beneficial in itself, and attention is drawn to any positive consequences that local direct political participation may bring about (for overview Schiller 2011).

Traditionally the benefits of direct forms of decision making were put forward by normative theories of democracy of the participatory as well as deliberative kind. However, over the past two decades, also the importance of the local level has been emphasized, especially in the context of local inclusive governance, which has been viewed as a way of revitalizing democracy (Buček and Smith 2000). So when direct democracy is organized, especially on local level, there is a tendency to view it as a contribution to the participatory momentum (Michels and De Graaf 2010; Michels 2011). Such benefits of direct democracy are emphasized (Schiller 2011: 10) as strengthening political equality, expanding citizen competences, transparency of political processes, accountability and control of representative institutions. In addition, it is assumed that citizens are competent to decide on matters linked to local affairs (Schiller 2011: 10) and willing to participate in local direct democracy when the opportunity emerges (Michels and DeGraaf 2010: 489).

Local direct democracy has been often labelled as a kind of “democratic renewal” and promoted in some countries (Lainsey 2012: 640) as an effective means of tackling deficiencies of representative governance, a reaction to decreasing trust in representative institutions, and a form of civic education (Michels 2012). In this vein it is sometimes argued that democratic reforms towards local direct democracy and participatory governance should change citizens’

value orientations and even the political culture, which should shift from party-oriented to more inclusive governance. The expansion of local direct democracy in European countries is often interpreted along these lines (Vetter 2009; Denters and Klok 2013). It is regarded as a positive development, and an even stronger and more intensive use of direct democratic decision making on the local level is encouraged.

It is rather less often pointed out that direct democracy, on the local as well as the national level, can be linked to strategic considerations and political tactics. Such claims were made by Morel (2001; 2007) for national referenda and Lainsley (2012) in the context of local referenda. Morel (2001; 2007) identified as many as five types of direct democracy based on their function:

1. Direct democracy can be used as a *mediation* device. Mediation referenda serve to resolve internal tensions within a political party or coalition. To avoid difficult decisions and the risk of falling apart, the government transfers the decision to the people.
2. When pursuing the *agenda* function, by initiating a referendum the incumbent (or the opposition) hopes to remove an issue from public agenda before elections. The reason might be unpopularity of the issue among the electorate or even opposition within one's party or coalition.
3. The *legislative* function means to push through such a law that would not be adopted through a standard parliamentary procedure or that would face great difficulties. The aim here is to circumvent the standard procedures.
4. In its *legitimization* function, direct democracy is used to grant special legitimacy to a certain decision or to ensure popular acceptance thereof.
5. The *power re-enforcing* function means that the initiator uses the referendum to strengthen his position and weaken or divide the opposition.

When this approach was applied to the case of local direct democracy (Laisney 2012) it was found that most referenda and initiatives can be regarded as a mix of the above-mentioned functions and that there is little support for the idea that local direct democracy would be organized as an incentive to citizen political participation. Another important finding was that the strategic functions dominate not only government-initiated referenda but also those initiated by the citizens themselves. This corresponds to a view that direct democracy is often used rather as a "weapon" in political conflicts (Bogdanor 2009).

The occurrence of direct democracy also depends on the institutional factors. These essentially determine how easy or difficult the particular institutions of direct democracy are to organize in a given country. For example, Hug (2004) argued that the key predictor of the magnitude of direct democracy processes is whether there is the possibility to trigger the vote by the opposition and/or the citizens themselves, through citizen initiatives. Banducci (1998) emphasized the legal threshold as another important barrier that influences the occurrence of direct democracy.

Finally, especially research in the U.S. focused on the role of interest groups in the occurrence, use and results of citizen initiatives (Dwyre et al. 1994; Gerber 1999; Smith 1998; Banducci 1998). It was not only found that special interest groups often use citizen initiatives to push through their interests (Gerber 1999) and that the size and strength of interest groups matter for the occurrence of initiatives (Banducci 1999) but also that the existence of citizen initiatives as such leads to a greater number of interest organizations (Boehmke 2002) as well as to increased individual demand for interest group membership (Boehmke and Bowen 2010). Although there might be an issue about the direction of causality in the relation between direct democracy and interest group formation, this research showed that direct democracy processes are linked to interest group involvement.

5.4 Local direct democracy and the NIMBY problem

In the previous section three types of direct democracy were identified: threat, citizen initiative and internal issues. Judging from the issue on the ballot, the cases of threat and citizen initiatives (identified in Section 4) are often examples of NIMBY (“not in my backyard”) problems (Gross 2007; Richman 2001; Richman and Boerner 2006). These are conflicts that arise from projects that bring about benefits to the wider community but impose costs on the immediate environment. Although these projects may be highly desirable, they usually face fierce resistance from the local communities (for contrary evidence, see Johnson and Scicchitano 2012).

The efforts to understand NIMBY situations and conflicts are fourfold. First, there have been approaches trying to explain the nature of the political environment and determine whether it favours project developer efforts or local communities (Kalt and Zupan 1984). It was shown, for example, that overregulated NIMBY processes favour project developers and under-regulated ones (the case of the Czech Republic) put an advantage into the hands of local communities. Second, there have been also studies focusing on how to understand the resistance

from the local communities and explain the opposition to the project (Jobert et al. 2007; Devine-Wright 2010). Third, there has been a debate about how to design participatory institutions to facilitate the process of reaching an agreement in the conflicts between project developers and local communities (Bell et al. 2005). Last, there have been studies focusing on the nature, sources and course of the conflict in relation to regulation and legal environment (Richman and Boerner 2006), an approach that has been based on the perspective of transaction costs economics (TCE).

In what follows I will draw from the TCE perspective because it offers a rather general framework for understanding the sources, emergence and course of NIMBY conflicts and covers aspects of all of the above perspectives.

Richmann (2001: 224–225), drawing from the TCE perspective, argues that NIMBY conflicts are failures of political and negotiating processes and that they are essentially contracting/bargaining problems. The contracting challenge is to negotiate such terms and conditions that satisfy both parties. So the affected local community would be compensated by direct payments and/or commitments on the part of the developer in terms of (usually environmental) guarantees. Inspired by institutional economics and the idea of transaction costs (Williamson 1975), Richmann and Boerner (2006) argue that in a world of no transaction costs, the solution would be easy as residents would demand for compensations and thereafter obtain payment transfers. However,

“Siting waste facilities are transactions laden with uncertainty, impacted information, lack of trust and other difficulties – or to use TCE terminology ‘contracting hazards’ – that impede efficient bargaining (Richmann and Boerner 2006: 52).”

The following are concrete examples of the transaction costs that involve uncertainty, information asymmetries and opportunism (Richmann and Boerner 2006: 54–57):

1. A number of subjects representing one party. Since usually the local community does not form a single subject, the project developer faces uncertainty in the fact that any other party may raise demands on its own, which greatly increases the negotiation costs for the developer.
2. The impact of the project on the environment is uncertain and difficult or almost impossible to measure.

3. There is asymmetrically distributed information in favour of the project developer. This gives rise to opportunism which may, however, also arise on the part of the local community as it gives it the opportunity to make false claims and demands for unfair compensation.
4. Uncertainty also arises from the fact that evaluation of the impact of the project on the given community is subject to scientific studies which are usually funded by both sides of the conflict. Such competing studies are usually difficult to reconcile.

As we will see, this situation very much resembles the threat and citizen initiative types of direct democracy. However, the transaction costs explanation proposed by Richman and Boerner (2006) is possible due to the fact that the U.S. regulation defines the NIMBY problem as an explicit contracting situation. As summarized by Richman (2001: 232):

“The regulatory process makes clear to the parties that their alternative to negotiations is binding arbitration, and it facilitates concrete schedule where bargaining can proceed to a final resolution.”

Compared to the U.S. there is no provision in the Czech law that would set the NIMBY problem under such strong and binding regulation. The issue of project development and construction is subject to state regulation. The key regulation is the EIA which is a process of assessment of the environmental impact of each project that may have negative effects on the natural environment. It is an open process with any relevant party having an opportunity to provide relevant information and monitor the evaluation process. The procedure results in a decision about the project that may include additional concrete conditions regarding the future design and use of the project. Act No. 100/2001 Coll. includes a detailed description of the whole process.

However, in the Czech Republic there has been just this one regulation, which can be described as information-centred and information-enhancing. There is a complete lack of regulations dealing with the process as such, including public participation and engagement (Devine-Wright 2014). There is no provision that local interests should be represented, there are no negotiation rules, public hearings or arbitration and resolution mechanisms. As it will be shown later, the EIA, although essential and beneficial in itself, was not sufficient in the absence of other processes.

Therefore in the Czech Republic the parties (local communities and project developers) are not

forced into negotiations and the contracting situation is not explicit, but rather implicit. Neither party is forced into compromise negotiation but, as will be shown, there are still negotiations and bargaining taking place. Therefore I call this an implicit bargaining situation.

5.5 Empirical analysis and the NIMBY conflicts

In the analysis of the effect of local direct democracy on turnout in national and local elections (Section 4) three types of direct democratic events were identified. The first “threat” type was initiated by the local governments in order to fight an external, usually environmental, threat. Important features of these cases were high turnout, landslide victories and several neighbouring municipalities organizing votes about the same issue. I called these “threat referenda”. Second, there were votes initiated by the citizens themselves who were in a dispute with the incumbent. I called these “citizen initiatives”. Third, there were referenda initiated by the incumbent. Those were the least competitive, with low turnout, and the question on the ballot was concerned with internal issues. This type of direct democracy was labelled “internal issue”.

Now, for each of these types I will provide a short case study to explain the occurrence of the direct democracy process. I will focus on the three classes of factors identified above: institutional setting (regulation), political tactics and the role of interest groups. In addition, using the transaction cost perspective, I will approach the “threat” and “citizen initiative” cases as explicit or implicit contracting situations, which always include bargaining and negotiation about the project.

5.5.1 Case study – threat referenda

As an example of the threat type of direct democracy I will refer to a case of intended reconstruction and enlargement of an airport in Vodochody, a municipality located in Central Bohemia. First, I describe the factual course of events of the controversy leading to a number of local referenda in adjacent municipalities. Next, I identify the key factors that caused the occurrence of these (and similar) referenda.

In 2008 the Penta Investment group purchased a non-public airport located in Central Bohemia. In March 2009 the new owner presented a proposal to rebuild and redesign the existing airport into a regular international public airport with expected 3.5 million passengers per year. This would highly likely have a serious impact on living conditions in the adjacent municipalities. On a public meeting with local representatives in March 2009, the airport representative was

unable to explain the details of the project, and no compensations for the affected municipalities were offered.

In June 2009 the mayors of the respective municipalities founded an NGO called *Stop Letišti Vodochody* (Stop the Vodochody Airport) with the main reasons being that the intended enlargement of the airport would have a negative impact on quality of life, noise levels, property value etc. As many as 13 municipalities joined this NGO and contributed to its funding. The key goal of this NGO was to stop the project and prevent the Vodochody airport from becoming international and opening for commercial use. In November 2009 a petition against the airport was delivered to the Ministry of the Environment, the Penta Investment Group and other political representatives and officials with powers in the given affair.

In February 2009 Penta Investment submitted the project proposal for an EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) and this procedure took several following years. It became an important battleground between the investment group and the municipalities around the airport. A report from this evaluation was first made publicly available in November 2010. By that time the entire procedure was already under strong monitoring by the respective municipalities, members of *Stop Letišti Vodochody*. They began to file a series of complaints against the investor group and the way the EIA report was prepared. As a result, in February 2011 the Ministry of the Environment returned the project proposal to Penta Investments for substantial revisions. The investment group revised the project as early as in September 2011 but very soon a new series of official complaints were launched by the NGO and other adjacent municipalities. Nonetheless, in 2013, the Ministry of the Environment accepted the project in the EIA procedure, however, with as many as 124 concrete conditions that would have to be met in order for the construction to take place. This again produced fierce resistance from the NGO and other neighbouring municipalities. After year-long discussions, in June 2014, the Ministry cancelled the original affirmative decision. This was, in turn, challenged by the investment group's legal action, with no definite result so far.

Nonetheless, in 2010 many of the municipalities around the airport organized local referenda, all of which were initiated by the incumbent and launched by the respective mayor. These referenda were initiated at the point when the EIA procedure began and it became clear that it had a good chance of passing. Clearly there was no need to initiate direct votes by collecting citizen signatures as there was unanimous consensus against the enlargement of the airport. However, since the issue on the ballot was not in of the responsibility of the respective

municipalities, the result of these referenda would be non-binding, with no legal effects for the airport project.

The referenda took place from February 2010 to September 2010 and had the same two questions on the ballot, namely:

- a) *Do you agree that the municipality of /name/ did all the necessary legal steps to prevent the Vodochody airport from enlargement and becoming international commercial airport?*
- b) *Do you agree with the enlargement of the Vodochody airport which would make it an international airport?*

All referenda in all municipalities ended with landslide victories of the opposition against the airport. However, since local referenda can have binding results only with issues that are in the responsibility of the given municipalities (which was not the case) these results had merely a demonstrative effect – above all, increasing public awareness about these events.

Institutional factors: regulation

The whole conflict can be regarded as an implicit contracting situation. Bargaining and negotiation about compensations were certainly possible, but did not take place at any point over the course of the conflict. The project developer felt they did not need municipality approval and the municipalities rejected the project outright. Neither of the parties felt they needed a compromise. This happened as, there is no regulation (in contrast to, e.g., the U.S.) requiring participation of all affected parties. The only applicable regulation concerned the EIA, which has an information gathering function and does not promote negotiation leading to a compromise solution. Nonetheless, the course of the conflict was still subject to a contracting-related dynamics.

The driving force of the conflict were contractual hazards in the form of uncertainty, information asymmetries and opportunism: the municipalities believed the investment group did not disclose all relevant information, did not offer any compromise and provided only general, misleading information about the future airport (e.g., concerning the expected number of flights, noise levels etc.). This conviction emerged as soon as the project was announced because, on the public meeting about the project, the developer representatives did not disclose any detailed information about the project. In addition, the municipalities believed that the investment group wanted to circumvent the local communities. On the other hand, the project developer thought the claims of the municipalities were exaggerated. Also the project developer

believed the local community escalated the conflict by presenting negative effects of the project without any underlying studies and making strong claims without any substantial evidence. It is possible that if the project developer had offered compensations at the outset and disclosed more information, some compromise may have been reached.

All of this created not only feelings of uncertainty in the local community and perceptions of opportunistic behaviour by the investment group, but also distrust from the project developer. This led the local community to organize an NGO. When Penta initiated the EIA procedure, the NGO, uncertain and concerned about the possible result of EIA, organized several local referenda.

An important cause of the referenda was the fact that the entire process was not regulated enough (compared to the U.S.). The parties were not forced to negotiate which quickly led to a vicious circle of distrust, conflict and power struggle which included NGO formation, referenda and legal action.

Political tactics

A key feature of the referenda in these cases was their non-binding nature. The results of the referenda were also clear from the very beginning. This clearly demonstrates that the function of these referenda was linked to political tactics. The framework developed by Morel (2007) offers two functions that are apt to these cases at hand, namely the legitimation and power enhancing functions.

In these cases the referenda were used in pursuit of a combination of both of these goals. First, the aim was to enhance the legitimacy of the position of the municipalities. By showing unity in opposition to the proposal their stance could be viewed as more legitimate. Second, due to the increased legitimacy, it also had a power re-enforcing function in the struggle against the Penta investment group. A similar combination of legitimation and power enhancing functions can be identified in other threat referenda (for example, those dedicated to U.S. military bases) but was also found in local direct democracy in the U.K. (Laisney 2012).

Interest groups

The occurrence of referenda in these cases was not caused or influenced by the existence of strong interest groups, as was shown in the U.S. context (Boehmke 2002). Rather, the existence and emergence of interest groups and an NGO was a result and consequence of the particular conflict and dispute. The founding of the NGO as well as petitions and political party involvement occurred only after the conflict started, and can be regarded as a means of power

struggle used over the course of the conflict. The emergence of an under-regulated conflict lead to politicization of the conflict, with local referenda as well as NGO formation and involvement of other interest groups.

To conclude, the dynamics presented here on the case of the Vodochody Airport is not unique and the same or similar dynamics can be found in all cases of “threat” direct democracy votes. These other cases were concerned with the construction of U.S. military base, nuclear waste storage facilities, motor highways and such. All of these were essentially NIMBY problems with local referenda used at some point as a means of legitimation and power enhancement in the power struggle (political tactics function) in heated conflicts (due to absent regulation).

5.5.2 Case study – citizen initiatives

As an example of the “citizen initiative” type of local direct democracy I will describe the case of a dispute over the construction of a golf course in Klánovice, a district located at the outskirts of the capital city of Prague. As in the case of the “threat” type, it can be regarded as a NIMBY problem.

Klánovice is a wealthy residential district with a history of golf courses dating back to the beginning of the 20th century. In the mid-90s an investment group entitled, GKP (Golf Club Prague), proposed a project to construct a golf course. This 18-hole golf course project obtained a positive EIA rating (Environmental Impact Assessment) and was also approved by the Klánovice local authority. The construction of the golf course was included in the urban development plan of Prague. However, due to the lack of financial assets GKP postponed the construction indefinitely.

The idea emerged again in 2004 with a new investment group entitled, FGRP (Forest Golf Resort Prague). Compared to the project from the mid-90s, this one was more extensive and would involve cutting down a part of the adjacent forest. FGRP began negotiations with the responsible government agency, Forests of the Czech Republic, to remove parts of the forest. At that time also the local authority authorized the project without informing citizens in advance. The citizens of Klánovice were informed as late as 2005 about the project and about the fact it was authorized by the local authority.

Over the course of the next three years several events took place. First, the opponents of the golf course founded an NGO named, “Citizens’ Association for the Klánovice Forrest” (CAKF), with the only aim to oppose the project. A town hall meeting took place where a majority of citizens expressed their opposition to the golf course, the local authority passed a resolution

against the project and the Forests of the Czech Republic promised to respect the citizen's position. Also, short thereafter, a local branch of the Green Party was established in Klánovice. In 2006 local elections took place with the golf course project being the main campaign issue. The side opposing it, which included the majority of citizens, the newly established NGO and the Green Party, enjoyed a landslide victory and formed the local government. The mayor and the newly established government were strongly opposed to the new golf course project.

However in 2007 things began to turn around. The Forests of the Czech Republic began to negotiate with FGRP the terms of a rental contract for the forest area. The representatives of the city of Prague stopped communicating with the Klánovice local government and even decreased its annual financial contribution for the operation of the Klánovice district. In 2008 the Ministry of the Environment issued a report arguing that the golf course proposal would have to undergo an EIA procedure again as the old positive evaluation from the 90s was viewed as outdated.

In 2009 the mayor of Klánovice resigned and new municipality representatives were elected. They began negotiations with the investor, FGRP, and the result was a new version of the proposal to build a smaller, 9-hole golf course. However, these negotiations and the new proposal went against the resolution approved by the local authority in 2006 and the new city representatives were suddenly viewed as corrupt traitors. In reaction the ČAKF started collecting citizen signatures, which resulted in direct vote based on citizen initiative. After a heated campaign, also due to the involvement of the Green Party which made it a national affair, 80% of participating voters voted against the golf course. After the vote FGRP withdrew its proposal from the EIA procedure. The validity of the citizen initiative was later confirmed by the court.

The course of this dispute is rather similar to the one presented as case study of the "threat" type of direct democracy. The difference was that it took place between the local authority and citizens (or a citizen initiative). Also in this case the same three factors – institutional, political and interest groups – can be identified.

Unlike the case of the airport referenda, the issue on the ballot fell under the responsibility of the Klánovice municipality and therefore the result was valid. Unlike the airport referenda this conflict was a rather explicit contracting situation which resulted in the compromise proposal of 2009. However, as in the case of the airport referendum, insufficient NIMBY regulation

made negotiating compromise rather difficult. When this compromise was reached with one group of opponents, another opponent group initiated the direct democracy vote.

The local citizens viewed the behaviour of Prague representatives, the investment group and the local authority as corrupt and unfair. As in the case of the airport, the decision to hold a direct vote was driven by uncertainty, alleged opportunistic behaviour and information asymmetries, which had several sources:

- The opposition to the golf course was not unified and shifted over time, which made it difficult to negotiate the terms of the project. The opposition also experienced frequent internal struggles.
- The proponents of the golf course did not inform the citizens at the outset and did not initiate negotiations.
- No compensations were offered by the investment group.
- Local government faced unfair behaviour from the legal superior when its funding was reduced.
- When the Green Party got involved it made the citizen initiative campaign particularly heated, promoted it as a national affair and consequently hindered informal negotiations.

As in the case of the airport referendum, with exact regulation of the conflict missing, the conflict became dominated by distrust which was fuelled by impressions of alleged or real opportunism, informational asymmetries and uncertainty.

As for the political tactics, the initiative fulfilled several functions. It did not have the power reinforcing function as in the case of the airport project. It served a combination of the legitimization and legislative functions. The legislative function (Morel 2007: 1048) of direct democracy lies in the fact that it is used when other (more standard) means have failed or are unavailable. In this case the opponents have already used other (less costly) means: petition, NGO formation and especially winning local elections and changing the incumbent. The initiative was the only effective way left to ensure the defeat of the proposal. Nonetheless, it also had legitimizing function as the opposition was divided and the result of the vote, landslide victory for the opponents, marked clear dominance of the opposition.

5.5.3 Case study – internal issues direct democracy

As examples of internal issues type of local direct democracy two cases were selected: a referendum about the construction of a waterpark in Dačice, a city of around 10,000 inhabitants

in south-eastern Bohemia, and two referenda about the construction of a wastewater treatment plant in the municipalities of Jabloňany and Skalice nad Svitavou. These internal issues referenda did not represent a NIMBY type of issue, but rather an issue of great uncertainty where resorting to direct vote was a way of making the resolution local representatives did not want to make themselves.

In Dačice the municipality referendum took place in 2005 and was concerned with the construction of a waterpark based on a project designed about four years earlier. The reason was an internal dispute between local representatives about the costs of the project. The budget for the construction of the waterpark was originally set at about CZK 60m. However, when this budget was later reviewed the costs, due to inflation, grew to as much as CZK 74m. This created some dispute among the local representatives which resulted in the initiation of the referendum. The question on the ballot was framed as consent to the construction of a waterpark with the costs of CZK 74m. The turnout was low (30%) with most people voting for the construction (60%). The referendum was initiated because opposition representatives raised this as an issue. The decision to initiate the referendum was also criticized by a local citizen association as an act of obstruction.

In the municipalities of Jabloňany and Skalice nad Svitavou the construction of a new sewage system and treatment plant was planned and proposed. The reason for this was a legal requirement for all municipalities with a threshold number of inhabitants to build wastewater treatment plants. The municipalities were under some pressure to start with the construction as they could still use support from EU funds (but the window of opportunity was limited). The estimated costs were well over CZK 100m. The EU would finance most of the costs, with about CZK 28m left for the municipalities to finance. This idea originally emerged as soon as 2002 but these costs regarded as extremely high in relation to the budgets and financial capabilities of the two municipalities and therefore the decision in this matter was continuously postponed. Moreover the municipalities would get into debt for the next 20 years and other investments would be extremely limited. In addition it would increase the water costs for local inhabitants.

So the municipalities faced a complicated issue. With immense support from the EU, they could build new wastewater treatment plants which would significantly improve their living conditions. Nonetheless the investment would still indebt them for decades. For years local representatives were unable to reach an agreement and finally in February 2011 a local referendum on this issue was organized. Local governments prepared informational leaflets with the aim to explain the issue and behaved in a highly transparent way. Also they organized

a town hall debate one week before the vote to discuss the issue. They did not want to take the decision themselves and instead forced it out to a direct democratic procedure. This approach resembles the common situation in the threat type of referendum when elected representatives are unable to reach an agreement on a complicated issue (Budge 1996; Laisney 2012; Morel 2007) and choose an alternative way of reaching the decision. The result of the referendum was against the construction, with a turnout about 60%.

These two referenda can be viewed as fulfilling particular political functions, namely mediation and legitimation. The mediation function essentially means that a local government used the direct vote to avoid a difficult decision and the referendum eventually legitimized the result as well.

As for the two examples stated above it is quite understandable why these referenda did not have strong mobilizing effects and positive effects on political engagement (see the analysis in Section 4). Their cause was not strong citizen mobilization but rather disagreement among local representatives, usually about financial/budget issues. The citizens did not view these as burning issues and compared to “threat” or “citizen initiative” cases these can be regarded as low-profile votes. What made these referenda happen was uncertainty and disagreement among the local representatives which made them “force out” the respective decision to direct vote.

5.6 Discussion

In this section the typology of local direct democracy from Section 4 was used and for each type a short case study explaining how different factors contributed to the organization of local referenda and initiatives was presented.

It was shown that the occurrence of local direct democracy events in the Czech Republic over the past two decades can be explained mainly by two factors: institutional and political.

The institutional explanation lies in the fact that there is insufficient regulation of NIMBY issues in the Czech Republic, compared to other countries (Bohner 2006). This often leads to situations when negotiations between the project developer and local communities fail and unregulated conflict emerges. It is in the context of such conflicts that local referenda and initiatives are organized, usually as a “weapon” for one of the parties. Local direct democracy related to NIMBY issues mostly fulfil legitimation and power enhancing functions; in the case of internal issues referenda it is the mediation function. As a result of such heated conflicts, NGOs and political parties get involved which further prevents deliberation and compromise.

These findings corroborate the existing literature (Laisney 2012) in that the rise of local direct democracy should not be interpreted so much as a result of a participatory momentum but rather as strongly influenced by political tactics. Second, the analysis shows that institutional factors, namely regulation of NIMBY problems, are essentially the key factor in the occurrence of local direct democracy events in the Czech Republic.

Importantly, the analysis shows why only the “threat” and “citizen initiative” types of direct democracy had positive effects on citizen participation. Political engagement was stimulated in the context of fierce conflicts between citizen initiatives and incumbents or between local administrations and external threats. Such conflicts involved not only direct democracy but also petitions and NGO formation. It is thus very likely that the source of enhanced political interest was not direct democracy as such but an underlying environmental threat that lead to citizen mobilization.

But does this interpretation go against the participatory theory? One can assume that it does not. The institution of a local direct democracy (as well as petitions) served as effective means of expressing interests and power. Local referenda and initiatives enabled politicization of conflict and collective political action. The conflict did not usually involve deliberation and was contentious in its very nature but was successfully moved to the public/political arena. In this sense, direct democracy (Fatke and Freitag 2013) serves the function of integrating people’s opinions and preferences into political processes. It is regarded as an open, but rather conventional form of political participation that aggregates citizen opinions and preferences and thus channels existing conflicts.

Without a detailed record of conflicts that did not result in a referendum or citizen initiative (which would serve as counterfactual evidence) it is thus impossible to disentangle whether the positive effect of local direct democracy on political engagement is completely unrelated to the occurrence of direct votes and stems only from the contentious NIMBY situations. It rather seems that local direct democracy complements the political opportunity structure, channels conflicts and as a result has also positive effect on political engagement.

5.7 The rise of direct democracy - section conclusion

The aim of this section was to analyse the issue of when and under what consequences local direct democracy is organized. The analysis focused on local referenda and initiatives since there have been hundreds of them organized by municipalities in the Czech Republic since year

2000. Using this data I presented a framework for understanding the expansion and use of local direct democracy.

The results of the above analysis show that the occurrence of local direct democracy events is best explained by institutional factors (under-regulation of NIMBY problems) and political tactics. There is no single cause of the occurrence of direct democracy, but rather a series of institutional as well as strategic causes. The normative view is insufficient in understanding the occurrence and use of local direct democracy.

The analyses in this section bring two findings that relate to the aims of this dissertation. First, corroborating findings from other countries where local direct democracy is used, they show that local direct democracy should not be primarily seen as a result of participatory momentum (although an argument could be made that these referenda and initiatives served as a means of defence against some exogenous threats, thus supporting some claims of participatory theory about the importance of power decentralization) but rather as driven by strategic considerations and political tactics. I emphasized several political functions these referenda fulfilled. Second, the finding that the occurrence of local direct democracy is linked to conflicts emerging at local level casts into doubt the sources of the positive effect on political engagement. Although more research is needed on this matter, the existing evidence rather suggests that this positive effect emerges from conflicts of municipalities with their local superior or from conflicts within the community.

6 Conclusion

The conclusion of this dissertation consists of two parts. First, I summarize the results of all presented analyses and focus on how direct democracy in the Czech Republic satisfies the analytical criteria of democratic process used in this dissertation (inclusiveness, considered judgement, efficiency). Second, I deal with broader implications of these results. I discuss the relevance of the results with respect to whether direct democracy helps to bring about more responsive governance. Last, I focus on the debate about the relationship between direct and representative democracy.

The Czech Republic has seen a shift, although not a complete one, to direct democracy institutions, which are viewed as democratic innovations due to their rapid expansion, over the recent decades, in most developed countries on the local as well as national levels (Smith 2009; Altman 2010). The aim of the dissertation was to analyse the case of development of direct democracy in the Czech Republic. Although it mainly used Czech data, it also sought to engage in several key research questions related to direct forms of political participation. The findings achieved are not complete or exhaustive and should be viewed as rather provisional for the research question posed in the introductory section. This is mainly due to the fact that relevant data is not always available to support exhaustive analyses. But I consistently tried to use the available data to analyse direct democracy with respect to the three analytical criteria.

To evaluate direct democracy as a democratic innovation, I used the criteria of democratic process formulated by Smith (2009) that stem from the work of Dahl (1989; 1998). To evaluate direct democracy in the Czech Republic, I used the criteria of inclusiveness, considered judgement and efficiency (see Smith 2009). For every criterion there was a section of the dissertation which presented an analysis of the respective issue.

First I focused on the issues of inclusiveness and the sources of the expansion of institutions of direct democracy. The research questions were the following: Who supports direct democracy? Who participates in direct democracy? In what way is direct democracy (not) inclusive? Does it reproduce the existing biases in political participation or create new ones?

There were two analyses in Section 2. In the first step I focused on the strong popular support for direct democracy and where it comes from – what social groups support and promote it. In the second step I moved on to the level of participation in direct democracy and dealt with the

issue of who voted in the referenda studied. In both cases I wanted to examine the “self-selection bias” (Smith 2009: 21) that occurs (or may occur) in the case of direct democracy.

There are three hypotheses that aim to explain these issues. The cognitive mobilization hypothesis argues that it is the young and politically sophisticated who will prefer direct forms of political participation. The alienation hypothesis argues that support for direct democracy comes from those who are dissatisfied with and cynical about democracy. It is also people with rather extreme left/right political values that tend to support it. Finally, the stealth democracy hypothesis argues that strong support for direct democracy (and other alternative forms of political decision making) is not genuine; it merely responds to distrust to allegedly corrupt political elites and aims to limit their discretionary power.

The cognitive mobilization and alienation hypotheses predict that it is specific social groups that are drawn to direct democracy. Stealth democracy rather argues that people do not wish more opportunities for direct political participation and implies that expanding such opportunities would only replicate the existing (self-selection) biases.

First, I used ESS data from 2012 to analyse the sources of popular support for direct democracy. Based on standard regression methods, the results did not strongly support any of the tested hypotheses. However, it was shown that attitudes to direct democracy are not driven by socio-demographic variables but are rather a result of evaluations of representative democracy only. A more detailed, in-depth analysis of the case of the Czech Republic, based on a mixture modelling approach, showed that the most favourable attitudes to direct democracy are held by those who are extremely dissatisfied with democracy and its institutions as well as by those who are very satisfied. Also because the former group was found to be much more numerous than the latter, the findings seem to favour the stealth democracy and alienation hypotheses more than the concept of cognitive mobilization.

In the next step this finding was complemented by a case study focusing on the patterns of participation in EU accession referenda – actual voting behaviour. The results of the analyses show that while popular support for direct democracy was not driven by and related to socio-demographic variables (gender, age, education, social status), this was not the case of actual turnout in the referenda studied. In addition, in the case of participation in referenda, no support for the cognitive mobilization and alienation hypotheses was found. These findings support the consistent body of empirical evidence (Pattie et al. 2005; Smith 2009, Nevitte et al. 2009, Verba et al. 1995) that people with more socio-economic resources, such as education, income and

social status, are more likely to participate in politics and are also consistent with the argument that the expanding opportunities for political participation will benefit only those who are already politically active and thus fail to correct existing biases in political participation (Berinsky 2005: 482). So while popular support for direct democracy is generally very strong and is mainly driven by evaluations of institutions of representative democracy, it is the demographic variables and socio-economic resources that seem to drive the actual turnout in national referenda.

Nonetheless, this may not have any serious implications in terms of how direct democracy is used and what the voting behaviour is. The analyses of voting behaviour in direct democracy often provide a positive account of citizen decision making (Hobolt 2006; Hobolt 2007). It is argued that voters are rational decision makers and that they can process relevant information, form informed opinions and vote competently. In Section 3 it was shown that this idea is not precise and that citizen opinion formation and decision making is subject to bounded rationality and value ambiguity. The results of Section 3 set limits to how rational voters can be and to the kind of campaign dynamics one can expect in direct democracy campaigns. Voters always decide on the basis of underlying values which are often competing and are unranked; it cannot be expected that for each voter there would be a unique point at the underlying value scale that would fit her preferences. To sum up, voters in direct democracy use their resources to make informed choices, but this will always be subject to campaign dynamics, framing strategies and power in the public discourse, no matter how well-informed and politically sophisticated people are.

The results of the analysis have important implications related to the criterion of considered judgement. The issue is not, as elitist theorists argued (Smith 2009: 15), that citizens would lack the skills and competence to make qualified political judgements. It is rather unclear what it is that the citizens should vote about (i.e. what the underlying value dimension is), which creates space for various discursive strategies that can sway public opinion in unexpected directions.

Moving on to the consequences of direct democracy for political engagement, the fourth section was concerned with the effect of local direct democracy in the Czech Republic on engagement in terms of turnout in local and national elections. In this section I focused on the criterion of efficiency: whether direct democracy places too much burden on citizens and discourages them from political engagement or, in turn, whether it educates and stimulates them to participate in

politics more fully and more immediately. The former is predicted by the voter fatigue theory, the latter by the participatory theories of democracy.

The analysis showed that especially citizen-initiated direct democracy had a generally positive effect on turnout in various kinds of elections and even increased the number of candidates running for an office. In contrast to existing research, the analysis presented here rather gives more support to the assumptions of participatory theory. Nonetheless, I also discussed some concerns (related to endogeneity) about the possible sources of this effect, namely underlying conflicts at the local level.

The last section analysed in more detail the experience with local direct democracy in the Czech Republic. It showed that what was identified as an effect of direct democracy in Section 4 was very likely an effect of the underlying threat that caused a conflict that was channelled (also) by the institution of direct democracy. Second, the causes of the occurrence of local direct democracy in the Czech Republic over the past two decades were analysed. The results show two factors, institutional and strategic, that explain the occurrence of local referenda and initiatives. The under-regulation of NIMBY problems causes heated conflicts where direct democracy is used as a means to certain strategic ends in the struggle for power.

The findings from all the sections of this dissertation represent rather mixed evidence on direct democracy in the Czech Republic when evaluating it on the basis of inclusiveness, considered judgement and efficiency. Direct democracy on national level in the Czech Republic seems rather to replicate the existing biases in political participation and the strong popular support for it does not seem to translate into real voting behaviour. When voting in direct democracy, citizens are subject to framing discursive strategies that work no matter how well-informed they are about the issue at stake. Finally, direct democracy enacted on local level does bring about increased political engagement in subsequent elections, but this seems to be an effect of politicized local community conflict – not a pure direct effect of experience with direct forms of decision making.

To sum-up, direct democracy in the Czech Republic does not satisfy perfectly the analytical criteria of inclusiveness, considered judgement and efficiency. However, does this mean that it does not satisfy the key criteria of democratic process as such? Dahl argued that the most important feature of democracy is the “continuing responsiveness of the government to the preferences of its citizens considered as political equals” (Dahl 1971: 1). It is a core tenet of the concept of polyarchy that the system of governance should be open to citizen input. Several

institutional guarantees are suggested that should allow citizens “to formulate their preferences, signal them to each other and to government individually and collectively, and to have their preferences taken into equal consideration by the government” (Carlin and Singer 2011). So although direct democracy may not fulfil the analytical criteria perfectly, it may still represent an essential and beneficial component of democratic institutions and a complement to representative democracy, provided it contributes to greater citizen input into the political system and also to greater responsiveness.

Dahl viewed responsiveness mainly in terms of observation and translation of citizen preferences into political decisions (Lauth 2011), while democratic institutions were viewed as instrumental devices for satisfaction and protection of individual interests (Krouse 1982). Although Dahl himself was initially not overly supportive of direct democracy³³, the conceptual framework of polyarchy is open to the integration of direct democracy. Michael Saward argued that direct democracy and polyarchy are not only compatible but even that polyarchy essentially requires some form of direct democracy (Saward 2000: 6–7). It is the principles of equality (universal right to participation on collective decision making) and agenda control (popular right to decide what issues should be placed on agenda) that lead Saward to conclude that the concept of polyarchy also means and includes (Saward 2000: 18) “adoption of an array of direct democratic mechanisms on the basis of the meaning of fundamental democratic principles”.

The question is not whether direct democracy constitutes a more responsive form of governance than representative democracy. The question is, rather, if direct democracy institutions, when used in the system of representative institutions, contribute to greater responsiveness of government to citizen preferences. Several findings of this dissertation support the idea that direct democracy in the Czech Republic does increase the responsiveness to citizen preferences by elected officials as well as citizens themselves.

First, local direct democracy enables citizens to bring issues onto the agenda and better includes other non-governmental actors such as NGOs. In addition, the analysis of local referenda and initiatives showed that direct democracy helps defend citizen interests and preferences, namely through its power reinforcing and legitimation function (Morel 2007). But the practice of local direct democracy shows that in the case of the Czech Republic it is not only the responsiveness

³³ In his earlier work Dahl viewed direct participation as unnecessary or even harmful; later he began to include and acknowledge participation as somewhat beneficial and valuable.

of representatives to citizens, but also the responsiveness of state administration to local/municipal administration that is enhanced by direct democracy.

Second, local direct democracy contributes to politicization of local affairs, essentially by creating arenas for political contestation. The fact that local direct democracy is used strategically in conflicts at local level (Lainsley 2012) should not be viewed as a dysfunction of direct democracy but rather as its strength. It represents an institutional device that allows for preference aggregation, contestation, collective action and channelling of conflicts (Fatke and Freitag 2013). The three case studies in Section 5 show that it constitutes an arena and opportunity structure, a “valve” that contributes to performing politics at the local level.

Third, the analysis of campaigns in referenda showed that although voter competence and enlightened understanding are questionable in the case of direct democracy, the much contested and often conflictual campaigns in local and national direct democracy manifest the dynamic and volatile processes of opinion formation. Great volatility and frequent shifts in preferences in campaigns may not be viewed only as an effect of framing strategies and manipulation but also as a manifestation of conflict and struggle between different interpretations, interests and values. By creating arenas with majority voting, direct democracy invites conflicts, encourages public contestation and exposes power relations. Although direct democracy bypasses deliberation and consensus, it constitutes a terrain in which interests, preferences and values are mobilized around objectives that are channelled within a democratic process. From this perspective, the value of direct democracy lies in the fact that it allows for pluralistic contestation of values and reflects not only the multiplicity of voices that exist in modern societies but also the complexity of their (dispersed) power structures (Mouffe 2000: 17).

On the other hand, there is also a threat that direct democracy may represent for responsiveness of government to citizen interests and preferences. Since direct democracy is based on majority voting, it may potentially lead to oppression of minority rights. This may cause unequal distribution of resources or jeopardize egalitarian goals. For example, U.S. research on the issue warns that the use of direct democracy leads to systematic oppression of the rights of minorities, gay and lesbian civil rights in particular (Haider-Merkel et al. 2007). This may lead to a situation when preferences and interests of minorities are oppressed at the expense of majoritarian values. The fact that direct democracy is based on equal distribution of power says nothing about the outcome of the process. If we settled for only such procedural conception of democracy, then the results of such process would likely violate the basic values associated with democracy

(Dworkin 2002: 186; Christiano 2004) by systematically favouring majority values, interests and preferences over different ones, with only weak safeguards for minority preferences (see Vargas 1999; Johanningmeier 2007).

Finally, in Section 2 of this dissertation I showed that the people who were most dissatisfied with democratic performance in the Czech Republic were also, at the same time, most supportive of more frequent use of direct democracy. This interconnection between dissatisfaction with democratic institutions and support for direct democracy has been (mis)used by political parties to achieve electoral success. Political parties have generally promoted and approved laws enabling direct democracy in situations of upcoming elections, when threatened by electoral loss (Smith and Fridkin 2008). But also the Czech Republic and other post-communist countries have experience with breakthroughs of new anti-establishment parties which successfully used the narrative of corrupt political parties, argued that governments should be run like businesses, and proposed greater use of direct democracy. Hanley and Sikk (2014) show that in the post-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe, it was the configuration of long-term established “ossified” political parties exposed to this narrative that made these breakthroughs possible. Because support for direct democracy is associated with strong dissatisfaction with democracy, the discourse of direct democracy has been used repeatedly by political parties to gain popular support without relying much on substantive values and preferences. This interconnection between dissatisfaction with the performance of democratic institutions and support for direct democracy will very likely remain one of the key drivers of the expansion of direct democracy in developed societies.

In the introductory section I argued that the use of direct democracy in modern societies is only possible in combination with the representative one and that direct democracy’s claim to popular control has to be subject to some restrictions. Even some proponents of direct democracy (Budge 2006; Saward 1998, 2003) suggested that direct democracy should be embedded within the institutions of representative democracy.

So what should be the role of direct democracy in systems based on representative democracy? An in-depth discussion is beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, the findings summarized above show that direct democracy suffers from similar externalities and failures that plague representative democracy. Therefore, it cannot be argued that one form of democracy is superior (in terms of democratic goods and overall responsiveness) to the other. I

conclude this dissertation by considering several ways of embedding direct democracy in a representative system of governance.

Saward (2003) proposed that direct democracy procedures, including citizen initiatives and popular referenda, should be integrated in and combined with institutions of deliberation in a single democratic process. Such a process could start with citizen initiatives, continue by public as well parliamentary deliberation and finish with approval by legislature and in popular referendum. A single democratic process would thus include several different elements of various democratic institutions. Saward claimed that the strength of his approach (called reflexive proceduralism) stems from the fact that different democratic procedures have specific strengths. He proposed combining and rearranging them in order to meet democratic principles such as equality, transparency, inclusion etc.

Budge (1996; 2006) presented some revealing arguments about the complementarities between direct and representative democracy. He claimed that the arguments about their incompatibility are exaggerated. Both mechanisms should respect and be based on median policy preferences. Budge proposed that the division of labour should be issue-based. When the issues fit the traditional right-left cleavage and strongly relate to other policy concerns (such as income redistribution), they should be left to representative democracy. Those issues that are less clearly related to the right-left framework and have long-term implications (such as constitutional amendments) should be decided by popular vote.

In addition, Budge (2006) argued that direct democracy has been, in many countries, essential and beneficial for the development of party democracy. Direct democracy creates a new arena for political struggle and adds to the repertoire political parties and other groups can use in the democratic process. Direct democracy essentially represents a tool in party competition: new and opposition parties in Switzerland and the U.S. have repeatedly used direct democracy to publicize themselves and to oppose the government and ruling parties. From this perspective, direct democracy can even be viewed as a “force restoring and assisting party competition”.

Another possible division of labour stems from the analysis of voting behaviour and local direct democracy. I showed that referenda and initiatives are used as a “valve”, an opportunity structure. They allow for mobilization and channelling of conflicts. Direct democracy constitutes an arena of public contestation. The nature of campaign dynamics and political cleavages in direct democracy is very different from elections. It is far from careful rational deliberation (Plotke 1997) and is subject to volatility and great shifts in public opinion.

Although it is a process that involves power and influence and is far from a sum of autonomous choices, it is a democratic process that enables contestation of values and conflict resolution. So another way to combine representative and direct democracy is to allow one to review the other. There is no reason why decisions in representative democracy should not be reviewed in direct democracy and vice versa. This would enable a reciprocal, two-way evaluation of democratic decision making based on different democratic processes. This idea is very close to the way institutions of direct democracy are used in Switzerland. The existing research shows that although the process of direct democracy in Switzerland leads to decreased electoral turnout due to voter fatigue, it also enhances satisfaction with democracy and democratic institutions.

7 Résumé

V posledních několika desetiletích dochází ve většině vyspělých zemí k rozvoji institutů přímé demokracie na národní i lokální úrovni. Česká republika nepředstavuje výjimku a v posledních 20 letech prodělala postupný, ačkoliv neúplný, rozvoj směřující k přímým formám vládnutí.

Cílem disertační práce je na příkladu České republiky analyzovat příčiny rozvoje přímé demokracie, způsob jejího využívání a dopady na další politickou participaci. Ačkoli je práce založena především na českých datech, jejím smyslem je také reagovat na existující zahraniční vědecké analýzy, které se týkají zkoumaného tématu. Práce se zaměřuje na následující otázky: Jaké jsou příčiny rozvoje přímé demokracie, kdo ji podporuje a kdo se přímé demokracie aktivně účastní? Jak si voliči tvoří volební postoje a jaké jsou charakteristiky volebního chování v přímé demokracii? Jaký je vliv přímé demokracie na další formy politické participace a politickou angažovanost?

Disertační práce analyzuje přímou demokracii v České republice jako formu institucionální inovace. Pro empirickou analýzu využívám rámec, který posuzuje demokratické inovace z hlediska naplnění následujících funkcí: inkluзивity, kompetence a efektivity. Definice a výběr těchto kritérií vychází z konceptu polyarchie, který byl zaveden Robertem Dahlem.

Výsledky analýz ukazují, že v českém kontextu tyto funkce naplňuje přímá demokracie pouze částečně: Ačkoliv existuje velmi silná veřejná podpora institutům přímé demokracie, důvodem nejsou rostoucí politické zdroje občanů a zájem účastnit se politiky přímo. Je spíše důsledkem nedůvěry a nespokojenosti s politikou a institucemi reprezentativní demokracie. Přímá demokracie dále spíše reprodukuje nerovnosti v politické participaci a nemobilizuje občany, kteří stojí mimo politický proces. Rozhodování voličů v přímé demokracii je sice založeno na informacích o tématu hlasování, ale lidé při tvorbě svých postojů podléhají nejrozličnějším diskurzivním strategiím a dle nich upravují své hlasování. Na druhou stranu, přímá demokracie nevede k poklesu zájmu o politiku, ale naopak zvyšuje účast v následujících zastupitelských volbách.

Výsledky dílčích analýz ukazují, že přímá demokracie naplňuje kritéria inkluзивity, kompetence a efektivity pouze částečně. I přes tyto nedostatky ale přímá demokracie přináší do

politického systému větší otevřenost a činí politické rozhodování ve společnosti citlivějším k zájmům občanů.

8 References

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