NCCR Democracy visit to China: a travelogue

In September 2011, a delegation of the NCCR Democracy made up of Director Hanspeter Kriesi, Vice-Director Frank Esser and Sandra Lavenex, leader of Module 1, visited China at the invitation of Swissnex Shanghai – an organization that promotes cooperation networks between Switzerland and China. The NCCR delegation met Chinese scholars at the three highest ranking Chinese universities (Fudan, Renmin and Beijing University) and at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) as well as several journalists in Shanghai and Beijing.

By Hanspeter Kriesi

Our visit started at the CASS Shanghai. Founded in 1958, it is China’s oldest research institution for the humanities and social sciences, and a not-for-profit think tank. Prof. Tong Shijun and his collaborators discussed the meaning of democracy for China with us. He argued that there are two principles every moral action should fulfill: the principle of reasonable thinking and the principle of free will. The two principles are, however, given different priorities in Chinese and Western cultures. In China the mainstream Confucian thinkers tended to pay more attention to the principle of reasonable thinking. By contrast, in the West there has always been a strong tradition of voluntarism, according to which the free will is the first principle of human life, if not of the universe. Rejecting Western models, the construction of political democracy for Tong Shijun must be closely integrated with the history, culture, tradition and existing social conditions in China. Therefore the idea of a “socialist democracy with Chinese characteristics” should be explored in the direction of intra-party, grass-root and deliberative democracy.

Internet politics in China

Tong’s colleagues stressed that important steps have been made in the direction of the adoption of the rule of law, and that transparency has been increased by the fact that all government branches have to have their own websites. Internet is seen as a chance to promote democracy in China, the country with the largest number of netizens (500 million). Our impression that the Internet is a major channel for public debate and as such a topic the government is very continued on page 2
much concerned with, was confirmed at Shanghai’s Fudan University where we got to know Dr. Shen Yi and his research. Internet is seen as a double-edged sword. On the one hand, as an effective supplement to the controlled media of the government, it provides a valuable means for the government to understand public opinion, to monitor corrupt officials, and to implement policy, and thus directly or indirectly advance political progress in China. On the other hand, it is seen as providing a forum for irresponsible communication of news and rumors, and as a threat to individual privacy.

An example of its negative side that was pointed out to us several times is what the Chinese call ‘human flesh search engines’ (HFS). The term refers to searches that are conducted with help from human users whose task is to find the identity of a human being. This phenomenon has generally been stigmatized as exposing individuals to public humiliation. However, it is used for a number of other aims, including exposing government corruption, identifying hit-and-run drivers, and exposing scientific fraud.

We continued the discussion with Bernhard Bartsch, the correspondent of the Frankfurter Rundschau in Beijing. Bartsch told us that the control over the web has been tightened in more recent years, and that the regime’s critics exclusively rely on servers outside of China. In 2010, blogs, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube were stopped – i.e. they became unstable and excessively slow. The use of Facebook today is only possible with servers based outside of China and with special technologies. Micro-blogs (weibos), with smaller content than a typical blog, became increasingly popular instead. Weibos are also tightly controlled; however, the basic aim of censorship is not to prevent stories about the system on the web, but to prevent any discussion about alternative systems. Bartsch explained that the party has a huge network of online collaborators whose objective is to create the impression that the population stands behind the government. In order to guarantee its own stability, the party considers it important to be the public opinion leader on the internet. For this reason, the party needs a system of commentators, and Bartsch estimates that nationwide roughly 4,000 teams with about 100,000 collaborators are involved. However, the government is not interested in having total control over Internet activities as the operation of a modern society requires free flow of information. Crude methods of control, such as shutting down search engines, only cause greater internal and external dissatisfaction. Therefore, it uses a double control strategy: a) it only exercises selective control, which means that only information with political sensitivity that can undermine regime legitimacy and violate national security is checked; and b) it uses selective penal measures to constrain those who have attempted to transgress the boundaries that it has established for Internet users.

**Alternative media**

Bernhard Bartsch also pointed out that there are very interesting alternative media, such as an alternative “history magazine” edited by retired former party cadres. The influence of retired former key leaders is generally likely to grow in China, as a growing number of former leaders are speaking out and criticizing the government. Another example is Caijing (“Finance and Economics Magazine”), an independent, Beijing-based magazine devoted to information on companies in China. While its focus is on finance and economic issues, some important social issues are reported and sometimes find themselves in the headlines of the magazine. A famous investigative story was the report on the earthquake in Sichuan in 2008, stating that heedless economic growth, squandered public funds, and rampant neglect of construction standards had led to the disaster. The story detailed how local cadres cut corners, but it stopped short...
of assigning responsibility by name. When asked about the government’s reaction, Hu Shuli, the founder of the magazine, said, “they got very, very angry.” However, neither she nor Caijing were ever punished.

**Decentralization tendencies**

Finally, Bartsch also discussed with us the current fragmentation and decentralization tendencies. Formally, China is a centralized, unitary state, where all local governments are subordinate to the central government. Informally and de facto, however, the state has assumed a federalist structure. In this system of de facto federalism, the provinces have primary responsibility for the economy and, to some extent, politics within their jurisdiction. Instead of privatization, property rights were decentralized to local governments rather than to individual enterprises or individual entrepreneurs. Local governments became de facto owners of state enterprises. Thus, even though the centre gradually withdrew from economic affairs of individual enterprises, local governments became highly interventionist. Nevertheless, market relations became very important, because intense competition existed between different jurisdictions and between enterprises with different forms of ownership.

Decentralization, however, was not without costs. It posed a serious challenge to central power. Thus, after the reform began in 1978, central revenue declined continuously from 51 percent in 1979 to 28 in 1993, when a fiscal reform reversed this tendency. Furthermore, decentralization widened the diversities among the provinces and regions. Indeed, regional inequalities were perceived by government officials as a potential source of social instability. Decentralization also resulted in an increasing inter-dependence between Chinese provinces and the outside world, and a surprising decrease in inter-provincial interdependencies.

**Local elections and political reform**

Prof. Liu Chunrong of Shanghai’s Fudan University explained to us that the 1978 economic reform also paved the way for local elections that were introduced in the 1980s. Although these reforms may be viewed as initiated by the state, the policy innovations were brought about by social dynamics as the reform created vibrant neighborhood spaces beyond the reach of the state. However, as we learned from Prof. Dong Lisheng of the CASS in Beijing, after the Taiwan elections in 2000 (which brought an end to the Kuomintang rule) and the “colour revolutions” in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, the government decided to stop further experiments with direct township elections. Instead, in 2002 the 16th National Party Congress adopted the approach of using intra-party democracy to promote the people’s democracy. Innovations in intra-party democracy included competitive elections of deputies to town and country Party Congresses; annual (instead of once every five years) sessions of Party Congresses; and referring important decisions to the full Party committee (instead of its standing committee). According to Dong Lisheng, difficulties in promoting intra-party democracy prompted Chinese leaders to consider an alternative – the people-first policy and calls for building a harmonious society. These included specific programs for improving the people’s livelihood, such as provision of health care and social security packages, and efforts to ensure that all students admitted to colleges and universities get scholarships. In order to improve the provision of public goods and services, efforts are being made to strengthen central power, with a notable recent trend toward reviving vertical control. This alternative approach is supported by Prof. Huang Yanfen, an economist we met at Renmin University in Beijing. She suggests that after a 30-year economic transition period, the next 30 years are likely to be dedicated to social reform and the building of a welfare state, and only then would be the time for political reform. For Dong Lisheng, however, the time is ripe to introduce substantive and major political reform now. The decreasing executive capabilities of the party-state bureaucracy and especially of local governments, which manifest themselves in widespread corruption and internal inertia, should be held in check by public supervision. This calls for local elections of party and government leaders at the same time as People’s Congress deputies.

All in all, our trip to Beijing and Shanghai gave us a very valuable insight into political science research in China and key themes we might pursue in future collaborative research efforts with Chinese colleagues.

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Promoting democracy in the EU and in post-civil war countries: different settings but common challenges

Three NCCR research projects investigate the challenges of democratizing the European Union and post-civil war countries and thereby focus on surprising parallels: they lack an integrated and consolidated demos that forms the legitimate basis of their political order. Since this situation is likely to persist, new institutional solutions and identity-building processes have to be devised in order to promote democratization.

By Sandra Lavenex

What do the European Union and countries emerging from civil war have in common? At first sight the comparison may be wanting. At second sight, and from the point of view of democracy, the EU and ethnically divided, post-civil war countries share at least one key problem: as multinational political systems, they lack an integrated, consolidated people (demos) that is the source of sovereignty and legitimacy.

Modern democracy emerged in parallel with the consolidation of the Western nation state and was characterized by the relative congruence of state and boundary formation, nation building and cultural standardization. Democracy became based on the existence of a clearly delimited demos with a shared sense of identity, a common public sphere, and a high level of political structuring through political parties and other intermediary organisations. Internationalization and state-building in deeply divided post-war societies break with this congruence between the political order and the political community.

The transfer of political authority to supranational institutions such as the EU transcends national boundaries and political rule is no longer based on a consolidated national demos. Since the reconfiguration of the political order has progressed at a faster pace than societal integration within the EU, today there is no developed European identity and no single European public sphere. A demos can be found predominantly at the member-state level, while at the EU level we find multiple demos and multiple, contested conceptions of a European identity.

NCCR projects on democratization

Two NCCR projects study democratization in the EU and start from the premise that the national demos in the future continues to be the legitimate and necessary basis of a democratic EU, alongside the contested and nascent European demos. Daniele Caramani, Kurt Imhof and their collaborators analyze which configurations of European identity arise in political and media discourses in various member states. The project by Francis Cheneval, Sandra Lavenex, Frank Schimmelfennig and collaborators therefore analyzes how the media contribute to the formation of common political identities in post-conflict situations, and how ethnic cleavages are bridged in electoral systems and political parties as well as through power-sharing and regional autonomy institutions.

Although the three projects concentrate on these very different contexts, we expect that by comparing them we will gain new insights into the chances and perils of democratization in multinational political systems.

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How demo(i)cratic is the European Union?

The democratic deficit of the European Union and the problem that there is no single European demos as a basis for democracy is a constant topic of discussion. However, given the fact that the EU is rather a “demoocracy” made up of multiple national demoi, concepts of national democracy cannot simply be applied to the EU and assessments of how democratic it is have to take this into account. This research project evaluates how well EU institutions and rules reconcile the idea of democracy and the persistence of a multiple demos. One of the conclusions it comes to is that some of the most problematic democratic deficits in the EU result from deficits at the national level rather than from the supranational EU level.

By IP2 project team
Abraham Lincoln once famously stated that “democracy is the government of the people, by the people, and for the people.” The “people” or the “demos” of democracy is often taken for granted in definitions and discussions of democracy. There are, however, (at least) two complications:

First, who are the people? Who ought to belong to the demos? This is not only a philosophically tricky problem but also a pressing issue in the era of globalization, immigration and supranational political integration. Second, what requirements does a demos have to meet for democracy to work well? Quality and stability of democracy are supported by a collective identity, a common public sphere, and a strong political infrastructure. A collective identity helps the demos to define a common purpose and minorities to accept majority decisions. In the public sphere, the members of the demos come together to debate political issues and the common good. Finally, a strong political infrastructure consists of political associations and parties that represent and organize the entire spectrum of political cleavages in the demos and are able to channel these effectively into the decision-making arena.

Assessing the EU as demoocracy

In our project, we focus on the demos problem in supranational integration. The European Union is the most developed example of such supranational integration, and its “demos problem” and “democratic deficit” have been debated for a long time. Our starting point is the fact that a single European demos does not exist. Rather, the political community of the EU polity is fragmented in terms of collective identity, public spheres, and intermediary political structures. National (or subnational) identities and allegiances clearly predominate in the EU. So too do national public spheres. Europe-wide transnational media are rare and limited to a small elite. At best, there is evidence for the “Europeanization” of national public spheres with regard to topics of Europe-wide importance. Finally, intermediary political structures such as parties, through which the political preferences resulting from democratic deliberation are mobilized, aggregated, and represented in the political system, are weak in the EU. Parties are rooted and organ-

IP2 team (from left): Francis Cheneval, Sandra Lavenex, Antoinette Scherz, Michael Buess, Rebecca Welge, Thomas Winzen and Frank Schimmfennig.
ized at the national level, European parties do not exist.

The EU is therefore best described and analyzed as a “demoi-cracy”, a political system with multiple (national) demos. The starting point of our project is the assumption that assessing the quality of the EU as a democracy requires a free-standing benchmark that is not based on national conceptions of democracy. Democracy is the idea of a specific political order that takes into account liberal democracy and, in the absence of a single European demos, respects the national demos and citizens as legitimate subjects. From a normative point of view, democracy must ensure that freedom, and most of all popular sovereignty, is respected, and that the negative effects of democratic decisions on other members of the democracy are considered.

PhD theses

Two PhD theses in the project take a closer look at these institutional interactions in analyzing the parliamentary system and the system of regulatory agencies:

One important conclusion that we draw is that it is not sufficient to focus on EU-level institutions such as the European Parliament or the European Court of Justice when analyzing and evaluating democracy in the EU. Instead, we need to focus on the interactions of member states at the EU level. In a first, tentative assessment, we concluded that the constitutional development of the EU has, in general, approached democratic standards, while major deficits remain at the national level. They result from the uneven and weak implementation of democratic norms in the member states, and the uneven and weak adaptations of national parliaments and national constitutional courts to the tasks they need to fulfill in a democratic system.

First results

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Two PhD theses in the project take a closer look at these institutional interactions in analyzing the parliamentary system and the system of regulatory agencies:

It is widely agreed that European integration erodes national parliamentary authority and, moreover, that national parliaments fail to control governments in EU decision making. PhD student Thomas Winzen's project, however, shows that parliaments differ in how much control they actually exert over governmental conduct in the EU. First results suggest that parliaments constrain governments, in accordance with the traditional strength of parliamentarism in the country, the degree of popular Euroscepticism and whether the ruling parties are divided on the issue of European integration.

More and more regulatory tasks and powers in the EU are delegated to European Union Agencies (EUAs). These institutions are neither elected nor appointed by the European Parliament. This poses the problem of how they can be held publicly accountable for their actions. In his dissertation project, Michael Buess examines the relationship between EUAs and their national counterparts in the member states, as it is expected that this link constitutes a hitherto unexplored possible source of accountability and legitimacy for EUAs. In particular, the thesis explores how far member states’ representatives in the management boards of EUAs are democratically legitimated in the domestic constituency.

Two other PhD projects focus on the demos. One analyzes citizenship rights, which legally define the demos. The other develops a design for EU institutions that accounts for equality of demos and citizens.

EU citizenship rights are differently implemented in the member states, which leads to uneven opportunities for individuals. In order to increase democratic legitimacy, EU citizenship rights should therefore enable citizens to participate in the EU, hold EU decision makers accountable equally for all EU citizens, and secure transparency. In her dissertation, Rebecca Welge investigates the differences in EU citizenship in the member states and whether the perceived differences in opportunities affect the individuals’ understandings of European citizenship.

A fourth PhD project deals from a philosophical perspective with the foundation of demo(i)cracy. Antoinette Scherz develops in her thesis a normative framework for the design of democratic institutions that focus on equality between demos and citizens. In doing so, she analyzes double representation and participation, equality of citizens in a transnational system of rights, and equality of demos in negotiations and independent institutions.

Based on the analysis of these different aspects, the overall project aims to develop a theory of democracy for multinational political systems. Furthermore, it hopes to contribute to the discussion on how the EU can be further democratized.
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Publications


Bochsler, Daniel. “It is not how many votes you get, but also where you get them. Territorial determinants and institutional hurdles for the success of ethnic minority parties in post-communist countries.” Acta Politica, 46(3), 2011, 217–238.


Supporting or de-legitimizing Europe – how political parties and mass media shape conceptions of Europe

In the last two decades, the process of European integration has accelerated. However, a European identity is growing only slowly among the citizens of the EU. This raises the question of legitimacy of the European political regime – only if people identify with it, they legitimate it. This identification (or non-identification) with Europe and the various positive and negative conceptions of Europe are to a large extent conveyed and shaped by political parties and the mass media. An NCCR project explores to which visions on Europe they give voice to.

By Valeria Camia and Linards Udriņš

European identity may be defined as a sense of shared identification amongst the Europeans. This identification is necessary so people consider political decisions as legitimate. With the progressive transfer of sovereignty from nation states to the EU, the question of identity in the early 1990s started to enter mass debates. In today’s Europe, two broad visions on Europe are opposed: an open cosmopolitan Europe and a closed conception of Europe. The first supports a secularized, centralized and liberal conception of identity. The second favors a strongly decentralized and protectionist identity. Next to these visions, there is an anti-Europe conception, based on nativism and setting the nation state against Europe. The successes of these visions amongst people are not the same. Numerous studies have shown the rise of anti-Europe sentiments in recent years, both in the political and public spheres.

The aim of the NCCR project “Conceptions of Europe – alternative demos conceptions in the EU”, led by Daniele Caramani and Kurt Imhof, is to analyze who are the actors behind these different conceptions, and which groups they mobilize. Are there common interests that may serve as a basis for a European identity? And what are the links between political populism and media populism that facilitate anti-EU conceptions?

Visions on Europe portrayed by parties

To address these questions, we compare the conceptions of Europe of mainstream parties and populist parties in three European member states (Germany, France, Great Britain), and Switzerland. The analysis of party manifestos allows us to compare conceptions of Europe of different party families; the analysis of parliamentary debates and media coverage is instructive to qualify how conceptions of Europe fit into parties’ official discourses and which of these conceptions successfully make it into the mass media. Data is being collected from the 1990s to the present; and for periods with special relevance for EU institutions such as the Maastricht Treaty of 1992 or the current debate on the Euro-stability pact.

Since the early 1990s, European political space has changed and a new class divide has emerged between the winners and losers of globalization. The winners support a model of an open Europe, whereas the losers oppose an open Europe – perceived as a threat, for instance to national identity, the labor market and housing. Winners and losers constitute the social constituencies to which parties speak in Western democracies. Given the modified social structure in Western Europe, it is important to ask how visions on Europe portrayed by parties may change to mobilize changing electorates. At the same time, the political space in which parties compete has also changed. For instance, in the last decade we observe the emergence of right-wing, anti-European populist parties in most European states. These parties are particularly appealing to the losers of globalization. In this respect, the question is how mainstream parties have adapted their visions on Europe to remain appealing to the losers of globalization.

So far, our analysis has focused on mainstream parties of the left and right in the selected countries. Although manifestos have attributed more salience to Europe in the early 1990s compared to the preceding decades, we have not observed an increase in the relevance of Europe in the analyzed documents of the parties over time. Analyzing the content of the manifestos we found an important result: they increasingly call for more protectionism, both economic and cultural, in reference to Europe. This suggests to us that the parties’ visions on Europe are influenced by national competition. This is confirmed by the results of our analysis of party families in thirty European states between 1945 and 2009. They show that parties have moved towards more protectionist economic stances and less culturally open stances. In the economic dimension, both mainstream left and right parties have come to favor traditionally leftist themes, such as economic nationalism and welfare expansion. In the cultural dimension, the manifestos of these parties have been
signed by a return of themes such as protection of traditions, law and order, and opposition to multiculturalism.

We may also notice that references to Europe’s normative long-term achievements, such as peace, are decreasing as social democratic parties are in the process of de-ideologizing what Europe stands for. Instead, they focus on material outputs in order to legitimate Europe. We expect them to be competing with populist parties that aim at de-legitimizing Europe, for electoral constituencies.

Their issues (mostly identity politics such as immigration), their political rhetoric (with clear-cut divisions such as “us against them”) and their taboo-breaking strategies are all attractive to the news media. An anti-conception of Europe can be exploited by right-wing populist actors in public discourse because the nation state can be more easily linked to the “people” and set against the “other”, allegedly less legitimate supra-national European Union.

The Swiss case

At least the Swiss case, our first case study, supports these hypotheses. Our results show that the Swiss media have become more “national” in scope (less foreign news reporting) and increasingly give resonance exactly to the (issues of the) right-wing populist Swiss People’s Party (SVP) – the tabloids even more so than the quality press. Not only has the SVP become the clear owner in the field of “identity politics”, but it also trespasses on other issues, finds most media attention and receives the reputation as a distinct, legitimate, effective actor. With this dominance, the SVP has managed to bring to the fore an “anti” conception of Europe. In this sense, in Swiss politics the SVP is clearly driving the news.

This interplay of media populism and political populism no doubt varies among countries. First, media in one country can devote more attention to positive, more abstract and complex political issues (also concerning Europe) than in another. Second, mainstream parties in one country might successfully use a “soft” form of populism attractive to the news media as well. This would arguably decrease the chances of the “hard”, anti-EU populism of right-wing populist parties. However, populism by mainstream parties can also go hand-in-hand with a decreasing support for Europe, visible in the case of the social democrats. Comparing our sample countries and comparing party manifestos, parliamentary debates and media coverage, we will finally (and hopefully) be able to understand better which role parties themselves, and which role the media, play in fostering certain conceptions of Europe.

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Publications


What allows for peaceful and successful democratization processes in divided post-war countries?

In countries having undergone ethnic civil war, democratization attempts prove to be difficult as political institutions are weak and there is no agreement on who belongs to the political community and how it should organize itself. Wherever the demos and its institutions are challenged, the risk of recurrent conflict is high. An NCCR research project aims to find out how new political and media institutions should be designed in order to bridge ethnic cleavages and allow for a successful and peaceful democratization process.

By Nils-Christian Bormann & Manuel Vogt

Following a project on democratization as a possible trigger of conflict in troubled regions in the NCCR’s first research phase, the new project – again led by Lars-Erik Cederman, Andreas Wenger of ETH Zurich and Simon Hug of the University of Geneva – now takes on an even harder nut to crack: the utility and feasibility of democracy in deeply divided post-war societies. While one of the results of the first phase was that states undergoing democratic transformations have a higher propensity of experiencing civil wars, the new project “Institutional Strategies for Post-Conflict Democratization” proceeds from the normative assumption that democracy is generally desirable and not culturally constrained to economically advanced and/or Western societies. However, different countries need different models of democracy, and especially countries that have undergone ethnic civil war need to take special care when designing new institutions.

A central concern in ethnically divided post-conflict societies is the integration of the demos. In other words, who belongs to a political community and how does this community – the demos – organize itself politically? The project looks at this challenge from three different angles. Two PhD theses investigate electoral systems and political parties in post-conflict settings on the one hand, as well as power-sharing and autonomy institutions on the other. The third project, involving a postdoctoral fellow and another doctoral student, looks into the role different media institutions play in building a common national identity in post-conflict societies. All members of the project cooperate by jointly collecting data.

Political institutions and democratic stability

The PhD thesis by Manuel Vogt concentrates on two primary factors that are believed to influence both the outbreak and the resolution of ethnic conflicts: the electoral system and the intermediary organizations between the demos and the state. In order to find ways to bridge ethnic cleavages in politics, the project explores two central questions: Does the de-ethnicization of political competition and interest representation increase the probability of successful democratization after ethnic conflicts? What political and civic institutions promote de-ethnicization after ethnic conflicts?

When intermediary organizations, particularly political parties, become ethnicized, ethnic conflicts are more likely to erupt and stable democracy is less likely to be achieved in the aftermath of conflict. The structure of the party system, of course, is assumed to be a product of the electoral system to a large extent. On the other hand, strong non-ethnic or trans-ethnic civil society organizations might be able to serve as a bulwark against the ethnicization of politics by representing political and social interests related to potential cleavages other than ethnicity. Furthermore, this project argues that the type of ethnic cleavages has an important impact on the role of ethnicity in politics and, therefore, on the adequate strategies for ethnic conflict resolution. In highly unequal societies with firm, historically determined ethnic hierarchies, it is assumed that ethnic mobilization can have a positive effect on democracy.

The PhD project by Nils-Christian Bormann looks at the role that power sharing and regional autonomy institutions play in post-conflict settings. Democracy is sometimes seen as essentially being a mechanism that introduces uncertainty into the selection of power holders. If elites from different ethnic backgrounds have just fought a civil war for power, it is hard to imagine that the first thing on their mind is to turn their fate over to an uncertain process of leader selection. Alternatively, if a minority has fought against a majority ethnic group, and the introduction of elections
The National Centres of Competence in Research (NCCR) are a research instrument of the Swiss National Science Foundation.

means the domination of the ballot box by the latter group through the sheer size of numbers, democracy is unlikely to emerge. It therefore seems logical that reassurances are given to these opposed groups and their leaders in the form of consociationalism – a form of government that guarantees the representation of all groups. Nonetheless, it is often argued that the entrenchment of government positions for rebel leaders hampers democracy by undermining the democratic principle of leadership change and creating incentives for the militarization of politics. Furthermore, opponents of power sharing and autonomy institutions contend that these institutions freeze ethnic identities and increase the chance of conflict recurrence. The dissertation therefore examines the conditions under which consociational institutions come about and how they influence democratic stability and quality in post-conflict societies.

The role of the media

Finally, the project by Doreen Spoerer-Wagner and Nino Abzianidze examines the role of the media in post-conflict consolidation and democratization processes. It explores the question of how the media contribute to the formation of common political identities, a prerequisite for peaceful democratization in post-conflict situations. The project focuses on the Caucasus and the Western Balkans. Democratic transitions of a number of former communist countries have been accompanied by violent ethnic conflicts. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, for example, the Dayton Accords of 1995 turned out to be a success in terms of pacification and democratization of the country, although a common national identity was never achieved. Therefore attempts to stabilize political institutions in the country are likely to fail. The war in South Ossetia is a typical example of Caucasian instability, which has lasted since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. Here, opposing ethnic identities undermine the crucial public support for institutional conflict solutions. Although building of a common identity plays a crucial role in post-conflict democratization, the essential mechanisms of identity formation have not yet been studied comprehensively. What role do the media play in creating a common political identity – a demos – out of opposed ethnic blocs? The media can be expected to play a strong role here by displaying tolerance or stereotypes.

The project collects data on mass media reporting in Bosnia and Georgia as examples for two post-conflict societies and examines the impact different media reporting styles have on the formation of post-conflict identities. As media autonomy is an important factor when analyzing the role of the media in the formation of post-conflict identities, a special focus is put on the media environment: Are control and regulation exercised by political decision makers and economic power players rather enabling or restrictive?

Given the enormous challenges to governance in post-conflict states, the overall project aims to make a scientific contribution to this important subject. Furthermore, it plans to come up with policy recommendations regarding what political and media institutions can contribute to stable democratic rule in such settings.

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Publications


Transformation of the Arab World: where is it heading to?

In October 2011, the NCCR Democracy together with the Center for Comparative and International Studies (CIS) organized an international conference on the Arab revolutions. The aim of the conference was to bring together political scientists from various countries and backgrounds to discuss the driving forces and the role of key actors in the process as well as crucial factors for a successful transition to a new order.

By Yvonne Rosteck

The Arab revolution that started in Tunisia and Egypt at the turn of 2010 and triggered unprecedented revolts in several other Arab states came unexpectedly and gave rise to hope but also a feeling of disorientation. What caused these revolts and revolutions? Why did they develop so differently in each country? And how sustainable are they? Expectations regarding their future perspectives diverge: some are optimistic anticipating a democratization process that will stabilize the respective countries in the long term; while others are pessimistic, fearing political chaos that will destabilize the entire region for many years to come.

In order to find answers to these open questions, the Center for Comparative and International Studies and NCCR Democracy invited renowned political scientists from the Arab region, the US and Europe to a two-day international conference at ETH Zurich. The conference served as a platform for 130 participants, involving academics, practitioners, students, and the interested public, to inform themselves on the recent developments in the Arab region and discuss them with the speakers.

Different trajectories of revolutions

The conference started with two introductory talks given by Roland Popp of ETH Zurich and Daniel Ritter of the European University Institute in Florence. Roland Popp had a look at the driving forces of the revolts and revolutions and explained why the turmoil in Tunisia had a contagious effect on other regimes. While many of the driving factors in the Tunisian, Egyptian and Libyan revolutions – such as economic hardship, high unemployment especially among the youth, lack of freedom, political repression and flagrant enrichment of the elites – are detectable in most Arab countries, there are also important differences between these three countries regarding the repressiveness of the regimes, the role of the armed forces and economic wealth. According to Popp, it is therefore rather a new transnational Arab public and the enduring bonds between different Arab societies that explain the contagion. Daniel Ritter asked why the revolutionary developments turned out to be so different: why nonviolent revolution in Tunisia and Egypt, civil war in Libya, and brutal repression in Syria? He argued that the traditional relations with the democratic West account for the nonviolent revolutionary outcomes in Tunisia and Egypt. Because of their long-standing relations with the United States and Europe, Mu-

Menachem Klein of Bar-Ilan University in Jerusalem (left) with Kurt R. Spillmann who chaired the session on the role of international and regional actors.
barack and Ben Ali were forced to restrain from outright repression. Fearing that such responses would not be well received by the allies they depended on for political survival, the dictators had to play according to the liberal rules of the West in dealing with their opponents.

Saloua Zerhouni of Mohammed University in Rabat and Steven Heydemann of the US Institute of Peace shed light on the role of the political elites in the processes. According to Saloua Zerhouni, although the upheavals in the region are revealing the profound crisis of the Arab elites, their outcome in the long run will depend on the role of the political elites, be it the “old guard” or emerging new elites. Success or failure of the processes of change will be determined by the capacity of elites to agree on a common ground. How far the remaining authoritarian regimes will be able to stay in power by adopting strategies of repression and accommodation that prevent change was the focus of Steven Heydemann’s presentation. Giving a rather sobering outlook, he argued that, unlike the democratic change in Eastern Europe, the Arab Spring is far less certain to generate region-wide transformations. Why were the mass protest movements, after they had spread beyond Tunisia and Egypt, so quickly contained? Heydemann explains the capacity of some authoritarian regimes to suppress opposition movements with their capacity to learn from and adapt to the rapidly emerging challenges that mass uprisings posed for the survival of their regime. As authoritarian incumbents in Saudia Arabia, Yemen and Syria watched how uprisings unfolded in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, they learned from their own mistakes and those of others and developed strategies in order to survive at all costs.

Finally, Mark Tessler of the University of Michigan asked what the ordinary Arab citizens want: democracy, political Islam or a combination of both? He shared the findings of his public opinion surveys and showed that there is broad support for democracy – 84% want their country to be governed by a democratic political system, agreeing that democracy, despite its problems, is better than any other political system. There is, however a deep division of opinion about whether or not Islam should play a role in political life: The choice for the vast majority of Muslim Arabs is between secular democracy and a system of governance that is democratic and also incorporates Islamic elements – and not between democracy and Islam.

The role of international and regional actors

The second part of the conference focused on the interests and expectations of international and regional actors. Shibley Telhami of the University of Maryland explained the various factors that made the Obama administration change its position as the uprisings unfolded. In particular, he argued that the shift of American public perceptions of the Arab people affected US policy toward the region. While after the 9/11 tragedy, the American public has held increasingly negative views of Islam and Muslims, it adopted a positive view of the
Arab people in the light of the Arab uprisings. An opinion poll carried out by Telhami in 2011 showed that the American public is strongly opposed to the US taking sides in the internal struggles of Arab countries. Those who want the US to express support overwhelmingly call for support of the demonstrators against the governments, including those countries that have been close allies of the US.

Menachem Klein of Bar-Ilan University and Elham Manea of the University of Zurich shed light on the regional context. Klein asked the question whether the Arab spring is Israel’s winter. He asserted that Israel coldly greeted the revolutions, pushing the country towards self-defense and its old bunker mentality, as it can no longer rely on Arab dictators cooperating openly or secretly with Israel. He claimed that the Israeli public has built a psychological barrier against the Arab spring that goes hand-in-hand with their conflict with the Palestinians. Manea had a close look at the role the two regional competitors, Saudi Arabia and Iran, play. For Saudi Arabia, the success of any Arab democratic process is a direct threat to its political stability. As the regime suffers from severe deficits in democracy, citizens’ rights and transparency, demands of the public demonstrations in the Arab region could be easily overtaken by the Saudi population. As a consequence, the Saudi government used a carrot-and-stick approach to subdue any potential wave of public protests in the country. On the foreign policy level, it attempted to contain the democratic surge, supporting the Tunisian and Egyptian dictators at the last minute. Moreover, fearing any change that could alter the political landscape of the region, it undertook whatever necessary to prevent its rival Iran from playing a more assertive role in the region. This ranged from diplomatic actions to isolate Arab countries deemed too close to Iran (e.g. suspending Syria’s membership in the Arab League), to sending military troops under the banner of the Gulf Cooperation Council to help squash protests in Bahrain.

The European Union has been frequently accused of having cooperated with rather than confronted the authoritarian Arab regimes for many years. Tina Freyburg of ETH Zurich gave some arguments in defense of the EU. She maintained that the EU’s approach is to focus on building up democracies rather than on initiating change by breaking down autocracies. Therefore, like in Eastern Europe more than 20 years ago, the EU is committed to fostering democratization processes after the people in the autocratic countries have taken the initial step. The EU’s recent review of its policy towards the Arab states shows that it will use the portfolio of instruments and strategies of democratization support applied in post-communist countries, seeking to export democratic norms of decision-making at the level of the state, administration and society.

The first day ended with a public panel discussion in German. Participants were Arnold Hottinger (former Middle East-correspondent of the Neue Zürcher Zeitung), former Swiss ambassador Josef Bucher, and Swiss-based Egyptian journalist Tamer Aboalenin. The discussion was organized in cooperation with the German weekly Die Zeit and moderated by its correspondent in Switzerland, Peer Teuwsen. Like the conference itself, the discussion concentrated on the question of the future of the Arab revolutions, putting the focus also on its effects on Switzerland and Europe and the question of what they can contribute to the democratization process.
Outlook: Democracy or political chaos and new repressions?

The second day was dedicated to the question of how sustainable the political upheavals are. Nils-Christian Bormann, Manuel Vogt and Lars-Erik Cederman drew attention to the fact that most Arab states are divided by ethnic cleavages. The regimes continue to rely on the dominance of specific ethnic groups, discriminating and excluding other ethnic groups that in some cases even constitute the majority of the population. They argued that, in the short run, democratization attempts may increase the risk of civil violence at the very moment the people are supposed to take over political rule: not having resolved the question of who belongs to the political community and politically excluding ethnic groups, may be a trigger of conflict. In the long run, political stability will be impossible to achieve without including all ethnic groups in the political process and enabling the democratic participation of the masses. Ethnic inclusion and minority rights therefore should be a central concern.

Sheila Carapico of the American University of Cairo argued that, regardless of the outcome of the Arab uprisings, the experience of civic revolution will be significant for the future. Never in the history of the region have citizens acted together, peacefully raising their voices and demanding democratic change not only as a nation but also in unison with revolutionaries elsewhere in the Arab world. The combination of simultaneity, synchronization and solidarity among essentially leaderless protests show that a virtual Arab public sphere has emerged.

According to Wendy Pearlman of Northwestern University it was a transformation of emotions that propelled the upheavals and that ultimately will prove to be the most sustained and enduring change of the Arab Spring. For decades, the citizens did not express their opposition to corruption and lack of freedom not because they did not deeply resent them, but because they were too afraid of repression and too doubtful that protest would bear fruit. In order for mass protest to develop, those emotions had to be transformed into new emotions such as anger, pride, solidarity and hope. The feeling of overcoming fear and powerlessness is what has sustained the revolts across time and space and, according to Pearlman, promises to be their most significant legacy far into the future. Nader Fergany of Al-Mishkat Center in Cairo shared this conviction. For him, one certain outcome of the initial success of the popular uprisings is that the people in these countries will never be subjugated again. He believes that freedom, justice and human dignity will be attained eventually, even if the cost of achieving them can be a long period of turmoil entailing a great loss in human lives and welfare in the countries affected.

The conference ended with a concluding discussion round. The panel was made up of Steven Heydemann, Elham Manea and Sheila Carapico and moderated by Francis Cheneval of the University of Zurich. The recordings of the final discussion round in English and the public panel discussion in German are available on the NCCR website at www.nccr-democracy.uzh.ch/news_events/news/menaconference.

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Do all good things go together? Conflicting objectives in democracy promotion

The promotion of democracy in post-conflict or transition countries often does not prove to be successful. Trying to achieve peace, security, prosperity and other desirable goals at the same time often leads to conflicting objectives that might hinder processes of democratization. The NCCR Democracy hosted a workshop that brought together international scholars in the field in order to analyze the various dilemma of democracy promotion. The results will be published in spring 2012 and may help actors to work out strategies to address conflicting objectives of democracy promotion.

By Tina Freyburg

International democracy promotion is often pursued under the umbrella of “All good things go together!” Peace, stability, prosperity, freedom, good governance and rule of law are expected to be strengthened by the implementation of democratic institutions. However, various problems arise if such an instrumental understanding of democratization support is applied. Firstly, international actors tend to overload their agendas of democracy promotion. In doing so, they – secondly – raise expectations that can hardly be fulfilled. Thirdly, unintended risky conflicts of objectives may evolve during the process of democracy promotion. Finally, policies to support democratization might conflict with other interests and policies of actors involved. These setbacks call for in-depth theoretical and empirical investigation. A vast amount of literature has emerged that addresses these questions of goal conflicts in different sub-disciplines. For instance, peace researchers are interested in the compatibility of democracy promotion and peace building, and development studies ask whether democracy is best suited to promote socio-economic development. Although the individual research results might be of equal importance to understand and explain the effectiveness of policies of democracy-promotion, no major efforts have hitherto been made to consolidate them.

Workshop on the conflicting goals of democracy promotion

In March 2011, the NCCR Democracy hosted a workshop that brought together the prospective authors of an accepted special issue of the journal Democratization edited by Julia Leininger (German Development Institute Bonn), Sonja Grimm (University of Konstanz) and Tina Freyburg (ETH Zurich). This special issue seeks to provide an assessment of what we know empirically and theoretically about the different aspects of conflicting objectives in democracy promotion. The authors are expected to pursue two aims: first, to analyze significant conflicts of objectives in democracy promotion; and second, to explore their consequences for the effectiveness of democracy promotion. The authors are asked to specify possible trade-offs between democracy promotion and security, peace building, state building, empowerment and capacity building.

Eleven scholars from all over Europe and Canada followed the invitation to the workshop and met in Zurich in order to exchange arguments, discuss their findings and share knowledge about the regions and countries they study and about actors as diverse as the Taliban and the European Commission. As a start, Sonja Grimm and Julia Leininger proposed an analytical framework for identifying conflicting objectives in democracy promotion and for studying the conditions of their emergence. To this end, they proposed hypotheses on the impact of conflicting objectives on the effectiveness of democracy promotion that will be addressed by the individual contributors to the special issue.

Conflicts emerging from foreign intervention

Hans Agné (University of Stockholm) elaborated on the conflicts that emerge in democracy promotion, in particular through external democracy promotion that contradicts the principles of democracy that the people collectively govern themselves and decide on their political order. This conflict between foreign intervention and self-rule was also taken up by Nicolas Lemay-Hérbert (University of Quebec). By taking the example of the UN interventions in Timor-Leste and Kosovo, Nicolas critically assessed the tension between international trusteeship administrations as a means of external democracy promotion and local ownership where legitimacy conceptions from the inside are taken into account. Marissa Quie (University of Cambridge) took also up the problem of exclusion and inclusion in democracy promotion. By focusing on the Afghanistan Peace
The National Centres of Competence in Research (NCCR) are a research instrument of the Swiss National Science Foundation and Reintegration Program. She addressed the difficulties external actors face when dealing with relevant domestic agents such as the Taliban who need to be included in order to sustainably build peace, but are risky partners when it comes to their inclusion in processes of democratization.

Trade-offs between democracy promotion and other goals

Solveig Richter (German Institute for Security and International Affairs SWP) turned toward a second conflict of objectives between the promotion of democracy and the establishment of security, which can be observed in the Western Balkans. She basically argued that different kinds of democracy promotion instruments can have varying impacts at different stages of the democratization process: what can be appropriate at one point can cause serious counterproductive side effects at a different moment. A third conflict of objectives was dealt with by Jörg Faust and his team at the German Development Institute (DIE) in Bonn, notably the conflict between budget support as an instrument of poverty reduction and democracy promotion. Their study on Zambia demonstrated the ambivalent effects budget support as an indirect way of supporting democratization can have in terms of regime change. Staying on the African continent, in this case the Congo, Cristina Barrios (London School of Economics LSE) and Said Ahamed (University Paris-Sorbonne) challenged the existing literature by stating that a commonly acknowledged conflict between state-building and democratization dissolves if one considers processes of decentralization.

Promoting democracy through functional cooperation

Tina Freyburg (ETH Zurich) took up the question of whether functional cooperation (that is, policy-specific cooperation at the political-administrative levels) with authoritarian regimes is a blessing or a curse for democratization. In her analysis of EU cooperation with Morocco, she came to the conclusion that functional cooperation can have multiple effects depending on the level we look at. Whereas it might contribute to the stabilization of authoritarian ruling at the level of the regime, it can foster processes of democratization at the meso-level of state administration by socializing administrative staff into democratic governance and empowering reform-oriented agents. Jonas Wolff (Peace Research Institute in Frankfurt/Main), in his analysis of US and German reactions to political change in Bolivia, stressed that democracy promotion is confronted with a series of conflicts of objectives not only in post-conflict societies and cases of coerced democratization, but also in the broad range of normal post-transition countries.

The workshop clearly demonstrated that conflicting objectives hinder effective democracy promotion if actors do not find strategies to adequately address them. In June 2012, the results of the analyses will be published in a special issue of Democratization. This special issue is the product of on-going collaborative research of the network ‘External democratization policy’, an interdisciplinary and inter-institutional working group of junior scholars that is funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG). For further information please see the website of the network at www.external-democracy-promotion.eu.

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Empowering citizens in the European Union

The European Union (EU) is frequently accused of having a democratic deficit due to the lack of influence on the part of the citizens. Two current NCCR Democracy projects focus on the democratization of the EU. In order to transfer the knowledge gained in these projects into society, the NCCR this year became a partner of the Citizens for Europe Network, an association that aims to enhance equal political participation for all EU citizens.

By Rebecca Welge

NCCR research has come to the conclusion that democracy in the EU requires institutional mechanisms that represent the national political communities and individual citizens. Individual rights should not only be granted in the individual’s country of origin but also in the transnational realm. Enhancing political participation rights and citizen involvement are therefore important steps towards a more democratic EU. Sharing these same values regarding political participation with Citizens for Europe, the NCCR Democracy became part of its network in summer 2011.

The Citizens for Europe network

The non-profit association Citizens For Europe e.V. was established in Berlin by young professionals from throughout Europe at the beginning of 2010, with the aim of enhancing political participation rights for people residing in the EU and promoting a modern and progressive EU citizenship. Such an EU citizenship would not only consider member-state citizens but all people lawfully residing in the EU, and overcome current discriminatory practices that restrict political participation. In order to gather expertise, the association has built up a network of civil society actors, public and private institutions and individuals committed to improving citizen involvement and political participation in the EU. For the NCCR, being part of the network provides a possibility to transform its research findings into activities for the public and specific target groups.

The aim of the network is to raise awareness of existing participation opportunities in the EU, to create new opportunities for participation, to reveal the potentials of cultural diversity for democracy, and to empower individuals to take an active part in democracy at different levels. The processes of internationalization and transnationalization challenge democracy and increase the importance of networking between important stakeholders from academia,
The National Centres of Competence in Research (NCCR) are a research instrument of the Swiss National Science Foundation. How the partners will work together on specific activities and topics in future, and how the network’s opportunities can be used for building and strengthening capacities for democracy and citizens’ participation in it. This will be further discussed at a second meeting that will take place at the beginning of 2012 in Aarhus, Denmark.

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Civil society, education, political institutions, and the public sector to sufficiently meet constantly changing challenges. Migration, demographic change, and social and economic insecurity demand new perspectives and solutions that cannot be provided or adequately addressed by single actors. Especially, the exchange and transfer of knowledge, experience, and competences is essential to reveal new opportunities and create new capacities by sharing resources.

How to foster political participation and democracy in Europe

In September 2011, a kick-off network meeting on "Building capacities to foster political participation and democracy in Europe" took place in Berlin. Twenty-five representatives of partner organizations in ten different countries came together to lay foundations for a long-term collaboration. Participants engaged in lively discussions about the potential of citizenship education, social media and exchange programs to foster values of tolerance and democracy at the individual level and for social groups. The network members have discussed very intensively the topics of empowering to participate, disclosing the value of diversity for democracy, and creating new opportunities for participation. How responsibility in multinational and multicultural societies can be shared was also vividly discussed. Many collaborations on a small scale resulting from this meeting made the network idea already very concrete. Overall, the network members have shown real interest in intense exchange and the development of collaborations and common projects. Still, it is an open question how the partners will work together on specific activities and topics in future, and how the network’s opportunities can be used for building and strengthening capacities for democracy and citizens’ participation in it. This will be further discussed at a second meeting that will take place at the beginning of 2012 in Aarhus, Denmark.

The aim of the meeting was to discuss how the network can build and strengthen capacities for democracy and political participation in Europe.
Judith Vorrath, after leaving the NCCR in summer 2010, became a postdoctoral fellow in the “Transatlantic Post-Doc Fellowship for International Relations and Security (TAPIR)”. The program is run by a group of renowned European and US think tanks and political consulting research institutes. Fellows in this program spend three eight-month stays at participating institutes in order to conduct research in the field of international relations and/or international peace and security, and build a career in policy-oriented, international research. Judith still works on issues directly related to her PhD thesis that examined changes in conflict lines during post-war democratic transitions. The main explanation put forward for such changes is the return and integration of mobilized exile groups. The dissertation included a detailed assessment of the Burundian civil war and post-war transition at the elite level, through a content analysis of news sources and field interviews.

As a post-doc fellow, Judith continues to conduct research and analyses on (post-war) democratization, political fragmentation and the role of exile groups in civil war and peace processes. During her first TAPIR stay at the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) in Washington DC, from October 2010 to June 2011, she focused primarily on elections and democratization in sub-Saharan Africa. Her USIP Special Report “Political Trends in the African Great Lakes Region” (No. 279) highlights the political development in the course of the recent round of elections in Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda, and the upcoming elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Despite improving security and some socioeconomic achievements since the last round of elections, the report identifies clear signs of electoral authoritarianism in all four countries – coupled with new divisions and increasing fragmentation.

Other publications on elections in sub-Saharan Africa are forthcoming, and Judith is also co-authoring a paper on exile leadership in civil wars. She presented her work at several meetings inside USIP and at other Washington institutions. She was also involved in the review of a diaspora strategy paper of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) as a consultant. Asking Judith how she assesses her first TAPIR stay in Washington, she says that is was a very valuable experience. She got to know the functioning of a major US thinktank in the field of conflict and peace, had the opportunity to work with senior colleagues, and she got very interesting insights into Washington’s policy and research communities.

In the meantime, Judith works now at her second host institute, the European Union Institute for Security Studies in Paris. Since arriving there towards the end of June 2011, she has started working on different publications for the Institute: amongst other things on the upcoming elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo and on the European Union’s engagement of diaspora groups in peace processes. Judith’s next and final stay in the program will be at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP) in Berlin.

In what way has her experience gathered in the NCCR Democracy been helpful during her post-doc fellowship? First of all, Judith says, the doctoral program and the general research environment in Zurich equipped her very well for conducting sound policy-oriented analyses. But she has also learned a lot through the interaction within the NCCR, and by developing and organizing her own PhD project. Furthermore, she profited from the opportunities provided by the NCCR to conduct field work, present her work at conferences and participate in different courses. Last but not least, she would not want to be without the personal and professional relationships within the NCCR and beyond, which persist to this day.

And what are her plans for her future career? After finishing her post-doc fellowship in 2012, Judith would like to work for a think tank or a policy-oriented research institute in her fields of expertise.
Urs Scheuss chose a career outside academia and, in summer 2010, became political secretary for the Green Party of Switzerland.

What exactly is your job as political secretary?
My job primarily consists of advising the parliamentary group of the Greens at the federal level in the fields of environmental, energy and transport policies. I am also responsible for issues in the realms of science, education and culture. However, due to the lack of resources, as is common for most political parties in Switzerland, specialization is not possible. Rather it is a “division of priorities”.

After finishing your PhD you worked for one year as a post doc in the NCCR and then decided to leave academia. Has the change been easy?
During the time I worked for the NCCR I was involved in politics at all federal levels: as the president of the local section of the Greens in Biel, as a member of the cantonal parliament of Berne and as an activist in the campaign of the Swiss Young Greens against Sport Utility Vehicles (SUVs). Therefore it was a small step to leave academia. However, leaving academia also means leaving behind the collaboration with people that have become friends. This was a harder step to take, and I thank all my former colleagues for the great time I enjoyed with them.

Why did you choose a career outside of academia?
The job offer from the Swiss Green Party was an opportunity I had been looking for. During my time in the NCCR Democracy I became aware that doing politics was more important to me than working as a researcher. For instance, I discovered that I preferred to organize political actions and to write press releases rather than to elaborate a publication strategy or to write proposals for research projects. It was therefore consequential to leave academia. However this does not mean that to write a dissertation and to work at the university as a research and teaching assistant had been a wrong decision. On the contrary, it was a worthwhile experience.

Does your dissertation and your experiences gained in the NCCR help you in your present position?
Yes, with respect to analytical skills. It helps you understand political issues and identify the relevant actors very quickly. In addition, PhD training and attending conferences during my time in the NCCR has taught me how to present subjects in a concise and comprehensible manner. Finally, I learnt to manage stress. This is very important because political issues may change from one day to another – as, for example, with the sudden change in Swiss energy policy after the Fukushima nuclear disaster – and you have to work in a sometimes very conflict-laden context.

Has being a part of the NCCR Democracy network helped you in any way, and how?
It is sometimes useful to know some experts in the field of political science to ask them about findings on questions that are politically relevant for me. And I hope political scientists will ask me for answers to questions they are interested in. I know how important it is to gather information from people who work in the field. I have learnt a lot more about Swiss politics during the last year and I am open to share this knowledge with my former colleagues and their students.

What are your plans for the future?
This is an interesting question for someone who does politics. For now, I am considering my options. There are several paths that are now open to me. I have not chosen yet which one to follow. You should always avoid “dead-ends”. Yet, I’m sure I will not leave politics and return to academia.

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News in Brief

NCCR book series
“Challenges to democracy in the 21st century”

In December, Palgrave Macmillan launches a new book series on the challenges to democracy in the 21st century. The series publishes innovative research on established democracies under the influence of new developments, democratization processes and democracy in multi-level governance structures.

The series was initiated by NCCR Democracy and is based on its research output, but will also be open to other authors and research programs in related fields. It seeks to break down artificial divisions between different disciplines, by simultaneously drawing on political communication, comparative politics, international relations, political theory and political economy.

The first book published in the series in December is “Political communication in direct democratic campaigns”, edited by Hanspeter Kriesi. The book summarizes the results of political science and communication science research in NCCR module 4 on “Changing processes and strategies of political participation and representation”.

Further information on the series: www.palgrave.com/products/Series.aspx?s=CDC

NCCR Knowledge Transfer Award 2011

For the fifth time, the NCCR Democracy conferred its Knowledge Transfer Award to NCCR researchers who made a special effort in transferring their knowledge into society and contributing to a public discourse on democracy. This year, the prize was split and awarded to the team of the Democracy Barometer project and to PhD student Manuel Vogt.

Marc Bühlmann, Wolfgang Merkel and Lisa Müller were awarded the prize for their outstanding media work and the enormous media coverage they achieved after having presented the Democracy Barometer at a press conference at the University of Zurich in January this year. The results of the Democracy Barometer stirred a huge public response and an intense discussion on how democratic established democracies are. For several months the topic was covered in the Swiss and foreign media and was brought up again and again in political discussions. Thus, the Democracy Barometer raised awareness of the complexity of what constitutes a good democracy and where the strengths and weaknesses of democracies in the individual countries are.

Manuel Vogt, PhD student in the project “Institutional strategies for post-conflict democratization”, received the prize in recognition for four articles he published on his research in Swiss and foreign and online news platforms. These included an essay in a Guatemalan newspaper two days before the election that provoked enormous reactions in the country’s middle- and upper-classes.

The Award, endowed each with 2,000 Swiss Francs, was presented by Vice-Director Frank Esser at the annual NCCR conference in November in Thun. NCCR Democracy congratulates the winners and looks forward to more transfer activities in 2011!
“Swiss Youth in Science” study week: discovering the social sciences

For the second time, NCCR Democracy participated in the annual study week dedicated to the social sciences and humanities organized by “Swiss Youth in Science”. The study week took place from 14-19 November and the topic this year was “freedom/lack of freedom”. Eight PhD students of the NCCR Democracy and of the Center for Comparative and International Studies (CIS) devised four projects covering a wide range of topics. For example, the thirteen young participants dealt with questions such as: What factors determine freedom? Which aspects of individual freedom are granted to migrants in Switzerland and why are they denied other aspects of freedom? What does “freedom to die” mean? And what regional and international developments influence the individual freedom to make one’s own decisions and the individual’s right to express his/her opinions in Switzerland?

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 Zurich.

NCCR project wins 2011 International Geneva Award

Sandra Lavenex, Frank Schimmelfennig, Tina Freyburg, Tatiana Skripka and Anne Wetzel won the 2011 International Geneva Award for their article “Democracy promotion through functional cooperation? The case of the European Neighbourhood Policy”. The award acknowledges outstanding articles that are particularly relevant for international organizations.

The awarded article, based on findings of the NCCR project “Promoting democracy in the EU and its near abroad”, highlights the conditions under which functional cooperation in specific policy areas can advance principles of democratic governance in non-democratic countries, and thus contribute to the internationally recognized objective of democratization. While focusing on the EU, the study is of broader relevance, in particular for international organizations that are specialized in certain policy fields.

The Award Jury, composed of members of the Academic Council of International Geneva, selected the article out of a total of 14 papers received. The jury was convinced by the originality, the strong methodology and the direct relevance of the paper for international organizations. The article appeared in the journal Democratization 18(4), August 2011, pages 1026–1054.

NCCR Democracy on Facebook

Upcoming Events

4th Aarau Democracy Days: Democratization in the Arab World
15–16 March 2012, Kultur & Kongresshaus Aarau
www.demokratietage-zda.ch

NCCR-Conference on “Ethnic Politics and Electoral Democracy”
14–16 June 2012, Zurich
www.bochsler.eu/ethnicpolitics/

Scientific conference on civic education
7–8 September 2012, Centre for Democracy Studies Aarau (ZDA)

4th Aarau Democracy Days „Democratization in the Arab World“

The Centre for Democracy Studies Aarau (ZDA) organizes the fourth Aarau Democracy Days (“Aarauer Demokratietage”) on 15–16 March 2012 at the Kultur- und Kongresshaus Aarau. The annual event brings together representatives from science, politics, the media and citizens to discuss fundamental and topical questions on democracy. In 2012, the focus is on the Arab revolutions and their future perspectives.

After an opening speech by Arnold Hottinger, a public roundtable discussion on 15 March will focus on the Arab revolution and its effects on and consequences for Switzerland. Participants are Elham Manea (University of Zurich), Anita Müller (Swisspeace), Markus Leitner (Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs), National Councilor Geri Müller and Andreas Auer (ZDA).

The scientific conference on 16 March focuses on the opportunities for democratizing the region, the pre-requisites and basic elements of democracy and the role of education in democratization processes.

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

The Aarau Democracy Days bring together representatives from science, politics, culture, media, as well as citizens in order to discuss current topics related to democracy.