

# The Need for Political Parties in Switzerland

Guarin Flück  
Marc Glettig

Matthias Minder  
Oriane Peter

## The Naive Obviousness of Political Parties

It is very rare for a democratic political system not to have parties. They are often considered as needed due to two assumptions:

1. *Political parties regroup politicians of similar opinions*
2. *Political parties are needed to form a government*

Political parties have their downsides:

- *Politicians are often forced to join parties to be successful*
- *Politicians will then often vote in party interest, regardless of their personal opinion.*

Do political parties make sense in the peculiar Swiss democratic system?

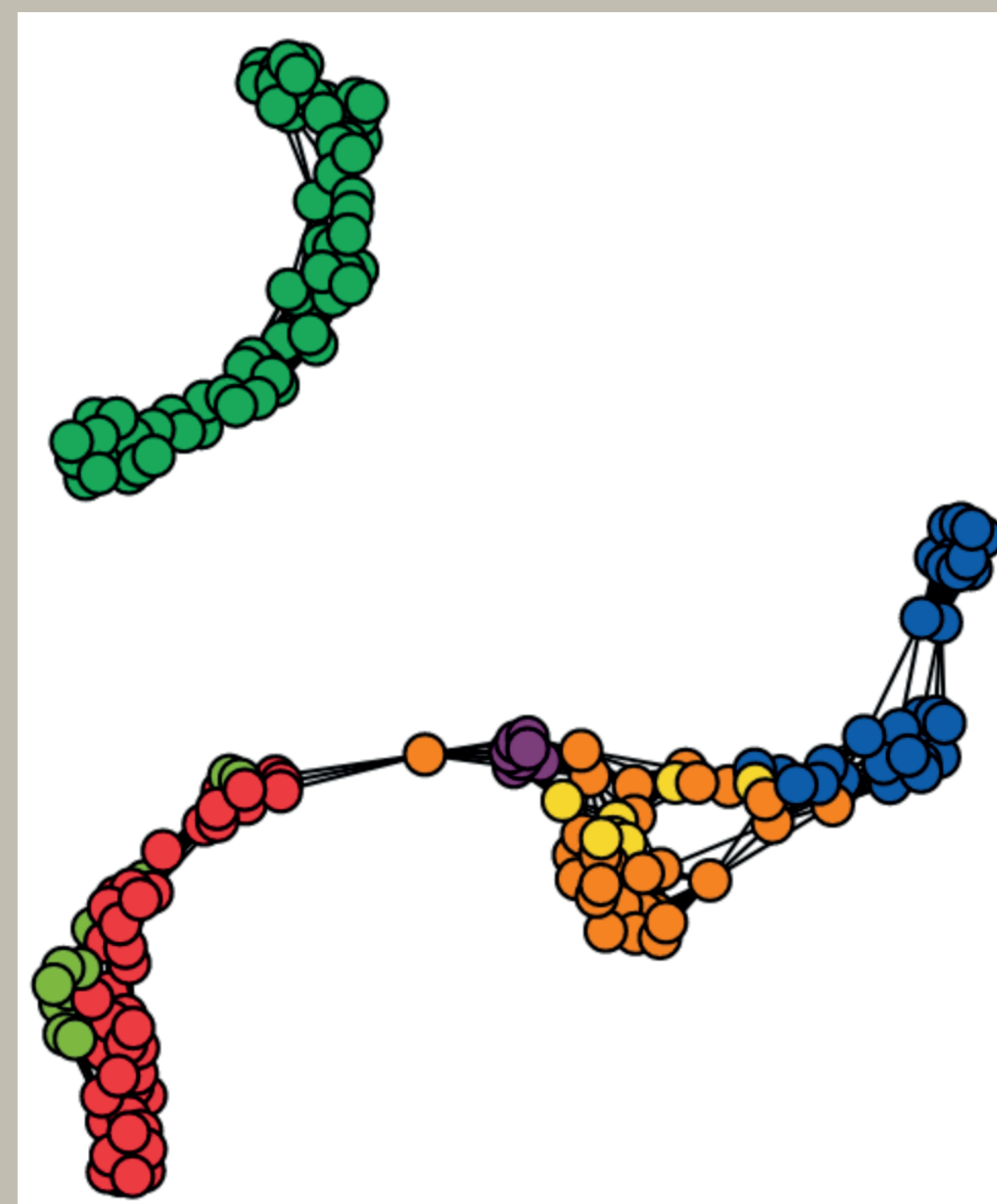
To answer this let's challenge the two assumptions.

## The Data

The analysis is based on voting records of members of the Swiss legislative power. From this we infer a social network where politicians with similar voting behaviors are connected. The data are openly accessible at [www.parlement.ch](http://www.parlement.ch)

## Assumption 1: Regrouping People

Our data-inferred social network naturally re-grouped members of the same party. It seems that the first assumption of usefulness is justified.

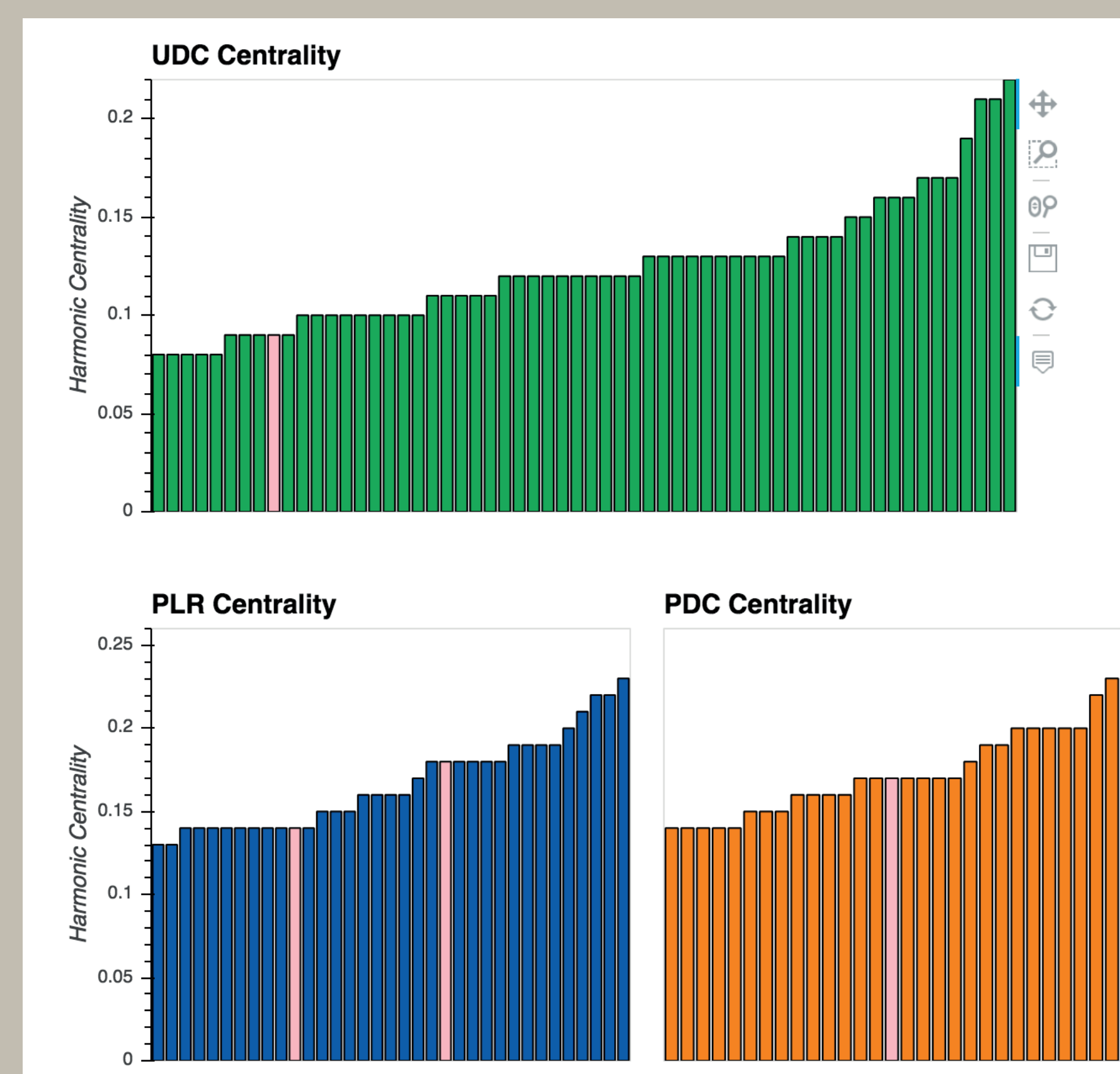


*A social network of politicians*

## Assumption 2: Government Formation

The government in Switzerland is conceived to be representative of the population.

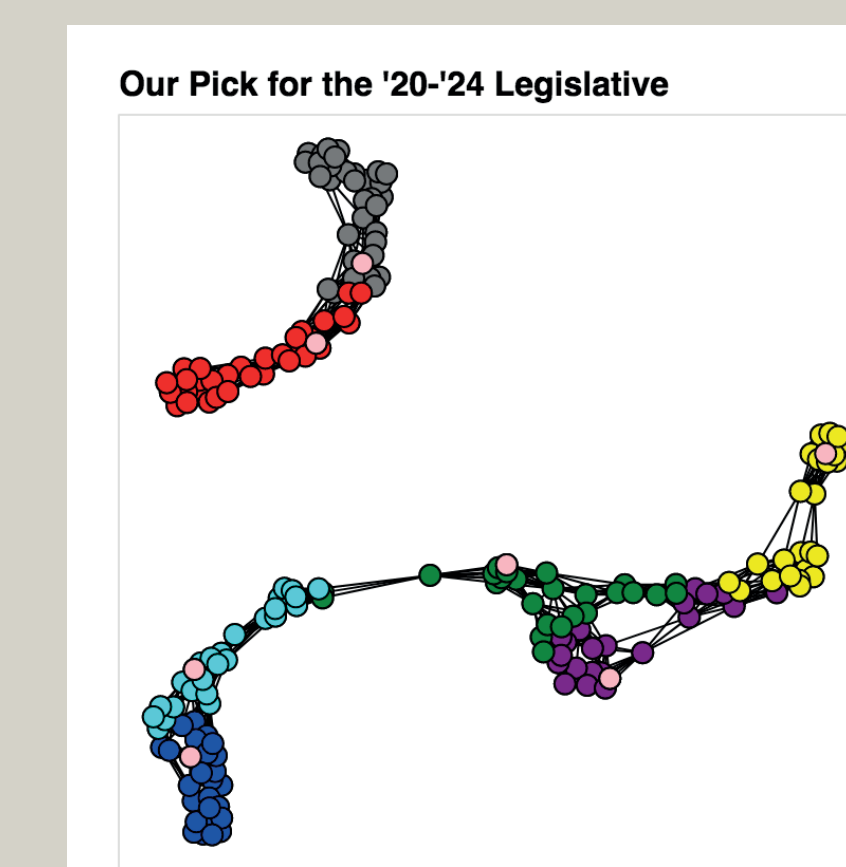
Yet, we see that the members of the government aren't central to their party. This means that the executive branch is a suboptimal representation of voter opinion.



## A Data-Driven Way to Choose the Executive

We propose a new method for picking federal councillors that does not rely on political party and that ensures that the political landscape is better represented:

1. *Create 7 clusters of even size*
2. *Pick the most central node in each*



## Conclusion

Only one of the two assumptions on the necessity of political parties can be justified in Switzerland. While political parties are useful to regroup people of similar political opinion, they are not needed to form a government. Furthermore, a data-driven way of choosing the government would lead to a more representative elective power.