

The Need for Political Parties in Switzerland

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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?

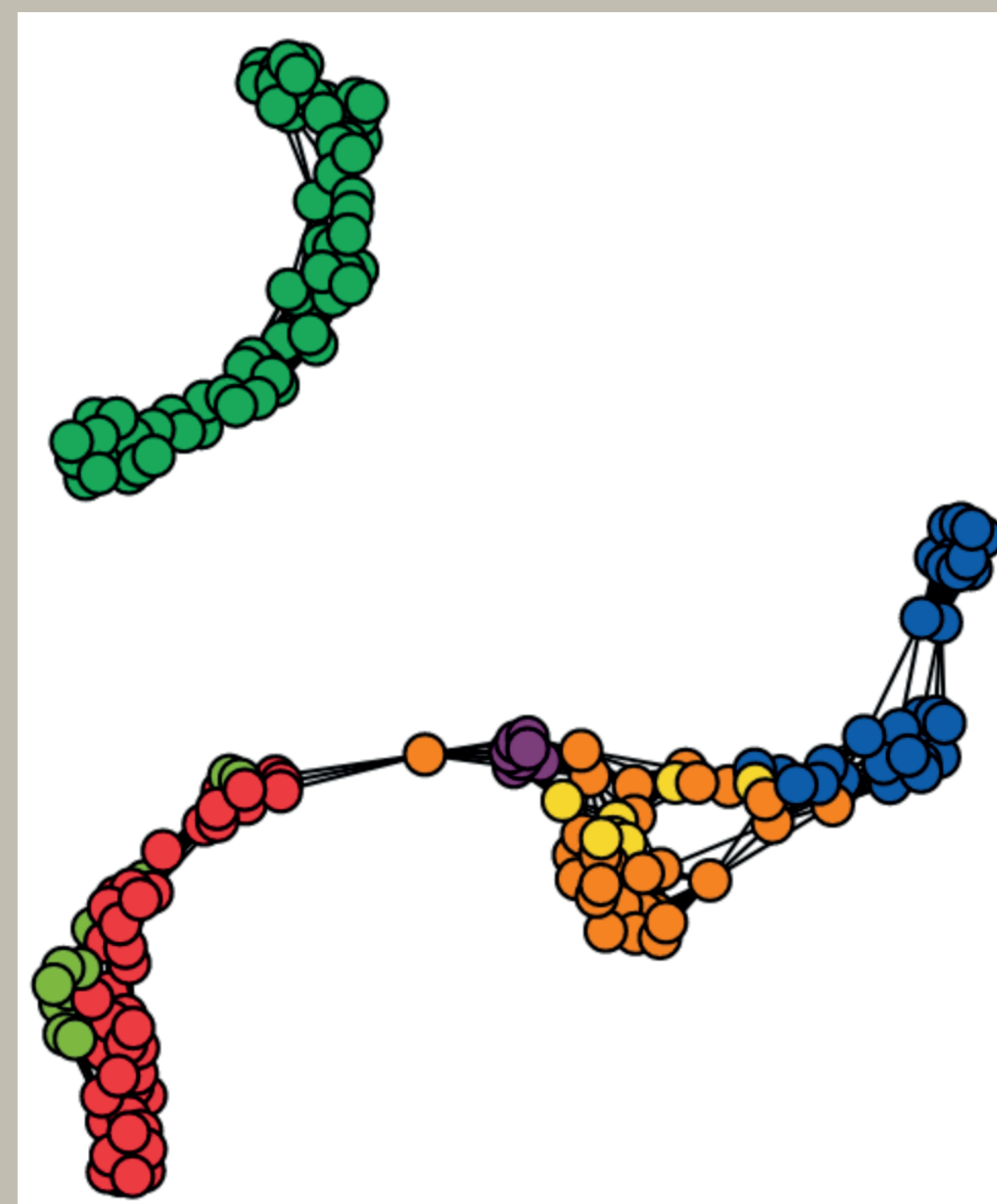
To answer this let's challenge the two assumptions.

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

Assumption 1: Regrouping People ✓

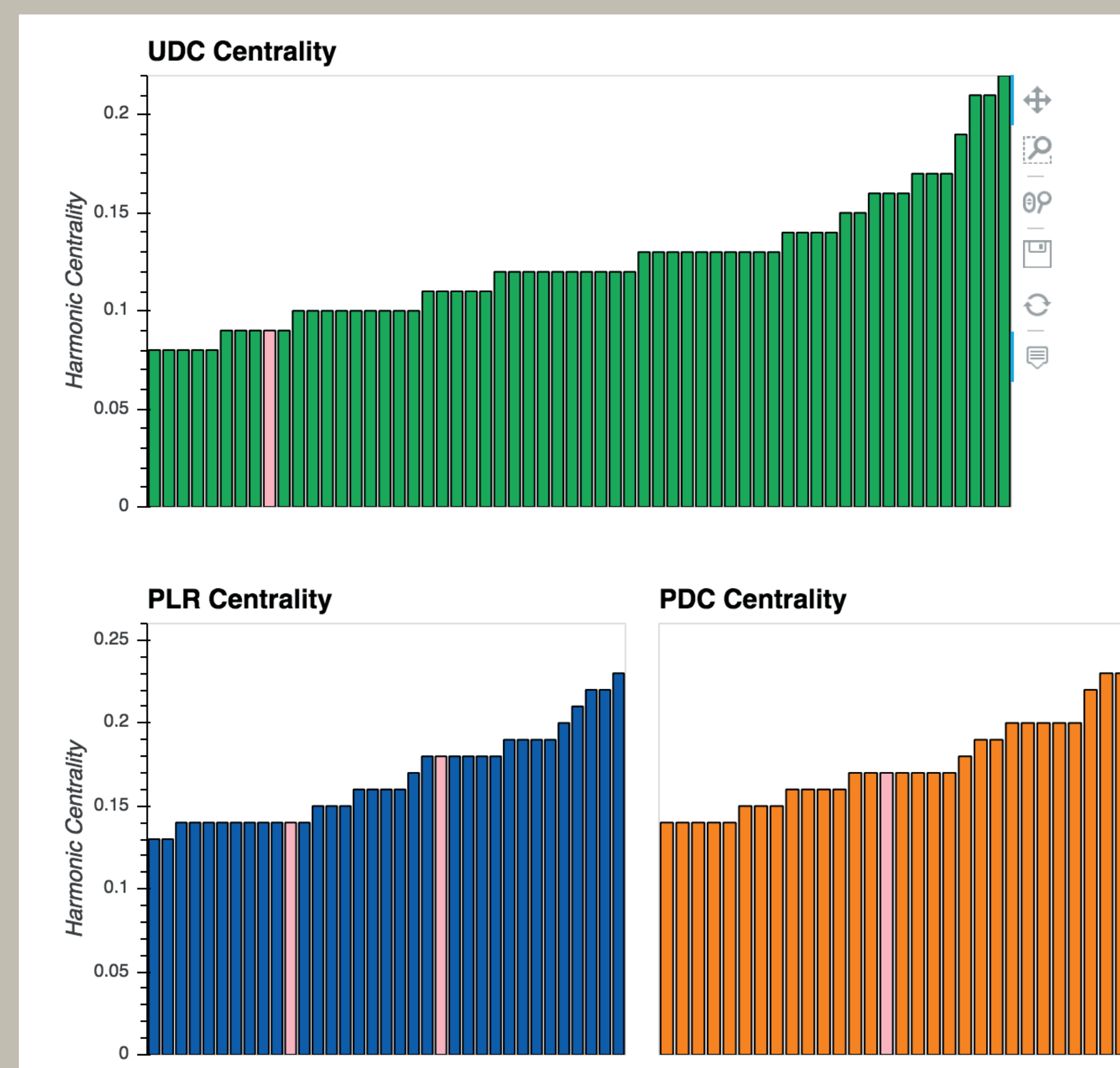
Our data-inferred social network naturally re-grouped members of the same party. It seems that the first assumption of usefulness is justified.



A social network of politicians

Assumption 2: Government Formation ✗

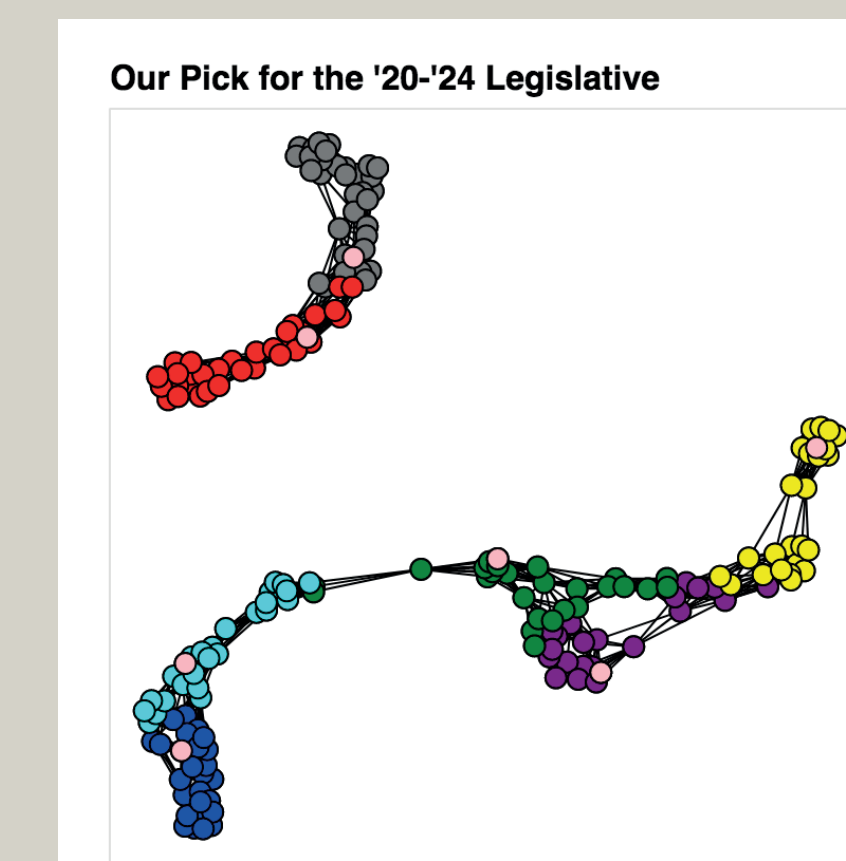
The government in Switzerland is conceived to be representative of the population. Yet, we see that the members of the government aren't central to their party. This means that the executive branch is a suboptimal representation of voter opinion.



Fixing Government Formation

We propose a data-driven method for picking federal councillors that does not rely on political parties 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*



This shows that political parties are not necessary to form the Swiss elective power, which further discredits the second assumption.