

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SMDPR VS OTHER PR ELECTORAL SYSTEMS

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The **SMDPR** (Single Member District Proportional Representation; ref. denisfalvey.com) electoral system is a clever innovation that provides significant advantages over the two established PR systems (MMP and STV), but unfortunately is also seriously flawed. This analysis is intended to objectively examine its strengths and weaknesses, which reveal important aspects of all electoral systems.

In comparison with **MMP** (Mixed Member Proportional), SMDPR has the following advantages:

- SMDPR guarantees to provide perfectly proportional results, with no change to the existing ballot or voting process, whereas MMP is comparatively inferior on each of these factors.
- SMDPR requires no changes to existing ridings, whereas MMP requires some combination of approximately 50% larger ridings or more MPs (i.e. MMP needs about one-third to one-half of the seats in Parliament to be 'compensatory', to offset the disproportionality of those elected under First-Past-The-Post).
- SMDPR has only one class of MP, and all members are directly elected by and accountable to their constituents, whereas MMP has a mix of about two-thirds (to one-half) who are elected directly and the remainder filled from 'party lists'.
- SMDPR has no vulnerability to voters or parties 'gaming' the system, whereas MMP (with separate votes for a local candidate and a party) is vulnerable to the possibility that voters or parties (e.g. in known coalitions) may be able to benefit from both the candidate and party vote (i.e. effectively two votes from a single ballot).

In comparison with **STV** (Single Transferable Vote), SMDPR has the following advantages:

- SMDPR guarantees perfectly proportional results, with no change to the existing ballot or voting process, whereas STV provides much less than perfect proportionality and requires a far more complicated ballot and voting procedure.
- SMDPR requires no changes to existing ridings, whereas STV requires multiple (typically five) ridings to be combined into a much larger voting district with multiple elected members.
- Under SMDPR, most MPs are elected by winning a plurality (or majority) in their riding, whereas under STV most MPs are elected with a considerably lower fraction of the vote according to a calculated quota (e.g. *one-sixth* plus one in a *five* riding district) based on the district's number of elected members.
- Both SMDPR and STV suffer from exceptionally convoluted vote counting processes.

These advantages of SMDPR over MMP and STV are impressive. Alas, there is a very damaging downside to SMDPR. To quote its author:

"The devil's due is that majority and/or plurality results lose, about one-in-five cases. In other words, local politics must occasionally defer to national democracy."

Elections must serve two essential functions:

1. To elect a local MP (Member of Parliament).
2. To elect a Government, led by the party (or coalition) with the most MPs.

The fundamental premise of Democracy, based on 'Majority Rule', is that all elections should always fulfill both of these essential functions, through an electoral process that determines and faithfully represents the true 'Will of the People'.

The hard fact is that it's virtually impossible to design an ideal electoral system (i.e. other than **PPR123**) that can deliver both local and national results that comply with 'Majority Rule' and truly represent the 'Will of the People'.

The great flaw of SMDPR lies in *how* it achieves perfectly proportional results.

SMDPR enshrines the ideal of PR above all else—even above the basic principles of Democracy. SMDPR admirably achieves its primary goal of ensuring that the 'Will of the People' is truly fulfilled at the national level, by ensuring that the parliamentary voting power (i.e. the number of elected members) of each party is in perfect balance with its national vote-share. But SMDPR can only achieve this through gross violations of both the principles of Democracy and the expressed 'Will of the People' at the local level.

In contrast with MMP, which is designed to 'compensate' parties for disproportionate 'under-representation' arising from FPP (First-Past-the-Post), SMDPR is designed to prevent any 'over-representation' or 'under-representation' through its unique method of translating Citizens' votes into elected representatives. SMDPR allocates seats to each party under an almost perfectly proportional quota basis (i.e. with each party's number of seats determined by their total vote-share within each province/territory).

Under SMDPR, all riding winners from 'under-represented' parties (i.e. fewer winners than their proportional quota) would be declared elected in the seats they won. However, for any party that was 'over-represented' (i.e. more winners than their proportional quota), their winning candidates would be ranked in an 'order of merit', based on their total votes (or vote-share) in each riding. The 'superior' winners (i.e. those who ranked above the quota number of seats for their party) would be declared elected; the 'inferior' winners (i.e. those ranked below their party's proportional quota) would be declared 'not elected' and, in each of those ridings, replaced by the leading candidate (i.e. the best 'loser') from another party for which their quota was not yet filled!?

Beyond the fact that selecting winners according to rank ordered vote-share is based on a flawed premise that may advantage some comparatively mediocre winners who faced inferior competition (over 'better' candidates who won with fewer votes against stronger competition), the entire process is a discriminatory and convoluted violation of the basic principles of Democracy.

The implications of SMDPR in the 2015 would have been that almost one-third of the 'over-represented' Liberal winners would not have been elected. Once the top-ranked Liberal candidates were declared elected and their party's quota was filled, approximately 50 seats actually won by lower-ranked Liberals would instead have been filled by a second or third place 'defeated' candidate from another party that was under-represented (until their quotas were filled). That would certainly not be a reflection of the expressed 'Will of the People'; and that would be an outright violation of an essential principle of Democracy.

The electorate (as well as the politicians and the candidates) would probably not accept that the fundamental principles of Democracy should be arbitrarily abrogated in an unprincipled pursuit of PR, and would almost certainly not tolerate such an obvious injustice.

Nonetheless, it can be argued that SMDPR is in many important ways superior to both MMP and STV, by avoiding nearly all of the problematic defects of each. Furthermore, the most problematic defects of MMP and SMDPR are strikingly parallel, and qualitatively not so different as it may initially appear. MMP achieves quasi-PR by ‘disallowing’ the democratic election of about one-third of MPs, and substituting ‘party lists’ as the basis of filling the ‘compensatory’ seats; SMDPR achieves perfect PR by overturning the democratic election of about one-fifth of MPs, but does this on an ‘order of merit’ basis. Which form of “*the devil’s due*” is worse? It is contended that the degree to which SMDPR is fundamentally undemocratic is probably only more conspicuously obvious—rather than intrinsically worse on balance—than MMP and STV.

With the conventional types of PR based on the various contrived ways of fudging the number of members to match the vote-share of each party, “*the devil’s due*” is that these must inescapably involve blatant violations of the principles of Democracy. It’s mathematically impossible to fulfill *both* of the essential principles of Democracy (i.e. ‘Majority Rule’, and representation of the ‘Will of the People’) simultaneously—at both local and national levels—while complying with the traditional constraint that the parliamentary voting power of each party is determined by their number of elected (and unelected) members (i.e. *one-member = one-vote*).

At opposite ends of the electoral spectrum, IRV (Instant Runoff Voting, also known as AV or Alternative Vote) is in perfect compliance with ‘Majority Rule’ at the local level, whereas SMDPR is in perfect compliance with the ‘Will of the People’ at the national level. [Each fails quite badly at the other level: nationally, IRV misrepresents the ‘Will of the People’; locally, SMDPR does not comply with ‘Majority Rule’.]

MMP and STV also both fail the ‘Majority Rule’ criteria at the local level. MMP arguably does a better job of fulfilling the ‘Will of the People’ at the national level—yet there’s a general consensus that STV is overall superior to MMP (the BC Citizens’ Assembly of 160 citizens chose STV over MMP by 80% to 20% after an in-depth study). But both of them also have other serious defects that fall under the broad description of “*the devil’s due*”.

In striking contrast to all of the flawed electoral systems, **PPR123** guarantees ‘Perfect Proportional Representation’ and ‘Voter Equality’—by design. **PPR123** is a hybrid solution that ensures strict fulfillment of each of the essential criteria of Democracy, at both the local and the national levels. Locally, **PPR123** uses IRV to ensure that every member elected is the ‘*rightful*’ winner under the basic democratic principle of ‘Majority Rule’. Nationally, **PPR123** ensures the fulfillment of the ‘Will of the People’ through proxy voting in Parliament, with the parliamentary voting power of each party being derived directly from –and precisely equal to–their total number of Citizens’ votes (i.e. ‘*honest*’ and uncoerced 1st-choice votes).

In conclusion, it is clear that the only way to ensure true democratic legitimacy of all elected members is through fulfillment of the first principle of Democracy, ‘Majority Rule’ (as with IRV or **PPR123**). And the only way to *also* ensure that the national result fulfills the second principle of Democracy, the ‘Will of the People’, is to have a *hybrid* voting system (**PPR123**) with proxy voting by elected representatives—which guarantees Perfect Proportional Representation by giving each party precisely their fair share of parliamentary voting power that is directly determined by their total number of Citizens’ votes (i.e. including all votes for defeated candidates).