Questions Similarity in Voting Advice Applications

"Politics is such a mess! So many candidates, so many opinions – how am I supposed to figure out who actually aligns with me?" Well, good news: there's an app for that! Voting advice applications (VAAs) like Smartvote[1] have been gaining traction in recent years. Such applications typically work as follows: first, enthusiastic (or strategic) candidates go through a 50-question marathon on pressing political issues. Then, voters take the same questionnaire and get matched with the politicians who best reflect their views.

Sounds like a win-win scenario, right? Politicians boost their visibility and potentially sway undecided voters, while citizens get valuable political guidance and (ideally) better democratic representation. Everyone walks away happier! Well... not so fast. How do we ensure these systems remain fair and unbiased? The recommendations made to voters rely on a number of key factors – like the distance metric used to match them with candidates or, even more crucially, the specific selection of questions in the questionnaire.
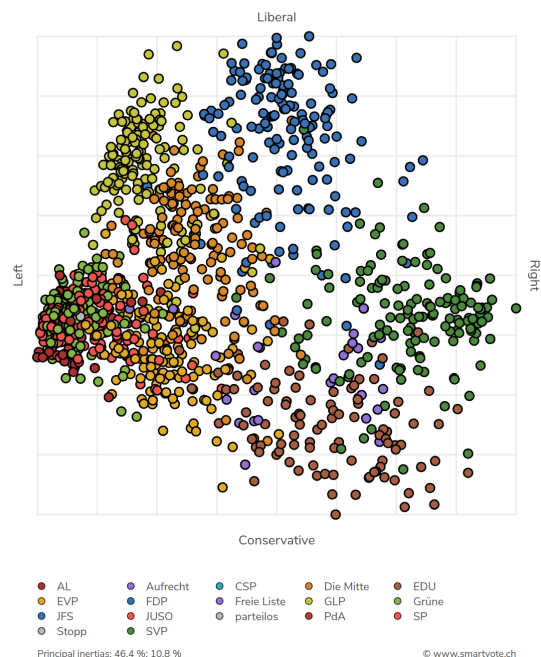

In this project, you will investigate the impact of question similarity in Voting Advice Application and explore strategies to mitigate its effects. We will have weekly meetings to discuss progress, open questions and the next steps.

Requirements: Strong motivation, ability to work independently, and interest in conducting exciting theoretical research. Solid background in mathematics and data science. Good programming skills, in particular with Python. Coming up with your own original ideas is highly appreciated, an interest in politics is a significant plus.

Interested? Please reach out for more details!
Describe your motivation for the project in a few sentences, along with any relevant courses or prior projects (personal or academic).

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[1]Go ahead, take the Zurich 2024 cantonal election questionnaire for a spin! https://www.smartvote.ch/fr/group/53/election/23_zh_leg/matching/questionnaire/deluxe/category/1