

New Democracy Barometer shows how democratic the thirty best democracies are

In cooperation with the Social Science Research Center Berlin (WZB), the NCCR Democracy designed a new instrument that measures the quality of democracy of the thirty most established democracies in the world and shows their development over time. The Democracy Barometer was developed in order to overcome the shortcomings of existing indices of democracy. While it reveals some interesting surprises regarding the countries under study, it found no evidence of an overall crisis or a decline in the quality of democracy.

Country	1995	2005	MEAN
Denmark	87.7	88.6	88.30
Finland	86.4	88.3	87.77
Belgium	83.2	86.4	85.12
Iceland	80.0	86.3	83.51
Sweden	80.7	83.3	82.92
Norway	80.8	83.2	82.12
Canada	76.1	81.8	79.41
Netherlands	77.1	81.0	78.97
Luxembourg	69.0	71.6	75.21
United States	75.6	73.4	74.88
Germany	72.5	71.5	73.19
New Zealand	68.1	72.0	72.08
Slovenia	68.4	71.3	69.59
Switzerland	61.0	73.7	67.77
Ireland	68.2	66.8	67.02
Portugal	67.8	62.7	66.73
Spain	63.9	66.7	66.61
Australia	65.1	63.8	65.47
Hungary	60.7	61.9	63.16
Austria	62.6	65.5	63.07
Czech Republic	60.4	53.2	58.25
Italy	56.7	47.4	56.98
Cyprus	53.2	55.7	55.45
Malta	46.0	57.2	54.20
Japan	39.2	50.9	45.78
United Kingdom	37.9	47.9	44.61
France	40.7	39.6	42.82
Poland	38.1	45.9	41.98
South Africa	34.5	38.6	39.83
Costa Rica	31.0	29.2	32.70

Figure 1: The quality of democracy in 30 established democracies (MEAN = 1995 to 2005) www.democracybarometer.org

By Marc Bühlmann, Wolfgang Merkel and Lisa Müller

The aim of the Democracy Barometer is to measure the differences in the quality of democracy between the thirty most established democracies and across time. Thus it shows the strengths and weaknesses of the individual countries and also reveals where progress and success have been achieved and where it is worth studying the best practices of successful democracies more closely. In order to be as transparent as possible, the results of the Democracy Barometer can be publicly accessed on its website (www.democracybarometer.org), which presents the rankings, diagrams, data and country analyses. The study so far spans the years 1995–2005; however, a second dataset including the years 1990 to 1994 and 2006/2007 and more than 20 additional countries will be released this year.

Why a new democracy barometer?

Measuring the degree of democracy is nothing new and has a long tradition in political science. Previous indices such

as *Polity*, *Freedom House* or the *Vanhanen's* index are useful to differentiate between democracies and autocracies. However, they cannot measure the subtle differences in the quality of established democracies. All established democracies simply get the maximum score – in the case of *Polity*, some of them have even been rated perfect democracies since the 19th century (e.g. the United States or Switzerland). This shortcoming is the main reason why several new indices have been developed recently that try to measure the quality of established democracies. Some of these new indices, however, just rely on previous indices and/or expert ratings (e.g. the democracy index from the *Economist Intelligence Unit 2010*, the *Bertelsmann Sustainable Governance* or www.democracyranking.org). But the reliability of subjective expert ratings is questionable and in the case of

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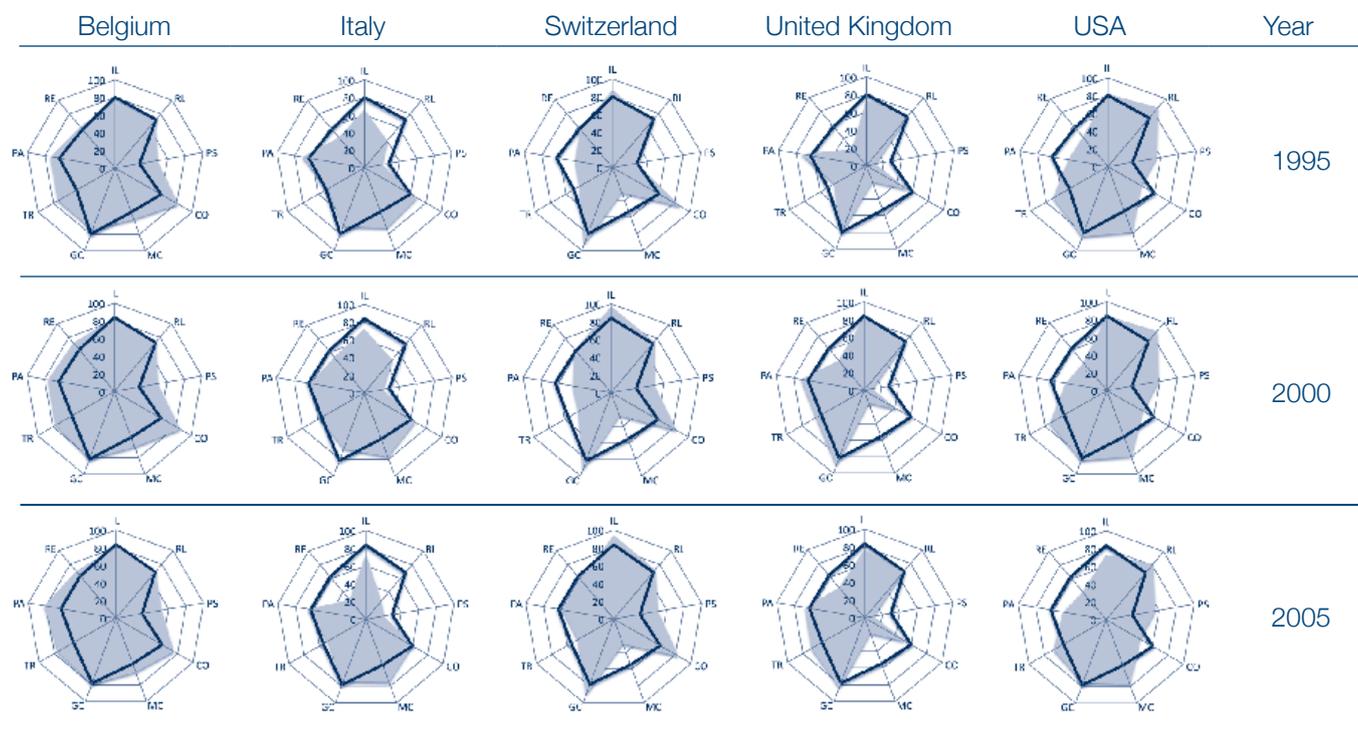


Figure 2: The quality of democracy in selected countries and over time. IL: Individual Liberties; RL: Rule of Law; PS: Public Sphere; CO: Competition; MC: Mutual Constraints; GC: Governmental Capability; TR: Transparency; PA: Participation; RE: Representation.

the *Economist's Democracy Index* not even very scientific due to a lack of transparent information on the measurement. Thus, a more objective and differentiated measure is needed. The NCCR Democracy Barometer complies with these conditions.

How is democracy measured?

In order to overcome the conceptual minimalism of previous measures of democracy, the Democracy Barometer embraces liberal as well as participatory ideas of democracy. The starting point is the premise that a democratic system tries to establish a good balance between freedom and equality, and that this requires control. Control is important in a democracy because it is the institutionalized checking of the political authorities that distinguishes democratic systems from autocracies. These three prin-

ciples are ensured by three functions each: individual liberties, rule of law and public voice ensure freedom; competition, mutual constraints and governmental capability measure control; transparency, participation and representation secure equality. The Democracy Barometer uses 100 indicators to measure how well a country complies with these principles and functions. We argue that the degrees of fulfilment of these nine functions define the quality of democracy. Therefore, the quality of democracy is high when the degree of fulfilment of all functions is high and when all functions score on similar levels. The data are drawn from representative surveys and statistics and from different sources in order to reduce measurement errors. The results of the analysis are best illustrated by cobweb charts where the axes represent the democratic functions. As shown in figure 2, both the size and the shapes of the cob-

webs differ considerably across countries as well as across time.

This provides evidence for our assumption that each given democracy weights the principles and functions differently as a consequence of ongoing political as well as societal deliberation. However, even though a simultaneous maximization of all nine functions is not possible, their combination can be optimized to increase the overall quality of democracy. We therefore argue that the countries also differ in terms of their quality of democracy.

Plausibility and surprises in the country ranking

At first glance, the ranking (see fig. 1) and the development of the countries according to their overall mean score of the quality of democracy between 1995 and 2005 seem quite plausible. The Scandi-

navian countries, including Denmark and Iceland, on average rank in the top six whereas younger democracies such as Costa Rica, South Africa, Poland, Cyprus, or the Czech Republic are among the group of countries with the lowest relative quality of democracy. In some countries the development of the overall score quite nicely conforms to intuitive expectations: in Italy or the United States, for instance, one could interpret the downtrend of the quality of democracy as a consequence of the policies enacted by the Berlusconi and the Bush administrations. In both countries, the quality of democracy declined after 2001 – i.e. after the government had changed. While in the USA this can be primarily explained by a deterioration of ‘individual liberties’, it is the functions ‘rule of law’ and ‘representation’ that suffered the most in Italy. But political events can also lead to progress in the quality of democracy: following the electoral victory of Blair in 1997, for example, a sharp increase in the principle of equality took place in Great Britain. The reform of the electoral system in New Zealand (with the first elections under the new system in 1996) explains the leap forward of the functions ‘competition’, ‘participation’ and ‘representation’. Finally, the sudden improvement of the Swiss quality of democracy in 1999 is mostly due to the total revision of the Swiss constitution in 1999. It is important to note that there are no indicators included in the Democracy Barometer that measure the welfare state, the party composition of governments or electoral systems. Thus, the described results are not mere artifacts.

At a second glance, the rankings according to the mean quality of democracy between 1995 and 2005 of some

countries are rather surprising. Belgium, for instance – a country where political agreement seems to be at least very difficult to establish – ranks third overall. By contrast, the UK – the ‘home country’ of democracy so to speak – finds itself at the bottom of the ranking (26th). The mediocre 14th place of Switzerland could also leave us puzzled. However, with these three seemingly deviant cases the power of the Democracy Barometer can be nicely illustrated.

Compared to the overall mean of all countries (black lines) as well as to the other countries in figure 2, Belgium’s nine functions, for example, are much more balanced. Additionally, Belgium scores comparatively high in ‘public sphere’, ‘competition’, ‘transparency’ and ‘participation’: the high degree of associational density, the relative freedom of the media from political control and the high and, above all, equal participation are the most important factors for Belgium’s high quality of democracy. At the same time, the cobweb also shows the weaknesses of Belgium: not very well fulfilled are the functions ‘individual liberties’, ‘rule of law’ and above all ‘governmental capability’, where Belgium only ranks at position 20. However, all in all, Belgium seems to deal with these problems quite well. Whether this was still the case in 2010 cannot yet be answered with the data at hand.

Figure 2 clearly shows why Switzerland belongs to the middle-ranking countries: the high degrees of ‘competition’ (Switzerland’s political process is more open to new competitors than any other country’s in the sample), ‘governmental capability’ (due to the high confidence in the government and especially the very high stability of the government) and ‘individual liberties’ cannot outweigh

the shortcomings in terms of ‘transparency’, ‘mutual constraints’ and ‘participation’. Switzerland is one of the few countries without mandatory disclosure of party finances or freedom of information laws (at least until 2005). Even worse, there are practically no institutionalized horizontal checks and balances between the three constitutional branches; and finally, despite (though partly because of) many opportunities for direct citizen involvement, mean participation in Switzerland is not only low but also very unequal: suffrage rights are quite restricted and there is a huge bias in participation at the expense of low-income and low-education population groups. This, eventually, also seems to negatively affect the function ‘representation’.

The United Kingdom performs weakly in all nine functions. Only ‘governmental capability’, ‘transparency’ and ‘participation’ score slightly above average. The most negative effect on the overall rating, however, comes from the very low degrees of fulfillment in the functions ‘public sphere’, ‘mutual constraints’ and ‘representation’. The first can be explained by three factors: first, the UK has no written constitution. Some indicators, however, measure the culture of freedom by the explicit existence of freedom rights in the constitution. Much more important for the low score in ‘public sphere’, however, are Great Britain’s lack of civil society and of a diverse media system, both quantitatively and ideologically. As for ‘mutual constraints’, the balance of power between government and opposition is comparatively good in the UK. However, there are no additional checks in terms of judicial review or subnational autonomy. Finally, the majoritarian electoral system seems to impair the degree of ‘representation’.

No sign of an ongoing crisis of democracy

The Democracy Barometer can also be used to measure the quality of democratic systems over time. Contrary to the contemporary political discourse, the results show that there is no evidence of an overall crisis or a decline in the quality of democracy. Listening to scholars and journalists alike, an ongoing crisis of democracy seems common wisdom: growing political mistrust and apathy among citizens, the delegitimization of institutions, increasing corruption and political scandals are taken as evidence for the unstoppable downfall of Western democracy. Interestingly, the idea of a crisis of democracy quite rapidly replaced the end of history thesis from the early 1990s, which declared the victory of liberal democracy across the world. The Democracy Barometer paints a more differentiated and even optimistic picture – at least for the period under study:

Taking all 30 established countries together, the mean quality of democracy increased from 1995 (63.1) to 2000 (66.6) and then slightly decreased between 2000 and 2005 (65.5), but nevertheless remained on a high level. First analyses show that the reversal in 2000 was primarily due to the ‘dotcom’ crisis. However, while in some democracies this economic crisis indeed led to a loss of quality, others could even enhance their quality after the crisis. In countries with a higher level of equality and a high degree of fulfilment of the function ‘governmental capability’, the virulent effect of economic crises on the quality of democ-

racy was much weaker. There are nine countries where a decline in quality can be observed: Italy (from 56.7 in 1995 to 47.4 in 2005), the Czech Republic (60.4 to 53.2), Portugal (67.8 to 62.7), the United States (75.6 to 73.4), Costa Rica (31.0 to 29.2), Ireland (68.2 to 66.8), Australia (65.1 to 63.8), France (40.7 to 39.6) and Germany (72.5 to 71.5). By contrast, in the remaining countries in our sample the quality of democracy increased. The biggest changes occurred in Switzerland (from 60.9 in 1995 to 73.7 in 2005), in Japan (39.2 to 50.9), in Malta (46.0 to 57.2) and in the UK (37.9 to 47.9). All in all, this picture neither supports the pessimistic crisis hypothesis nor the optimistic end of history hypothesis. Instead, it shows that democratization is a never-ending process, also in established democracies.

An instrument for the reflection and study of democracy

The Democracy Barometer’s intentions are to encourage the public to reflect on democracy and to contribute to the scientific discussion on the measurement of democracy. It was therefore designed as an open structure, which is probably the instrument’s greatest potential: the website with its detailed documentation of the concept and the indicators allows other researchers to benefit from the data collection. They can build their own assessments and improve the data and the concept. We are aware that our conceptualization of democracy is only one of countless possible models. Different combinations of indicators, different scaling or weighting pro-

cedures as well as the addition of other, newer, or even better indicators should allow researchers to build and measure other concepts of democracy. This will hopefully lead to an extensive academic debate and, in the long run, an improved version of the Democracy Barometer. Furthermore, the Democracy Barometer team itself will continuously revise and extend the dataset by including recent years and more countries. It will also use the data for further in-depth analyses, such as on the social, economic or cultural explanations for the differences between countries.

Contact

Dr. Marc Bühlmann
marc.buehlmann@ipw.unibe.ch

Prof. Wolfgang Merkel
wolfgang.merkel@wzb.eu

Publications

Democracy barometer website:
www.democracybarometer.org

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Deliberation in Swiss direct democracy: A field experiment on the expulsion initiative

In the past decade, deliberation has become a highly fashionable decision-making tool. A central claim of deliberative theorists is that deliberation produces “better citizens” who become aware of the complexities of politics and policies, resist simplistic policy solutions, and know more about the issues at hand. An NCCR project explores how deliberation can be used in Swiss direct democratic voting.

By *André Bächtiger, Marco Steenbergen, Thomas Gautschi and Seraina Pedrini*

Deliberation can be defined as a rational communicative process of weighing arguments and policy alternatives, leading to the choice of the best policy option. With the exception of Switzerland, numerous initiatives were launched to put deliberative democracy into practice, mainly consisting of forums for citizen deliberation. The most important finding is that deliberating citizens change their opinions quite dramatically, frequently in the direction of more common good-oriented policies. These successes have led to a rapid proliferation of citizen deliberation; not only has citizen deliberation been successfully applied to the non-Western context (especially to China) but also to divided societies such as Northern Ireland. But do these positive experiences of citizen deliberation also apply to direct democratic voting in Switzerland, where the level of policy contestation is frequently very high and citizens are exposed to vigorous campaigns? And can deliberation be a cure against populism, making citizens aware of the dangers related to simplistic populist initiatives?

The NCCR project “Deliberative experiments and direct democratic voting”, in collaboration with the market and social research institute *LINK*, conducted in 2010 the first deliberative field experiment in Swiss direct democracy.

The topic of the field experiment was the expulsion initiative (“*Ausschaffungsinitiative*”) of the Swiss People’s Party (SVP) and the counterproposal of the Swiss government and parliament. The expulsion initiative asked for a quasi-automatic expulsion of foreigners who have committed a number of designated crimes. The counterproposal was also committed to the expulsion of criminal foreigners, but tried to come up with a systematic list of crimes (depending on the severity of the crime rather than on a relatively arbitrary list of crimes as in the initiative) and to align deportation with the requirements of international and basic law. Our research question was whether deliberation has a transformative effect on citizens’ preferences in the context of such a highly contested vote.

Experimental Design

Our field experiment draws from James Fishkin’s “Deliberative Opinion Polls” (DPs), but has a number of innovations. First, in accordance with DPs, the participants were recruited via random sampling in a two-fold process: the *LINK Institute* conducted online interviews with 1670 randomly selected Swiss citizens who are entitled to vote; at the end of the survey, participants were invited to participate in an online discussion. Contrary to previous experi-

ences with DPs, only 15% (rather than the predicted 30%) were willing to participate.

Second, we tried to establish a causal relationship for deliberation’s effects. To date, many deliberative experiments (including Fishkin’s DPs) have not qualified as true experiments since they either lack a true control group or create control groups out of those participants who are not interested in participating in the deliberative event. This, however, leads to comparisons among people with very different motivation profiles and does not allow extracting the true causal effect of deliberation. At the same time, we wanted to isolate the effect of deliberation from other effects, especially those of balanced information, which generally plays a crucial role in citizen deliberation. To achieve these two goals, we focused, on the one hand, only on those survey respondents who were willing to participate in the deliberative event. On the other hand, we randomly assigned survey respondents into three groups: one group getting information based on carefully balanced materials and discussing the issue in small groups; one group getting only the balanced information material; and one group getting nothing (thus being merely exposed to the campaign). The three groups were re-surveyed in the experimental week one month prior to the vote as well as immediately after the vote on November 28, 2010.

Third, and contrary to the usual DP setup, deliberation took place in an online chat. Online deliberation has two major advantages compared to face-to-face deliberation: it is much cheaper and,

somewhat paradoxically, online chatting better matches the classic deliberative ideal than a face-to-face setting since all participants can stay anonymous. Thus, there will be a prime focus on arguments while personal characteristics of participants, which psychologists consider to have major effects on opinion change, only play a very minor role.

The online discussion

The field experiment took place one month prior to the vote. The online discussion comprised three sets of questions regarding the initiative and the counterproposal: namely criminality of foreigners, the list of crimes and its potential conflicts with international law. A total of 49 persons (German and French speakers) took part in the online discussion (99 persons were invited) and there was a total of 10 discussion groups. Even though the major goal of our field experiment was to extract deliberation's causal effect, questions of representativeness and external validity still loom large. Compared to the initial sample, participants in the online discussion did not differ much with regard to sex and age; however, participants in the online discussion were a bit more oriented toward the right, more frequently had a university degree and had a slightly higher political interest.

First Results

In order to check whether the online discussions satisfied a number of crucial

AJAX Chat - Logs

Logout Raum: Channel02 Datum: 2010-10-25 Uhrzeit: --- Stil: prosilver Sprache: Deutsch

(2010.10.25 - 19:05:21) moderator2: ⚠️ Trotz engagierter Diskussion kommen wir nun zur letzten Frage.

(2010.10.25 - 19:05:36) moderator2: Die Ausschaffungsinitiative will einen automatischen Entzug des Aufenthaltsrechts, und zwar ohne Prüfung des Einzelfalls. Auf diese Weise könnten gemäss Initiative kriminelle AusländerInnen konsequent ausgeschafft werden.

An der Ausschaffungsinitiative wird kritisiert, dass der automatische Entzug des Aufenthaltsrechts zu erheblichen Konflikten mit dem Völkerrecht führt.

Was ist aus Ihrer Sicht zentral: die konsequente Ausschaffung von kriminellen AusländerInnen oder die Einhaltung von völkerrechtlichen Prinzipien?

Bitte begründen Sie Ihre Antwort und haben Sie einen Moment Geduld, bis alle Teilnehmenden Ihre Beiträge geschrieben haben! Die Teilnehmenden können sich in folgender Reihenfolge äussern: user1 user3 user9 user15 user2 user12

(2010.10.25 - 19:08:35) user9: Ich finde es viel wichtiger die Prinzipien des Völkerrechts einzuhalten. Ich bin sehr dankbar, in der Schweiz leben zu dürfen, ich wurde als Kind und Jugendlicher

(2010.10.25 - 19:09:37) user15: da finde ich auch die prinzipien des völkerrechtes wichtiger. kriminelle ausländer kann man ja auch in der schweiz bestrafen, ohne dass sie ausgewiesen werden

(2010.10.25 - 19:09:49) user3: m.E. geht unsere Sicherheit vor, d.H. Die Ausschaffung. Natürlich ist das Thema Völkerrecht in der ganzen Welt ein Thema. m.E. können wir Schweizer machen was wir wollen, wir werden von anderen Staaten immer kritisiert. (Dies ist aber ein anderes Thema)

(2010.10.25 - 19:10:12) user1: Damit ich nicht falsch verstanden werde: Ich bin für die Ausschaffung Krimineller. Aber ich finde, wir müssen das Völkerrecht beachten, damit wir nicht zu Gunsten von einem Gesetz quasi ein anderes Gesetz missachten. Die Schweiz ist stolz auf ihre Vergangenheit und ihre humanitäre Tradition. Es musste doch einen Weg geben, um beides unter einen Hut zu bringen. Man sollte den Ermessensspielraum der Richter beschränken, damit die Lage nicht nach Gutdünken beurteilt werden kann. In diesem strengeren Rahmen lassen sich Ausschaffungen konsequent und fair regeln.

(2010.10.25 - 19:10:30) moderator2: User9, möchten Sie Ihre Antwort noch vervollständigen?

(2010.10.25 - 19:10:41) user9: zweiter Teil)nicht von Armut und Krieg geprägt, ich durfte in einem friedlichen Land aufwachsen und wurde dadurch geprägt.

(2010.10.25 - 19:12:04) user9: Die Schweizer benehmen sich manchmal, als ob sie etwas dafür können, in diesem Land geboren zu sein

(2010.10.25 - 19:12:22) user12: soll ich meine antwort abgeben, oder auf user2 warten?

(2010.10.25 - 19:12:38) user2: Für mich ist die konsequente Ausschaffung wichtig - mit dem Zusatz dass die Strafe auch wirklich gerecht verhängt wurde. Dann kann meines Erachtens das Völkerrecht eingehalten werden.

Extract from the online discussion on the expulsion initiative.

deliberative standards (i.e. participation equality, justification rationality and respect), we asked participants to assess the quality of the online discussion themselves. About 70% stated that they could present their arguments in detail, 70% reported that a sufficient number of reasons were presented, and 80% viewed the discussions as respectful. Thus, in the participants' view, the online discussion was fairly deliberative.

With regard to preference transformation, first results show some intriguing patterns. What stands out is that the online discussion group became more favorable to the counterproposal, especially compared to the control group with no balanced information where the approval score steadily declined from the first to the last survey. At the end, almost 70% of the participants in the online discussion group were in favor of the counterproposal, whereas the corresponding figure in the two control

groups was only 45%. At the beginning, the approval rate to the counterproposal of all three groups was between 40-45%.

Thus, despite the highly contested nature of the vote, deliberation had an effect on citizens' preferences. It pushed them towards the counterproposal that tried to overcome some flaws of the initiative and combine the popular demand for the expulsion of criminal foreigners with the requirements of international and basic law. This is good news for advocates of deliberation arguing that deliberation drives citizens in the direction of less simplistic and more balanced policy solutions. But preference transformations via deliberation occurred in more complex ways than previous studies have found. Preference shifts did not materialize immediately after the online discussion but happened before the discussion, as a result of information as well as internal reflection. This is suggestive of the philosopher



The NCCR project team also organized a public discussion round on the expulsion initiative, chaired by André Bächtiger, at the University of Lucerne in November 2010. Participants were (from left) Lathan Suntharalingam (cantonal MP Lucerne, Social Democratic Party), André Bächtiger, Hansheiri Inderkum (President of the Swiss Senate, Christian Democratic Party) and Yvette Estermann (national MP, Swiss People's Party).

Robert Goodin's concept of "deliberation within". He claims that the discussion component may be less important for opinion change than the information phase and the internal-reflective process in participants' heads prior to discussion. However, deliberation still had a direct effect on citizens' preferences by *consolidating* these preference shifts: while the online-discussion group kept its support for the counterproposal after the discussion, the two other groups experienced a decline in their respective approval score in the period between the experimental week and the vote. We found a similar effect for knowledge gain. We asked participants a difficult knowledge question regarding the content of the initiative ("Are economic crimes part of the initiative?"). Initially, all three groups had a large proportion of incorrect answers. After being

exposed to the information material, both the online discussion group and the group with balanced information had a higher proportion of correct answers than the group with no balanced information. However, when re-surveyed after the vote, only the online discussion group could keep the knowledge gain, while the group with balanced information slid back to a lower proportion of correct answers. Again, the discussion process seems to have consolidated the initial knowledge gain.

The next step of our research will be to better understand these intriguing results. For instance, did the participants of the online discussion support the counterproposal because they became convinced of related arguments, such as a better adherence to international law? Or was the support merely due to subtle framing effects during the online discus-

sion? To shed light on these questions, we shall analyze the wealth of survey questions as well as the discussion transcripts.

Contact

Prof. André Bächtiger
Andre.Baechtiger@unilu.ch

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How new information technologies affect voters' decisions and elections

During the last couple of years so-called online Voting Advice Applications (VAAs), which help voters in their decision making prior to elections, have become increasingly popular in many countries all over Europe. There are hardly any elections without one or even several VAAs offering their services. The impact VAAs have on political participation and opinion formation, however, is under-researched. The NCCR project "Smart voting 2.0" is one of the few that have been analyzing the challenges and opportunities VAAs bring for democracy.

By Jan Fivaz and Joëlle Pianzola

In the last few years, VAAs and the number of voters using them have spread enormously. For example, in the Netherlands, the use of VAAs exploded from 250,000 voting advices, generated by one VAA during the campaign for the 1998 elections, to more than 6.3 million voting advices generated by two competing VAAs in 2006. In Germany, the VAA *Wahl-O-Mat* delivered 3.6 million voting advices in 2002, a number which increased to 6.7 million for the 2009 elections. Despite the fact of their growing popularity, VAAs are still widely neglected as a research topic by political scientists, and only very few scientific projects are dealing with them. One is the NCCR project "Smart-voting 2.0". Based on data generated from the Swiss VAA *smartvote* (www.smartvote.ch), it analyzes both the challenges and opportunities the emergence and widespread use of VAAs imply for democracy. VAAs are built on the premise of matching voters and candidates on the basis of their issue congruence, and might therefore affect the decision making of its users and influence the notion of political representation. Representation as a main pillar of democracy is generated through the act of voting, and if both aspects are affected by the use of VAAs their impact deserves closer attention.

Evidence from the Swiss VAA "smartvote"

Smartvote was introduced to Swiss voters in the run up to the elections for the Swiss parliament in 2003. Back then a modest number of 255,000 voting advices were generated. Four years later, the use of *smartvote* had increased almost fourfold, with about 963,000 voting advices issued. Measured in absolute numbers the extent of this use is not very impressive compared with figures from VAAs in other countries. It can be assumed that the figures also contain double counts due to the fact that people visited the website several times and also generated more than just one voting advice. Therefore the web server statistics and the data provided by the *smartvote* database were thoroughly analyzed in order to delete the double counts and estimate the number of real voters using the application. At the end of this process, we estimated that in 2007 about 375,000 voters had used *smartvote*. In relation to the only 2.4 million voters who had cast a ballot, this means that more than 15% or one out of six voters had used *smartvote* before they went to the polls. The number was crosschecked with, and confirmed by, data from the representative phone-based survey con-

ducted by the *Swiss Electoral Study* (Selects), which also included the question of whether a voter had used *smartvote* or not. Thus our estimate of the number of effective users can be regarded as very reliable.

What kind of impact does *smartvote* have on voters? First results indicate that there is a positive correlation between the use of *smartvote* and political participation: *Smartvote* users show a higher voter turnout than non-users. About 40% of the *smartvote* users asked in the post-electoral surveys conducted by the NCCR project say that the use of *smartvote* had a slightly positive or even decisive effect on their decision to go to the polls. Based on the same survey data we could show that the use of *smartvote* led its users to look for additional information about the candidates as well as about the policy issues under question.

Finally, we found the first evidence that indicated that *smartvote* also had a direct impact on their electoral choice: 67% of the users stated that the voting advice provided had influenced their actual voting decision.

Besides the impact of *smartvote* on voters' decisions, a further crucial question – which, from the point of view of the users, is one of the shortcomings of VAAs – was analyzed. Once candidates are elected members of parliaments, do they really stick to the policy positions they have put forward in the VAA? In order to answer this, we compared candidates' policy positions before elections based on their answers in the *smartvote* questionnaire with the legislative behavior of the elected candidates/MPs after elections based on roll-call data. We



The Smart-voting team (from left): Stefani Gerber, Jan Fivaz, Joëlle Pianzola and Andreas Ladner.

could not find any sign of widespread use of strategic behavior of candidates. On the contrary, an overwhelming majority of about 85% of Swiss MPs acted according to their policy positions revealed on *smartvote*. Based on the study we could also show that a positional change once a candidate is elected is more likely if he or she is a first-time MP, the individual voting behavior is not made visible to the public, the MPs electoral district magnitude is a large one, the vote is not about a party's core issue, the MP belongs to a party of the political centre, or if the pre-election statement dissents from the majority position of his legislative party group. Of these factors, the last one is paramount.

Smartvote and the Swiss federal elections 2011

In the coming three years, the project will continue researching the impact of the received voting advice on the actual voting behavior of *smartvote* users on the basis of data collected in the upcoming Swiss elections. A second line of research will address the impact of institutions like electoral systems, party systems or patterns of party competition. The need to include such aspects can be shown with the following example. A compari-

son of several studies indicates that Swiss voters follow the advice of VAAs to a much higher degree than voters in other countries. The reason for doing so is most probably the specific Swiss electoral system, which is much more demanding and complex than those in other countries.

The data-collecting framework for the Swiss federal elections in October 2011 will be very similar to the one applied in 2007: besides the data gathered from the *smartvote* database, the project team will conduct a survey among candidates – together with Selects – as well as a pre- and a post-electoral survey among voters using the VAA. Moreover, we are considering whether it will be feasible to conduct a low-scale experiment on how the VAA *smartvote* affects the voting decisions of its users in order to gain additional data for crosschecking the empirical findings from the surveys. Finally, data generation will follow a format that allows international comparison.

Contact

Jan Fivaz
fivaz@nccr-democracy.uzh.ch

Joëlle Pianzola
pianzola@nccr-democracy.uzh.ch

What are VAAs?

VAAs are websites providing voters with information about which political party or which candidate comes closest to their own political values and policy preferences. In order to do that they proceed in three steps: first, the voters are asked to create their political profile by filling in a questionnaire on different political issues; second, the VAA compares their answers with the positions of parties or candidates on these issues; and finally, voters are provided with a voting recommendation in the form of a list ranking parties or candidates according to the degree of their issue congruence with the particular voter.

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NCCR Democracy welcomes new Assistant Professor for Democratization

On February 1, Daniel Bochsler assumed office as new NCCR Assistant Professor in Comparative Politics with a focus on democratization at the University of Zurich. He will take over the project leadership of the Democracy Barometer and also contribute new research projects to the NCCR on ethnic politics.

Before joining the NCCR Democracy, Daniel Bochsler was research fellow at the Central European University (CEU) in Budapest, an American university which attracts MA and PhD students mainly from post-communist countries in Europe and the former Soviet Union. He holds an MA in political science from the University of Bern, with a minor in journalism (University of Fribourg). In 2008, he completed his PhD thesis on “Resolving the puzzle of party systems in Central and Eastern Europe: the joint impact of party nationalization and electoral systems” at the University of Geneva. His research stays brought him to destinations such as Belgrade, Tartu (Estonia), Irvine (California) and, finally, Budapest.

In his research, he is interested in the effects of political institutions, and has worked on topics such as direct democracy, electoral systems, representation of ethnic minorities and minority rights, or inter-governmental cooperation. Currently, he is particularly interested in elections and political radicalization in ethnically divided countries. He thinks that a more profound understanding of the radicalizing dynamics of ethnic politics might help our discipline in designing institutions that empower conciliating politicians, instead of warlords. Certainly, external incentives, such as EU and NATO integration, along with massive international pressure, might be helpful to motivate radical nationalists

to cooperate. Apart from this, social scientists have focused a lot on the reasons why hatred and radical speeches are psychologically convincing to voters, while other, also very rational, aspects of political radicalization have received less attention: “If your neighbor, who belongs to a different ethnic group, is likely to elect a party which is only keen on protecting your neighboring group’s interest, you might do the same – to be sure that there is somebody to counter-balance your neighbor’s choice. In order to understand politics, we also need to understand the strategies, the political behavior and the coalitions formed by the political elite and political parties”, Daniel Bochsler explains. Therefore his current research interest is to identify political institutions, and primarily electoral systems and decision-making mechanisms, that break the vicious circle of radicalization – or which at least do not contribute to a further acceleration of these dynamics.

As he points out, research has impressively shown that the dynamics of inter-ethnic conflict and the effect of institutions rely and interact with the relative sizes of ethnic groups. Taking these results seriously, it is interesting to investigate samples with strong variation in the size of ethnic groups. Municipalities in ethnically divided countries provide an outright laboratory for the dynamics of ethnic politics. “Based on some quantitative research, I became particularly



Daniel Bochsler

interested in political coalitions in municipalities that are evenly split between two groups. There, the pressure to cooperate is particularly high, but we also expect particularly strong ethnic conflicts. I found several remote towns in the Balkans, which perfectly represent such cases, and am trying currently to learn a lot about coalition making from local political actors in towns such as Targu Mureş in Romania, Prijepolje, Bujanovac in Serbia, Kičevo or Struga in Macedonia, all of them evenly split. One of the most fascinating stories I came across was the attempt to elect a local mayor in Struga, who belongs to a marginal and forgotten local minority – the ‘Torbeši’ – with a transitional ethnic identity between ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians. The ethnic conflict there is particularly heated. He almost got elected, and could have acted as a mayor who is able to connect to all ethnic groups – if electoral fraud had not prevented him from being elected. Setting the institutional incentives correctly, and designing new institutions that learn from

New NCCR Publications

what we observe evenly split towns, we might elsewhere help politicians to be elected who bridge the gap between different ethnic groups.”

In the NCCR, Daniel Bochsler will continue this research and also participate in other research projects at the Center for Democracy Studies Aarau (ZDA) where his professorship is also situated. Furthermore, he has taken over the co-leadership of the Democracy Barometer from Marc Bühlmann – an NCCR project which is jointly carried out with Wolfgang Merkel and his team from the Social Science Research Center Berlin (WZB). With his research agenda, Daniel Bochsler will fit nicely into the NCCR program and add to the already impressive body of research produced and different specializations represented.

Contact

Prof. Daniel Bochsler
daniel.bochsler@uzh.ch

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NCCR Democracy Alumni: Careers in academia

The first cohort of doctoral students left the NCCR Democracy last year. In each issue of our newsletter, we track the professional advancement of two of them. This time, Gabriele Spilker and Lutz Krebs tell us how they proceeded in their academic careers.

Lutz Krebs, in the fall of 2010, was appointed assistant professor at Maastricht Graduate School of Governance (MG-SoG) and became education director for its MSc program on Public Policy and Human Development (MPP), offered jointly with the United Nations University.

How did you make the jump from PhD candidate to assistant professor?

I took advantage of the opportunities offered by the NCCR to present my results at conferences, but more importantly, to be invited for talks at other institutes. One of these presentations at MGSOG gave rise to the job opportunity that followed. Besides interest in my research, they chose me because of extensive teaching experience and didactic training that I obtained through Zurich University's "Teaching Skills" program, as well as the NCCR doctoral program.

What was the topic of your dissertation?

My dissertation investigated the role of political leaders in leading a country to war or peace during democratization periods in ethnically heterogeneous countries. Using quantitative and qualitative methods, I showed that leaders can pour fuel on the fire of a potential conflict, but that the structural forces of the situation have a larger influence than often acknowledged in the literature.

Do you continue to work on this topic?

I am still interested in regime-type transi-

tions. Currently, I am working on a coding project attempting to identify the "starting point" of a democratization process in order to enable more precise quantitative studies on how the onset of democratization and the onset of political violence are interrelated. Our partnership with United Nations University also draws my attention to potential roles for the UN in stabilizing and facilitating transition periods before violence breaks out.

How would you describe your experience at NCCR Democracy? What did you learn most while you were there?

My time in NCCR Democracy and at ETH Zurich was a crucial formative period for me. The ability to get feedback from leading scholars in the field, but also from fellow PhD candidates with such a broad variety of perspectives on our joint topic of democracy, was enormously helpful in developing my own ideas. Perhaps the most helpful opportunity of all was to observe the NCCR Democracy as the best practice for a large-scale collaborative research project from the inside from the very beginning. I am certain this will help me in my future work as a member of larger research projects.

Has being a part of the NCCR Democracy network helped you in any way, and how?

Since I have left Switzerland and am working at an institute with a different topical orientation, the NCCR network has not been crucial in my career since



Lutz Krebs

graduation. However, the research projects are very interesting for me and I continue to monitor the NCCR publications for useful information to circulate at MGSOG and UNU.

What are your plans for the future?

As the education director for the MSc program, I have been preoccupied with turning the MPP into a joint degree offered by the United Nations University and MGSOG. My intention is to integrate more UNU institutes into the program and to make it one of the leading programs for people wanting to work in international organizations and national governments. On the research side, I am presently revising my dissertation for publication in the new NCCR Democracy book series with Palgrave Macmillan, and I hope to present first results from my democratization-coding project this year.

I would like to send my greetings to all present members of the NCCR doctoral school! The NCCR Democracy is an incredible opportunity and I hope you enjoy it as much as I have!



Gabriele Spilker

Gabriele Spilker is a postdoctoral researcher in the “International Political Economy” group of Thomas Bernauer at the Center for Comparative and International Studies (CIS) at ETH Zurich. After finishing her PhD thesis at the NCCR Democracy in October 2009, she joined the NCCR Trade Regulation, where she is conducting research into dispute settlement at the WTO.

Together with Thomas Bernauer and Thomas Sattler (University College Dublin) she investigates whether dispute settlement at the WTO is more a rule clarification or an enforcement device: Does dispute settlement serve the purpose of reducing complexity and clarifying rules in settings where international contracts are incomplete? Or is it more an enforcement instrument in settings characterized by incentives to violate international law, domestic interest groups, and power politics? First results support the second perspective, which is why the researchers, in a second step, are investigating domestic political factors such as how interest groups affect compliance with WTO rulings.

Last year, Gabriele won the prestigious *Swiss Network for International Studies (SNIS) Award* for the dissertation she wrote in the NCCR Democracy entitled “Grow Rich and Clean Up Later? Joint Effects of International Integration and Democracy on Environmental Quality in Developing Countries”. There she analyzed whether integration into the international system in combination with democratic forms of government can help developing countries provide higher environmental quality. The empirical analysis showed that membership in international organizations is the only aspect of globalization that has a positive effect on the reduction in air and water pollution. Furthermore, whereas the type of the political system does not appear to directly affect developing countries’ environmental performance; it strongly mediates the effect of international integration. The SNIS jury highlighted the extraordinarily high quality of the dissertation and its relevance in today’s debate between economic performance and environmental responsibility.

Gabriele says that she profited immensely from being part of the NCCR Democracy. In particular, the many opportunities to present her research both within the NCCR and at the various international conferences she attended thanks to the funding of the NCCR. The doctoral program contributed to the success of her thesis by helping her to structure the work on her dissertation and ensuring its progress. The exchange with other doctoral students in the program and in the peer-mentoring group *Stepping Stone* was another important as-

set. Last but not least, the NCCR network provided the opportunity to meet interesting people and exchange ideas. She feels that she was very lucky to work with wonderful colleagues who over the years became good friends.

Asked about her future plans, Gabriele says she plans to remain in academia. From September 2011, she will spend a year as a Fritz-Thyssen-Fellow at Harvard University. Following that, she will come back to Switzerland to work for another year in the NCCR Trade Regulation. “I then hope to find a new position as a researcher at a Swiss or German university.”

Contact

Dr. Lutz Krebs

lutz.krebs@maastrichtuniversity.nl

Dr. Gabriele Spilker

gabriele.spilker@ir.gess.ethz.ch

News in brief

Young people get a taste of social science research at the NCCR Democracy

In November 2010, the NCCR Democracy participated in the annual study week for the social sciences and humanities launched by “Swiss Youth in Science”, an organization that encourages and promotes young people to explore their potential for research. Thanks to



Stephanie Schwab Cammarano (centre) and her four students investigated how politicians are presented in the mass media. She conceived the project together with Regula Hänggli.



Franziska Oehmer (far left) and Matthias Brändli (far right) with their students who analyzed the presentation of sports stars in the mass media.



Erik Jentges (left) designed a project on heroes, how they see themselves and how they are portrayed in the media.

the engagement of the NCCR, for the first time, young people between 16 and 20 were able to delve into political and communication sciences and experience research at the NCCR Democracy.

The motto of the study week was “Heroes, idols and role models”. NCCR PhD students and post-docs had devised five research projects for the 16 participants and supervised their work during the week. The NCCR projects covered a range of topics, including the presentation of politicians and sports stars in the mass media, the media’s portrayal of role models and heroes, as well as nationalist leaders in developing countries.

The study week was an excellent opportunity to get young people interested in the research subjects of the NCCR Democracy and gain insights into the working methods of the social sciences. Moreover, it was also a very good exer-



Karin Hasler (centre) and her students examined how role models, idols and heroes are portrayed in the Swiss free daily newspaper “20 minutes”.



Manuel Vogt (far left) with two students. Together with Nils-Christian Bormann he led the project on nationalist leaders in developing countries.

cise for the NCCR researchers involved to refine and put their research across in an understandable manner. They all agreed that it was a valuable experience for them to work with the young students.

At the end of the week, the young people presented their research findings to a wider audience at a public event at the University of Lucerne. The next study week for the social sciences and humanities will take place in mid-November 2011.

Contact: Yvonne Rosteck
rosteck@nccr-democracy.uzh.ch

Rebecca Welge wins NCCR Knowledge-Transfer Award 2010

For the fourth time, the NCCR Democracy in 2010 conferred its Knowledge-Transfer Award to a young NCCR researcher. The winner was PhD student Rebecca Welge who received the prize for the civic education course she conducted twice, together with a colleague, at the European Youth Conference “Europe 2030 – EU integration and challenges to democracy”. The course’s main topic was how separated identities of Europeans and the lack of a single political community impact on democratic life in the European Union. The course, which involved 22 pupils aged between 16 and 18 from five EU member states, was highly interactive and led the participants not only to think about the future of Europe, but also encouraged intercultural dialogue between them. Dur-



Rebecca Welge and Frank Esser at the annual NCCR conference in Thun.

ing the working sessions they reflected on how EU integration and internationalization will affect the daily lives of individuals in 2030, and the role identity and reactions to other social and cultural realities play in this. The aim was to make participants aware of important factors that might or might not lead to a democratic community, as well as enable them to think about the consequences of their individual behavior.

Rebecca Welge is PhD student in the NCCR project “Designing ‘demoicracy’ in Europe” led by Sandra Lavenex, Frank Schimmelfennig and Francis Cheneval. In her dissertation she analyzes how EU citizenship impacts individual opportunities and subjective understandings of individuals in the EU.

The NCCR Knowledge-Transfer Award is endowed with 4,000 Swiss Francs and was presented by NCCR

Deputy Director Frank Esser at the NCCR annual conference in Thun in October 2010. Congratulations, Rebecca, and keep going!

Contact: Rebecca Welge
rebecca.welge@eup.gess.ethz.ch

Tina Freyburg wins two awards for her paper on functional cooperation with authoritarian regimes

Congratulations also to former NCCR PhD student Tina Freyburg who received no less than two awards for her paper “Planting the seeds of change inside? Functional cooperation with authoritarian regimes and socialization into democratic governance”: The Best Graduate Student Paper Award at the

Pan-European Conference of the ECPR Standing Group on International Relations and the Carl Beck Award of the International Studies Association.

In her paper, Tina presents evidence that functional cooperation can be considered a promising way of yielding subtle processes of democratization that have hitherto been overlooked by scholars. The predominant view so far has been that cooperation with authoritarian regimes is counterproductive in terms of democratization because it helps the incumbent government to remain in power by stabilizing the regime. The paper explores to what extent state officials become acquainted with democratic governance by participating in transgovernmental policy networks, notably the Twinning program, set up by the European Union in order to implement functional cooperation with its Southern neighborhood. The findings corroborate an optimistic reading of functional cooperation: by significantly shaping the attitudes toward democratic governance of involved state officials, cooperation appears to be able to plant seeds of change inside authoritarian regimes.

Contact: Dr. Tina Freyburg
tina.freyburg@eup.gess.ethz.ch

Democracy Conference at the Academia Engelberg

In October 2010, together with the Collegium Helveticum, the NCCR Democracy organized the ninth Dialogue on Science of the Academia Engelberg, an international conference that brought



Democracy Conference at the Academia Engelberg

together 120 representatives from science, economy and politics. Under the topic “Challenging Democracy”, different aspects such as “science and democracy”, “freedom of choice” and “the future of democracy in a globalized world” were discussed. Among the speakers were Arthur Lupia of the University of Michigan, Günther Abel of the Technical University of Berlin and NCCR members Hanspeter Kriesi, Wolfgang Merkel, Jörg Matthes and Francis Cheval. One important aim of the conference was to actively engage young scientists in the dialogue through talks and a role play in which the conference participants assumed the task of governing different countries such as Germany, Canada, Kenya, Columbia, Pakistan and Serbia.

All the presentations and discussions were video-taped and can be found at <http://www.academia-engelberg.org>.

Upcoming events

3rd Aarau Democracy Days: “Electoral problems in democracy”

7–8 April 2011, Kultur- und Kongresshaus Aarau.

The Centre for Democracy Studies (ZDA) Aarau organizes the third Aarau Democracy Days (“Aarauer Demokratietage”) on 7–8 April 2011. This annual event brings together representatives from science, politics, the media and citizens to discuss fundamental and topical questions of democracy. This year, being election year in Switzerland, the topic is electoral problems in democracy. At the public panel discussion on Thursday, 7 April political campaigns and their implications for democracy will be discussed by renowned experts. The Aarauer Democracy Days continue on the following day with a scientific conference on elections and democracy and will close with a public reading by the Swiss writer Lukas Bärfuss on “democracy and literature”.

Conference website:

<http://www.demokratietage-zda.ch>

NCCR research colloquia:

Demos or ethnos? Options for democratic design

Prof. Klaus Eder, Humboldt University Berlin

18 April, 12–14h, University of Zurich, Cityport E 022, Affolternstr. 56

Voting with your feet: Exit-based empowerment in democratic theory

Prof. Mark Warren, UBC Vancouver

23 May, 12–14h, University of Zurich, Cityport E 022, Affolternstr. 56

Imprint

Publisher: NCCR Democracy
University of Zurich
Affolternstr. 56
8050 Zurich / Switzerland

Phone: +41 (0) 44 634 52 01
Fax: +41 (0) 44 634 52 00
E-mail: infodesk@nccr-democracy.uzh.ch
www.nccr-democracy.uzh.ch

Editor: Yvonne Rosteck

Layout: Fabian Furter, Baden

Photographs: Matthias Brändli, Erik Jentges, Yvonne Rosteck, Michael Buess, Fabian Furter

Print: Druckerei Sieber AG, Hinwil

The NCCR Democracy is a Swiss research centre for the multi-disciplinary study of the challenges to democracy in the 21st century.