

National Center of Competence in Research (NCCR)
Challenges to Democracy in the 21st Century

Position paper

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[@] *National Center of Competence in Research: Challenges to Democracy in the 21st Century*

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1. Introduction¹

In contrast to the optimism of the early 1990s, when some observers heralded an ‘end of history’ that would definitively seal the victory of liberal democracy across the world, a realistic assessment of the state of democracy today must admit that democratic regimes are faced with numerous challenges that threaten to undermine their very legitimacy. Contrary to the optimists’ predictions, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the triumph of democracy it symbolized have given way to a severe political malaise almost everywhere in the West. Today, citizens in Western democracies are increasingly disillusioned with their political leaders and institutions. This disillusionment is, for example, expressed in the increasing populist mobilization in Western Europe and the U.S., or in declining levels of electoral and increasing levels of non-electoral participation. Beyond the West, the process of democratization has proven to be more difficult than expected. NCCR Democracy takes the current malaise in the West and the difficulties of democratization beyond the established democracies seriously, and sets out to analyze and understand the challenges and opportunities they imply for the development of democracy under contemporary conditions.

1.1. The two major challenges of democracy in the 21st century

Our programme focuses on two broad challenges that we consider fundamental for democracy in the 21st century.

The first challenge comes from the increasing role of mediated communication in the political process. After the classical parliamentarianism of the 19th century and the party democracy that was established at the beginning of the 20th century, representative government currently takes the form of an ‘audience democracy’ (Manin 1995) or ‘mediatized democracy’ (Mazzoleni and Schulz 1999). Politics is increasingly being moulded by patterns of mass communication. Inputs into the political system (the demands of citizens and their expressions of support) must be articulated by political communication, channelled into the political arena by intermediary institutions, and converted into system output. In a similar way, system output (political decisions and outcomes) has to be communicated to the public, and in modern societies the mass media are essential for this function. There is no doubt that much political communication is still practiced as direct interaction ‘back-stage’, in the discrete rooms of parliament and government – hidden from the public view. Yet democratic politics, by its very nature, sooner or later must go through the ‘front-stage’, which increasingly means the media today. Therefore NCCR studies the diverse and contradictory implications of the growing intrusion of the mass media into the political domain.

A second challenge is related to the loss of problem-solving capacity that nation-states have suffered as a result of processes of denationalization. Throughout most of the last century, democracy spread and consolidated within the framework of the Western nation-state. The current reversal of this constitutive historical process, which has been characterized by state- and boundary formation, nation-building and cultural standardization within the established boundaries, is manifesting itself in the increasing permeability of the boundaries between nation-states and the ‘unbundling’ of national territories. Beyond the nation-states, the processes of globalization and regional (European) integration are threatening to undermine the congruence between problem-structures, decision-making processes and participatory mechanisms, with troublesome consequences for the accountability and legitimacy of national political systems and emerging supranational political structures. At the same time,

¹ The authors would like to thank the members of NCCR Democracy’s International Scientific Council (ISC) – Herbert Kitschelt, Els de Bens, Edgar Grande, Peter Humphreys and Hans Mathias Kepplinger – for their constructive criticism of a preliminary version of this paper. They have helped to improve it significantly.

the emerging political structures beyond the nation-states provide opportunities for what we shall call 'vertical' democratization.

Similar processes occur within the boundaries of the nation-states, where new forms of regionalism and new layers of governance are taking shape with similar consequences for the accountability and legitimacy of the established political structures, and similar opportunities for the democratization of the new layers. Moreover, the national boundaries are increasingly porous with regard to the regulation by other nation-states. Examples include neighbouring states who attempt to export their problems, such as environmental pollution, by adopting 'beggar-thy-neighbour' solutions, or the transfer of regulatory competencies to other states that is implied by the principle of mutual recognition (e.g. the famous 'Cassis de Dijon' case). Finally, in an increasingly globalizing world, what happens in other regions of the world, in particular in undemocratic and unstable 'neighbourhoods' of democratic states, will have serious consequences for the citizens of established democracies. In an interdependent world that renders state borders more permeable, isolationist impulses defending a western 'democratic fortress' make little sense.

In other words, democratic accountability and legitimacy is challenged by political decision-making and implementation shifting upwards to the supra-national level, downwards to the regional level, and sideways to other national or regional governments. To the extent that they are all territorially based, these shifts still have something in common with traditional forms of governance. However, denationalization is also propelled by the increasing mismatch between territorially organized political units and societal spaces, which gives rise to the increasing importance of functionally differentiated jurisdictions and forms of governance, as well as to the coexistence of public and private jurisdictions and various forms of self-regulation (Lehmkuhl 2007). The implications for democracy of this trend are even more challenging than the territorial shifts in governance, since democratic forms of government as we know them have typically been territorially based, while these trends imply a declining relevance of territorial differentiation.

We are aware of the fact that these are not the only contemporary challenges of democratic accountability and legitimacy. First, technological change tends to drive economic transformation with a vast range of implications for political interest mobilization and the complexity of policy making. One could argue that most of the risks generated by modern societies are the product of technologically induced structural transformations inside national labour markets (Iversen and Cusack 1996). Technological innovation and denationalization, but also mediatization, may feed on each other. Second, demographic change has become a major force, making it increasingly difficult for politicians to deliver rising levels of benefit and satisfy popular demands at a time of rising pressure on health and social security systems. The demographic transition may causally drive certain aspects of globalization (such as migration), rather than the other way around. Third, the increasing socio-economic inequality and cultural heterogeneity of national political communities, which may also feed on globalization, tend to undermine the societal preconditions for political equality. Fourth, social-cultural preference formation may be a partially autonomous force of democratic change that gives rise to new demands for democratic accountability. Finally, the continuing expansion of what Mény (2002) has called the constitutionalist element of democracy to the detriment of its popular element, is also driven by forces internal to the political system. We shall attempt to take rival theoretical arguments into consideration, even if we focus on the two challenges that we consider to be of key relevance for the question of democratic accountability and legitimacy.

1.2. Democracy's two faces

Democracy has many faces and there are many perspectives on democracy. To bring some order into the all too complex debate, we can follow Margaret Canovan (1999), who proposes to distinguish between two interdependent faces of democracy – an idealistic (Canovan calls it 'redemptive') and a pragmatic one. The two cannot be separated from one

another, although between them lies a profound gap which it is not possible to bridge. Canovan (1999: 10) mentions three specific tensions between the two: first, pragmatists see democracy as a way of handling conflicts, as the worst form of government – except for all the others that have been tried from time to time; by contrast, the ideal of democracy promises a better world through action by the sovereign people. Second, there is a gap between the promise of power to the people and the performance of democratic governments – the contradiction between the power and the relative impotence of democracy. Finally, pragmatically democracy means institutions – not just to limit power, but also to constitute it and make it effective. In idealistic visions of democracy, by contrast, there is a strong anti-institutional impulse, the romantic impulse of directness, spontaneity and the overcoming of alienation.

The gap between its two faces is a structural feature of democracy. For Canovan, both pragmatism and idealism are necessary for the working of democracy, and, if anything, each acts as an endless corrective for the other; they are, she argues, ‘a pair of squabbling Siamese twins, inescapably linked, so that it is an illusion to suppose that we can have one without the other’. Different forms of radicalism flourish in this gap between democracy’s promise and the really existing world of democracy. According to Canovan’s remarkable theoretical insight, any movement or theory seeking to enhance the idealistic vision of democracy benefits from this gap – in particular, the participatory, deliberative or constructionist theories of democracy that emerged out of the new social movements of the 1960s and 1970s and have dominated the theoretical debate ever since. There is, for example, a large dose of idealistic faith intermingled with the rationalism of most theories of ‘deliberative’ or ‘discursive’ democracy: faith in the transforming power of deliberation. Note, however, that deliberative or discursive approaches are not necessarily inclusive-participatory.

Canovan’s distinction is important for NCCR Democracy. We propose to study the really existing forms of democracy - i.e. we definitely focus on the pragmatic face of democracy. We intend to account for how democracy actually works. For this purpose we need, as Schattschneider (1975 (1960)) suggested a long time ago, a modern conceptualization of democracy explaining the facts of life of the operating political system. We need what he called ‘a realist’s view of democracy’. However, we intend not to lose sight of democracy’s promises. On the one hand, democracy’s idealistic face has real consequences for its day-to-day operations: democracy is stronger and functions better when people believe in its redemptive power. On the other hand, democracy’s idealistic face provides us with normative criteria for the assessment of its day-to-day operations, and the gap between the really existing democracy and its unfulfilled promises (Bobbio 1987) provides us with an incentive for reform.

1.3. Models of the democratic process

In his Gettysburg address, Lincoln famously spoke of ‘government of the people, by the people, for the people’.² His short phrase encapsulates the essence of the different theoretical perspectives on the democratic process. Following Scharpf (1970, 1999: 6-20) we can distinguish between input-oriented democratic thought emphasizing ‘government of the people’ or ‘government by the people’ and an output-oriented perspective putting the accent on ‘government for the people’. From the input-oriented perspective, political decisions are legitimate because they reflect the ‘will of the people’. From the output-oriented perspective, they are legitimate if and because they effectively promote the common welfare of the people.

The classic models of the democratic process take an input-oriented perspective and can, essentially, be divided into two main types: the representative type and the radical type. The

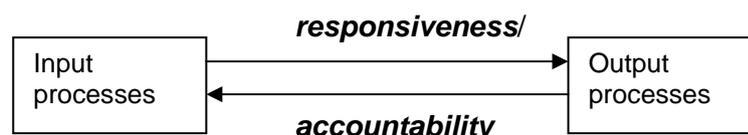
² See Roy P. Basler (Ed.) 1953-1955. *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, vol. 7: 22. Rutgers University Press.

former is based on a minimalist (or realist) conception of democracy and can be regarded as 'government of the people'. The radical type, by contrast, relies on a maximalist (or idealistic) conception of democracy and aims at 'government by the people'. Both types come in different versions: examples of the representative type are the models of liberal democracy, protective democracy, competitive elitism, pluralism, or legal democracy (see Held 2006). The radical type has many variants as well, among them participatory, deliberative, constructivist or feminist models of democracy. The third element of Lincoln's dictum – 'government for the people' certainly shares the idealism of the radical models (see Meyer 2005; Sen 1980, 1997). One could argue, however, that any model of democracy is designed to implement the idealistic goal of good governance - i.e. to improve the citizens' common welfare.

Relying on the basic ideas of democracy that derive from democratic theory, the principles of democratic justification are freedom and political equality. One could argue that 'control' constitutes yet a third basic principle of democracy (see IP14). Both, the representative as well as the radical type of democracy do not only seek to guarantee freedom and equality, they also justify democracy with the normative idea that this system improves individual liberty and equality (and the control by the people). In other words, both types of democracy do not only focus on the guarantee but also on the optimization of freedom and equality in political self- and codetermination. Representative democracy implements 'equality' by the principle of universal active and passive suffrage. With respect to liberty, it relies on the principle of free and fair elections of the political decision-makers, guaranteed by the competition between the organizations who structure the electoral process. Radical models of democracy insist on more elaborate notions of the citizens' participation in public debate and in the political decision-making process.

A realistic conceptualization of the democratic process in established democracies starts from the models of representative democracy. Under contemporary conditions, democracy essentially means representative government. Elections of the political decision-makers at regular intervals constitute the key institution of this form of government (Manin 1995: 18; Powell 2000: 3). We would like to stress that such elections are instruments of democracy to the extent that they give the people influence over policy making – i.e. to the extent that governments are accountable and responsive to the preferences of the citizens, considered as political equals (Dahl 1971: 1). Accountability and responsiveness link the political input processes to the political output processes, as illustrated in Figure 1. Our distinction between input and output processes may appear unusual to those who, in the footsteps of Easton's system theory, are used to distinguish between input, throughput and output. By distinguishing between these two types of processes, we would like to underline that, in representative democracies, the political process may be analytically divided into processes which are focused on the constitution of representative governments (input processes), and processes which are focused on policy-making (output processes).

Figure 1: A simple model of representative democracy



The 'chain of responsiveness' links political inputs (the result of elections) to political outputs (the results of the policy-making). Democratic responsiveness occurs when the democratic process induces the government to form and implement policies that citizens want (Powell 2004: 91). Accountability, by contrast, links political outputs to political inputs. It refers to the obligation of incumbent governments to assume responsibility for their acts and to enable

voters to respond with electoral sanctions, if the political output does not correspond to their preferences. Accountability combines an obligation of justification on the part of the representatives (they have to explain and justify their decisions to their voters) with the possibility of control on the part of the voters (they can sanction their representatives, if they do not deliver) (Papadopoulos 2007a: 470). Both accountability and responsiveness, as we view them here, go beyond purely procedural conceptions of democracy and take into account the substantive content of policy output.³

It is the regular repetition of elections that constitutes the crucial mechanism that allows voters to influence the decisions of those who govern - i.e. to incite their representatives to be responsive and to hold them accountable (Manin 1995). Based on this repetitive mechanism, the elected representatives are forced to take into account the retrospective (and, we should add, the prospective) judgment of the voters about the policies they have adopted. Repetition creates anticipatory pressure on elected representatives to take into consideration the preferences of the voters, which allows the voters to have an influence on their representatives on a daily basis. However, such pressure only exists if there is political competition: accountability and representativeness presuppose electoral contestability (open access for contestants), electoral vulnerability of incumbents, electoral availability of voters (their willingness to punish and reward their representatives), and the decidability of the offer (availability of differentiated offers).⁴

The components of political competition, in turn, heavily depend on the existence of a well-functioning public sphere. In other words, accountability and responsiveness also presuppose the existence of transparency – i.e. of conditions allowing the identification of the responsibilities of incumbents, and determination of to what extent they have been responsive. As Claude Lefort (1988: 17) has pointed out, however, there exists a fundamental paradox in democratic systems: ‘the locus of power becomes an empty place’. The point about democracy is that power is dispersed, continually contested, and not possessed by any single person or collective body. By contrast, the idea of popular sovereignty was originally modelled on kingship, and was an attempt to cast the ‘people’ in the role previously occupied by the king. However, with Canovan (2002) we can argue that precisely because democracy is the most inclusive form of government, it is the most complex form of politics, which means that it undermines transparency and, by implication, accountability. Or, stated in terms of a first hypothesis: the more complex the political process both on the input and on the output side, the less transparent it is, the less the representatives will be accountable to their voters, and the more difficult it will be for the citizens to sanction their behaviour and to ‘throw the rascals out’. The lower complexity of majoritarian systems goes a long way to explain why they are better able to provide for accountability (Powell 2000). But, for the general public, the inherent complexity of the democratic political process is not simply a given: political contests in the public sphere (i.e. political campaigns) are potentially able to reduce the complexity for the voters and to provide them with the relevant cues, primes or frames for making ‘enlightened choices’. Accordingly, we state a second hypothesis that puts the accent more heavily on the role of the public sphere and the media: the more effective the media in making the political contest transparent for the citizen public, the more the representatives will be accountable to their voters, and the more easy it will be for the citizens to sanction their behaviour.

Input processes determine the composition of the representative government, and, indirectly, the policy output of the government. They can be decomposed into at least three steps which

³ Bartolini (1999: 448) maintains that accountability requires only a regular renewal of the mandate to rule and is not concerned by what politicians should be accountable for – whether public policies or private behavior, personal prominence or prestige. In his view, only responsiveness requires the representatives to take the preferences and opinions of their voters into account. The way he defines responsiveness, however, closely resembles ‘accountability’ as it is defined here.

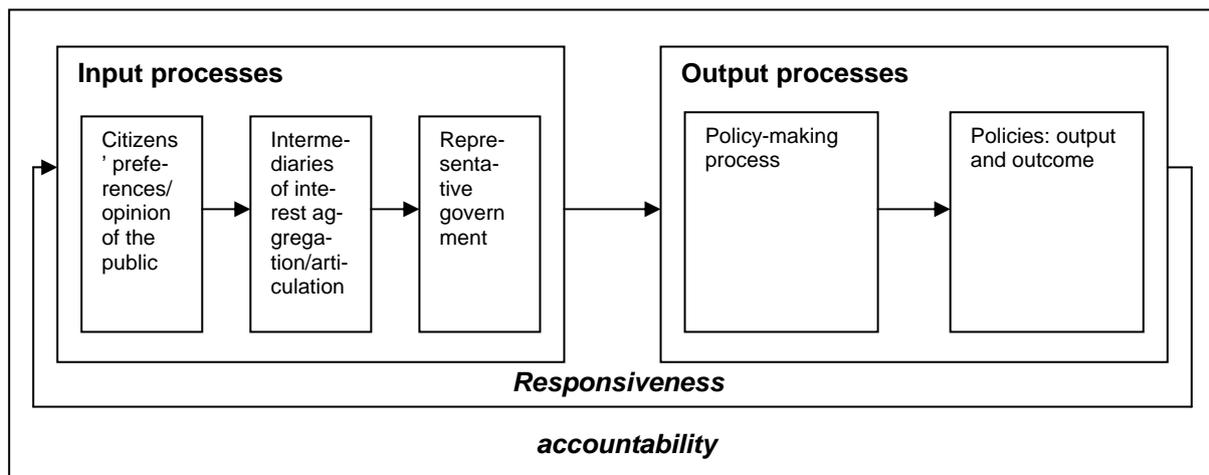
⁴ These four conditions are formulated by Bartolini (1999: 450-55), who views them exclusively as preconditions for what he calls ‘responsiveness’.

constitute as many processes of linkage between the citizens' preferences/opinions and the composition of the government:

- The structuring of the choice: the transformation of preferences and opinions into voting behaviour;
- The 'mechanic effect' of the electoral systems: the transformation of votes into seats;
- The coalition formation: the transformation of seats into government coalitions.

The structuration of the choice is shaped by intermediaries of interest aggregation and articulation – political parties, interest groups, social movements and the mass media. Political parties have traditionally been the main type of intermediary in the electoral channel, while interest groups are focused on the interest intermediation in the administrative channel. As already pointed out, the policy-making processes belong to what we propose to call the 'output processes'. Policy-making processes typically do not only involve the members of government, but also a variable number of additional actors – including members of opposition parties, public officials, representatives of interest groups and social movements, experts of different stripes etc. The output processes produce the public policies (the 'output'), which in turn are expected to exert an impact on society (the 'outcome'). The outcome of public policies is, of course, not only determined by the policy 'output', but depends on other factors as well, which escape the control of the government (Roller 2005: 32-34). Figure 2 provides somewhat more detail to the simple model presented in Figure 1:

Figure 2: Model of representative democracy



We consider collectively binding decisions to be legitimate to the extent that they are based on generally acceptable principles and procedures. Scharpf (1970, 1999: 6-20) has introduced the important distinction between input legitimacy and output legitimacy – two possible criteria to evaluate the quality of democracy. Input legitimacy is stressed by radical theories of democracy, while representative theories tend to underline output-oriented versions of legitimacy. Input legitimacy emphasizes government of or by the people. Input legitimacy is strongly based on the participation of all citizens (in the case of democratic decisions), of all interests concerned by a given collective decision (in the case of negotiating systems), or by the participation of all those who are competent in the field (in the case of technocratic decisions) (see Bartolini 2005: 173). It is also closely related to such criteria as inclusion, deliberation, enlightened understanding and representativeness. By contrast, output legitimacy emphasizes 'government for the people'. Here, collectively binding decisions are legitimate, if and because they are considered to effectively promote the common welfare of the constituency in question. Electoral accountability and responsiveness

are mechanisms that are expected to guarantee output legitimacy.⁵ As already pointed out, the outcome of the political process may, however, have come about irrespective of the government's actions – either because of the contribution of other actors (such as independent agencies, pluralist policy networks, supra-national regimes etc.) or because of factors (such as natural catastrophes, wars, business cycles etc.) altogether beyond the control of the policy-makers. Democratic processes and institutions that are considered to be well-functioning constitute the backbone of political legitimacy, social stability, and economic growth—i.e. of prosperity and social harmony.

1.4. The increasing role of the media

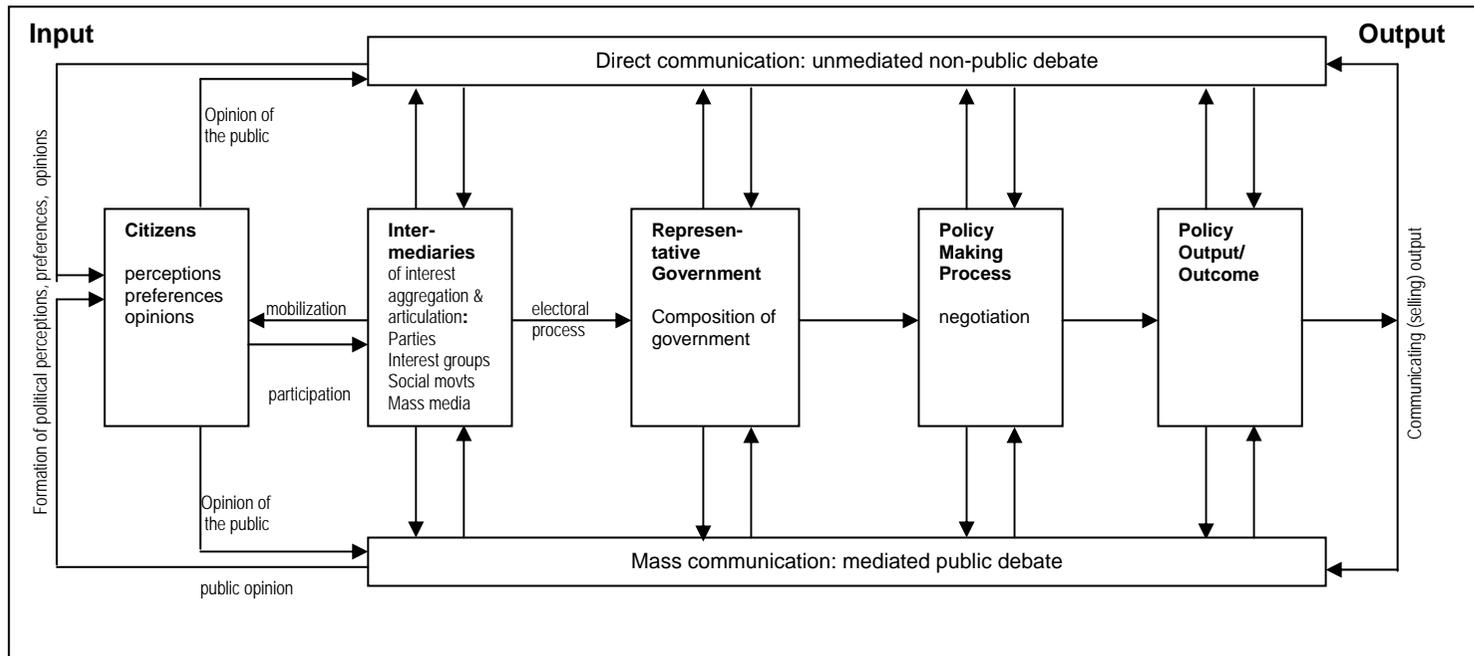
Traditionally, parties have been the main intermediaries between the citizens and their government. They have played a key role not only in the formation of the representative government, but also in the policy-making process. According to the thesis defended by Manin (1995: 247-303), party democracy is on the decline and we assist at a profound transformation of democratic systems of government today, due to the greatly increased importance of mass communication and media-centred public debates for democratic politics. The mass media have become an autonomous player in the intermediary system (alongside other emerging intermediaries like social movements) – a fact that provides a major challenge to traditional mass parties and other actors in the political domain.

The media's growing role has implications for the legitimacy of political institutions and processes, which increasingly depends on politicians' ability to communicate through the media – mainly by submitting to the media's preferred timing, formats and language. These challenges concern both the input and the output side of representative democracy as well as the linkage between the two. In order to put these challenges into perspective, we should elaborate the model in Figure 2 still further and replace it by an 'extended communication-based model of representative democracy' as in Figure 3.

In line with the conception of accountability and responsiveness which stresses the anticipatory pressure on representatives, Dick Morris (1999), a former political advisor of President Clinton, has observed that everyday is election day in the contemporary US. In other words, voters do not make their choice of representatives between competing elites only once every so many years and then let their representatives govern, as suggested by Schumpeter's (1962) 'realistic' theory of democracy, but they influence their representatives between elections, too. This means that, in representative democracy, the elected officials have a strong incentive to adapt their decisions to the opinion of the mass public between the elections. This idea corresponds to Stimson et al.'s (1995) model of 'dynamic representation'.

⁵ Note that, according to Scharpf (1999: 14), elections are not meant to express the 'will of the people' with regard to policy choices – for which he believes they are poorly suited under most conditions. Instead, they are important as 'infrastructure of political accountability', a subtle distinction – so subtle that it is, as Bartolini (2005: 169) suggests, difficult to grasp.

Figure 3: A communication-based model of representative democracy



According to this model, the citizens have a direct and an indirect effect on policy decisions. On the one hand, their opinion influences policy decisions indirectly, by determining the election outcome, which, in turn, leads to modifications in the policy decisions. On the other hand, the opinion of the public influences the policy decisions of the political authorities directly via their rational anticipations during a legislative period.

The 'dynamic model of representation' is, however, still unrealistic to the extent that it considers public opinion as an exogenous factor, which implies, of course, a highly restricted view of what political mobilization in a democracy is all about. In fact, in democratic systems, the key issue for political actors is precisely to shape public opinion – on specific issues (and not with respect to the general mood, as suggested by Stimons's model). Public opinion is the product of the debate in the public sphere – a communication system involving a wide range of political actors.⁶ The public debate, its inclusiveness and its deliberative quality are essential for the quality of a democratic decision. This is Schattschneider's (1960) view of democratic politics, for which the expansion of conflict constitutes the essence of democracy. For Schattschneider, conflict is contagious, and the larger the attentive public for a given conflict the more democratic is the struggle in question. Accordingly, the most important political strategy is concerned with the expansion of the scope of conflict - i.e. the number of people involved in the conflict. For Schattschneider, it is the scope of conflict which essentially determines its outcome, and at the core of each political conflict there is the struggle for its privatization or socialization. The privileged attempt to privatize the conflict - i.e. to take it out of the public's view - while the disadvantaged attempt to socialize it - i.e. to expand the attentive public: 'Democratic government is the greatest single instrument for the socialization of conflict in the American community' (S. 12).

Schattschneider's view of democratic politics corresponds to that of the agenda-setting approach (see Burstein (1998, 1999), Baumgartner and Jones (2002), Jones (1994)). This approach distinguishes itself from traditional approaches to democratic representation by the fact that it does not focus on the representation of preferences, but on the information processing of citizens and decision-making authorities and on the struggle for attention among the actors in the political elite. The participants in the public debate not only include government actors, but policy-makers of all types may opt for 'going public' too. Any collective or individual political actor may participate in this struggle – policy-makers as well as intermediaries and challengers from outside of the political system.

This extended model of representative democracy implies that the political supply by the elite is crucial for the democratic process. Accordingly, the vote basically appears as a reaction of the citizens with regard to the terms proposed by the elite. As Manin (1995: 290) observes, in politics there is no demand that is independent of the supply. This applies not only for representative forms of democracy, but for direct-democratic procedures, such as exist in Switzerland, as well (Kriesi 2005). Given the crucial importance of the political supply, the key question with regard to the substantive orientation of the democratic process is to what extent it produces 'largely not a genuine but a manufactured will', as Schumpeter (1942 (1962)) suggested in one of his devastating formulas. The answer to this question very much depends on the quality of the debate in the public sphere, which, in turn, is a function of its inclusiveness, its openness to a range of ideas and styles of expression, of its level of justification as well as of its outcome. For assessing the quality of the debate, it is, for example decisive what clinches the debate – the quality of the argument or the power of the speaker.

Ferree et al. (2002: 205-231) present various normative models of the public sphere, which may serve as a measuring rod for the evaluation of the quality of the public debate. In this respect, as in others, the model of the liberal representative theory of democracy is less demanding than the models of the more radical theories of democracy. Representative

⁶ Following Neidhardt (1994), we distinguish here between the 'opinion of the public' and 'public opinion'. The opinion of the public corresponds to the opinion of the citizens as measured by opinion polls, while the public opinion is the emergent product of the debate in the mediated public sphere.

theory starts from the assumption that the debate is essentially an elite debate and that the majority of the citizens are politically neither sufficiently competent nor sufficiently interested in participating in the public debate. This model requires less than full participation from the citizens – they can be ‘monitorial rather than informed’ citizens (Schudson 1998: 310), or ‘scorekeepers’ (Stimson 2004). Monitoring or scorekeeping citizens scan (rather than read) the informational environment in such a way that they may be alerted if something goes wrong, and they use heuristic shortcuts to make up their political mind. This theory acknowledges what Walter Lippman maintained long ago: ‘if democracy requires omniscience and omniscience from its citizens, it is a lost cause’. More radical models, such as the participatory theory of democracy, require much more participation of the citizens in the public debate, especially with regard to issues that affect them directly in everyday life. Accordingly, they ask for the creation of media structures that contribute to the ‘empowerment’ of individual citizens. Discursive theories put the accent on the quality of the arguments provided, and on the degree to which the best argument prevails. Constructionist theories, finally, do not devalue deliberation and formal argument in discourse, but they are concerned that unexamined assumptions about how discourse should be conducted may, intentionally or inadvertently, limit who participates. They, too, place a high value on empowerment and ask for ‘free spaces’ in which individuals may speak together, i.e. they prefer the idea of multiple independent public spheres over the idea of a single one.

The question of the ‘manufacturing of the popular will’ becomes particularly acute in a political system where political communication is no longer party-centred, but focused on the media. Research has demonstrated that the public does, indeed, form its impressions about the political world from the news media (Graber 2001; Zaller 2003). Whereas the increasing role of the media has been discussed mainly as a US development in the past, European systems have observed similar trends recently (Swanson and Mancini 1996, Hallin and Mancini 2004). Thus, the media are not mere passive channels for political communication and political content, but they portray political affairs on their own terms, according to their own specific news values, selection criteria, presentational styles and narrative frames. They selectively confer public status on political actors. It is almost exclusively left to the news media to decide which actors and voices of society gain access to the public debate. The media also determine which political events come to the attention of the public and impose a systematic bias upon the media reality of politics. In other words, they assign political relevance and importance to social problems by selecting, and by emphasizing certain issues and neglecting others they set the public and, indirectly, the political agenda. The media construct the meaning of political events and personalities according to their own commercial logic. Moreover, the media themselves become key political actors on their own, who are able to influence political decision-making processes and, in rare instances, even become mobilizing agents. Political communicators are forced to respond to the media’s rules, aims, production logics, and constraints (Mazzoleni and Schulz 1999). As a result, political actors and the media interact in complex ways in the public sphere that cannot simply be instrumentalized by one of the actors involved. Instead, we should assume a ‘symbiotic constellation of mutual dependence’, where all the participants are trying to optimize their control over the events (Schmitt-Beck and Pfetsch 1994: 115).

There is much controversy about the expected impact of the increasing role of the media on democratic politics. Some argue that the mass media generally are a weak force in politics and government (Newton 2006). We believe that such arguments need to be reconsidered in the face of more recent developments. Among those who take the impact of the media on politics more seriously, there are both sceptics and enthusiasts. With regard to the input side, sceptics stress that in their reporting, mass media follow certain news values such as negativity, conflict, drama, and personalization. Accordingly, they contribute to the ‘spectacularization’ of political communication formats, and they marry the language of politics with that of advertising, PR and show business (Mazzoleni and Schulz 1999). The implications for democratic accountability might be very serious, to the extent that the process of representation does not focus on questions of policy-output and does not take into account the political record of the government – i.e. to the extent that the input processes are

decoupled from the output processes – democratic competition becomes at best a meaningless beauty contest between political leaders, at worst a manipulative game that induces the voters to act against their own preferences.

In this context, personalization is of particular importance. By highlighting the role of personalities, the media enhance the focus on party leaders and chief executives. This trend undermines the organizational structure of political parties because the growing significance of media personalities and public images empowers individual political figures at the expense of the parties' authority. Today, the political leader directly addresses the public and directly reacts to changing public opinions. Accordingly, Fishkin (1991: 46) observes 'the spread of the plebiscitary model of leadership and representation'. At first sight, this trend reminds us of Max Weber's (1992: 44-49) vision of a 'plebiscitary democracy'. However, in Max Weber's view, which built on his observation of democratic politics in the early twenties, the party leader was something of a 'plebiscitary dictator', because he was able to mobilize the masses by using the party apparatus (the 'party machine', including the foot soldiers of the regular party members). The contemporary party leader, by contrast, is able to mobilize the masses largely without the party apparatus, i.e. we are witnessing what Peter Mair (2002) has, somewhat exaggeratedly, called the rise of a 'partyless democracy'. Mény and Surel (2000: 111) speak of a growing 'de-parlementarization' – i.e. a progressive erosion of the ties which linked the party and its leader in European democracies – and they arrive at the conclusion that never before has charisma had as important a role as it has today, not only in politics, but also in economics and religion. Poguntke and Webb (2005) refer to this trend as the 'presidentialization of politics in democratic societies', and they and their co-authors assemble strong evidence in support of a shift of power from organizational party power to individual power of chief executives and party leaders.

With respect to the output side and its linkage to the input side, in a similarly pessimistic assessment of current trends, Papadopoulos (2007) suggests that the increasing role of the media tends to obfuscate the ongoing transformation of output processes. In addition to personalization, the media's increasing role implies a certain vagueness of political commitments and the simplification of issues, especially as ideological and programmatic differences become less pronounced and the range of feasible policy options narrows. In Papadopoulos' interpretation, too, 'front-stage' politics tend to become primarily confined to the symbolic role of the 'political spectacle'. All kinds of irrelevant, but mediatized, issues tend to crowd out the relevant political issues of the day. A case in point is the sex scandal of President Clinton – the Lewinsky affair. While the impeachment process did not succeed, the affair occupied a significant part of the media agenda for six years and even dominated it during one year. As Delli Carpini und Williams (2001: 177f.) observe, national politics were reduced to an entertaining, sometimes melodramatic, but rarely relevant spectator sport. This affair can also be seen as an example of a growing anti-politics sentiment in parts of a thoroughly commercialized news industry. Moreover, as Papadopoulos argues, the decline in the quality of the representative process at the 'front-stage' provides additional grounds for depoliticising the policy-making process 'back-stage', broadening the gap between the competitive logic of input side and the necessarily cooperative logic of back-stage governance due to technical, social, and institutional complexity. The 'back-stage' policy-makers even contribute to this gap strategically by attempting to deflect the attention of the media away from the issues they do not want them to touch upon. In the final analysis, the decoupling of 'backstage' policy-making and 'front-stage' mediatized representative politics tends to increase the gap between the two faces of democracy, and thereby nurture populist protest (Papadopoulos 2002).

Contrary to these rather pessimistic expectations, the challenge of the increasing role of the media for the political process may also give rise to more optimistic expectations. Thus, the Lewinsky affair is, indeed, a case which allows for a more optimistic reading as well: in spite of the great efforts of the President's opponents and supporters, the public developed its own interpretation of the scandal, which was consistent with the view of neither one of the two camps: in spite of repeated attempts of the opponents to mix up the two aspects, the public

made a clear distinction between the affair (which it considered to be of the President's private concern) and his capacity to run the government. Zaller (2001) argues that the American public consistently valued the political substance of the Clinton presidency – peace, prosperity and political moderation – higher than his personal mistakes and lies. Zaller (2001: 270f.) comes to the conclusion that American politics are still politics of 'tough-minded substance'.

As Stimson (2004: 112) observes, one of the best established findings in voting research is that voters rarely hold a preference for a candidate and then change it to the opponent. What happens instead is that the electoral campaign, by increasing the information about the voting decision available to the voters, helps them update their beliefs regarding the issues at stake and to reach a decision in line with their preferences. Following Gelman and King (1993), Arceneaux (2005) calls this the 'enlightenment hypothesis'. During the campaign, the citizens' attention becomes focused on politics more generally (during election campaigns) or on specific political issues (during direct-democratic campaigns), and the citizens, who normally pay little attention to politics, learn a lot about the choices they have to make. Campaigns are information-rich events that allow the citizens to connect their preferences to the choice at stake and to make a decision in line with their preferences. As Sniderman and Levendusky (2007) point out, the clash of arguments during the campaign rather than confusing the citizens clarifies the choices before them.

Moreover, the increasing role of the media may also open up new opportunities for the mobilization of the public, and for the power of the electorate. In party democracy, the vote was to a large extent under the control of the party organizations and it was brought out by the party militants who canvassed their community. The loyalty of the voters reduced both party competition and the value of the vote for collective actors other than parties. By contrast, in the ideal-typical audience democracy, not only a much larger part of political action becomes public action, but a much larger part of public action escapes the control of the political organizations originally designed to mobilize the citizens as voters – the political parties. Today, as Kitschelt (2000: 164) has observed, parties are, much more than they were some years ago, confronted with political preferences that are exogenously determined by spontaneous developments in the electorate or by independent media and political entrepreneurs who operate outside of the parliamentary arena. In this new form of representative government, public support becomes volatile and unpredictable, but at the same time crucial for political success. This tendency is reinforced by the increasing sophistication and collective action capabilities of intense minorities in the electorate. By increasing the role of the public sphere and by reducing the control over the vote by the political parties, the audience democracy may, indeed, increase the incentives for all kinds of political actors to directly appeal to the public and to mobilize it in order to influence the political process between elections. Political parties become involved in permanent campaigning, and other political actors – such as social movements who resort to non-electoral forms of political mobilization – attempt to influence elected decision-makers indirectly, by attracting the attention of the public and increasing the public pressure on them. Moreover, strong, independent and diverse media may be better able to fulfil their function as guardians of the democratic process. At least in principle, they can contribute to greater transparency and accountability (Veltmer 2000)

Finally, the question may be raised whether we do not currently assist at another fundamental transformation of the public sphere as a result of the increasing use of the internet for political communication. Little is as yet known about the extent and the distribution of the use of the internet for political communication and about its impact on the democratic process. We should, of course, begin by distinguishing between the various applications of e-democracy and e-government, which may have quite different implications for representative democracy. Enthusiasts generally expect the new technological tools to provide opportunities for the empowerment of the citizens: they may improve the access to key information about the policy-making process, allowing for greater transparency and, by implication, greater electoral accountability. They expect the new tools to contribute to the

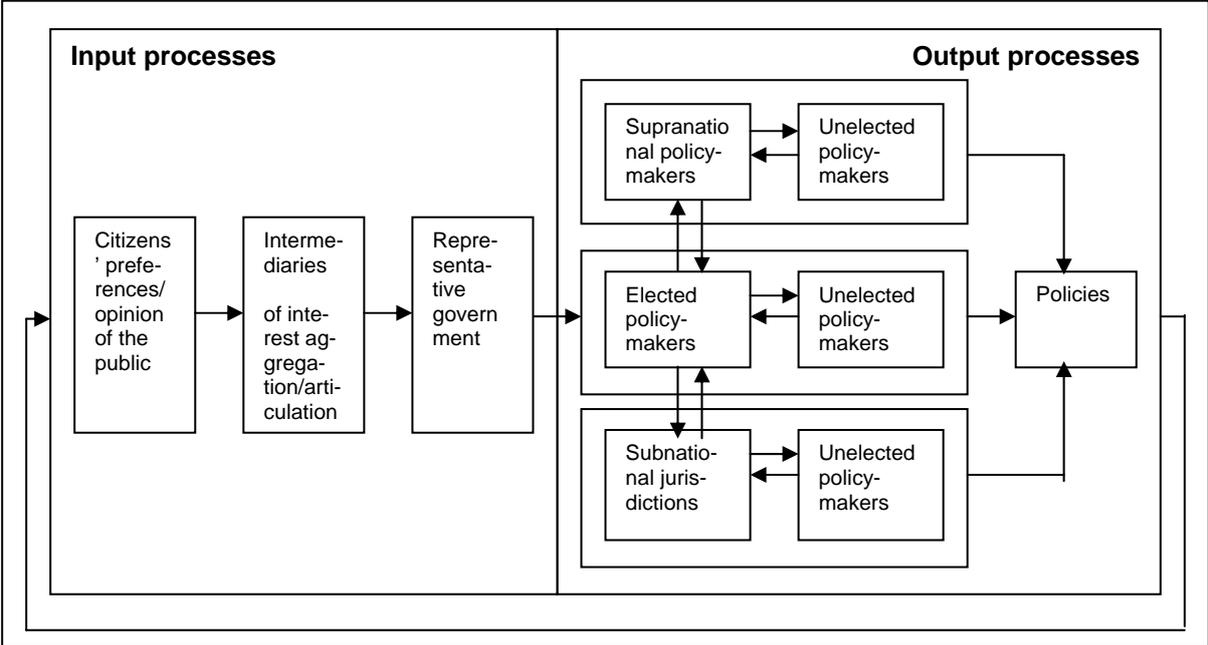
empowerment of the citizens by increasing their possibilities to control their elected representatives. By contrast, sceptics are afraid of increasing inequality among the electorate due to the asymmetric spread of the new tools ('digital divide', Norris 2001), and of increasing segmentation of the public sphere due to the balkanizing effect of the internet on the public debate (Sunstein 2001).

1.5. The increasing denationalization of policy making

The model of representation in Figures 1-3 applies to the policy process at the level of national political systems. Faced with the double challenge by the interrelated processes of globalization and European integration, European nation-states are suffering a loss of policy-making capacities. Globalization and European integration are threatening to undermine the congruence between problem structures, decision-making processes and participatory mechanisms, with potentially troublesome consequences for the accountability and legitimacy of national political systems and emerging supranational political structures. This challenge has implications for both the input and output side of the model of representative democracy. At the same time, as a result of changing problem structures, increasing complexity, dynamism and diversity, the existing governance structures are also changing within the nation-states in ways that have analogous consequences for the legitimacy and democratic accountability of policy-making: new types of subnational jurisdictions are introduced, and authority is delegated to a wide variety of unaccountable decision-making and regulatory bodies. European integration, as noted by Hooghe and Marks (2007a: 9), is one outcome of a broader process of authority dispersion, which stretches beneath as well as above the nation-state. The accountability and legitimacy problems posed by these developments may, however, not be as serious as some suggest. Moreover, they may also constitute a challenge to find new solutions to democratic control mechanisms in multi-level governance structures.

To introduce the consequences of denationalization of policy-making, we would like to first focus on the output side and link it to related developments that all amount to an increasing 'uncoupling' of the output side from the input side of the representative model. In order to put this challenge into perspective, we once more elaborate the model in Figure 1, and replace it by yet another version of the 'extended model of representative democracy' (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Extended model of representative democracy II



Processes of globalization and European integration generally impose constraints on national governments that reduce the number of policy options available to them: the increasing interdependence of economic, social, and cultural processes serves to limit the manoeuvring space of each national policy-maker and calls for regulation at the supra- or international level. In Europe, decision-making authority on a broad range of issues has come to be shared across EU institutions, national and subnational governments. As is observed by Hooghe and Marks (2007a: 8), the reason for this development lies in the benefits of adjusting the scale of governance to the scale of a collective problem: 'Where the externalities that arise from a problem such as providing clean air, minimizing transaction costs of monetary exchange, or reducing trade barriers, are transnational in scope, the most efficient level of decision making is similarly transnational. Where the externalities are local or regional, as for garbage collection or land-use planning, the most efficient level is subnational'.

The scale-shift of policy-making authority involves the establishment of multi-level governance structures, which poses some severe accountability problems (Papadopoulos 2007, 2007a). Negotiations between decisional units lack visibility and tend to involve participants who are subject to administrative rather than democratic accountability. Even those who find themselves under the immediate control of their electorates are subject to a 'two-level' accountability process: they must account for their actions not only to their constituencies, but also to their negotiation partners. As far as the EU is concerned, it is of course true that, in this particular case, citizens have the right to vote in European elections and they also have an indirect impact on the supranational decision-makers via their national executives. However, European elections are 'secondary elections' that are not really about representation at the European level (van der Eijk and Franklin 1996), nor are national electoral contests about the content or direction of EU policy (Mair 2001). European mainstream politicians have effectively organized EU issues out of the national political contests. As Follesdal and Hix (2006) argue, there is no electoral contest about the leadership at the European level or the basic direction of the EU policy agenda. In fact, as decision-making authority shifts to the EU level, there is an increasing lack of democratic accountability in the European multi-level system of governance. Decision-makers at the EU-level are weakly accountable to the European parliament, and much more isolated from national parliamentary scrutiny than national governments.

Moreover, following Scharpf (1999, 2002), the processes of 'negative integration' (i.e. deregulation at the national level without corresponding re-regulation at the supranational level), which have predominated policy-making in the EU, in combination with the pressure of international economic competition, undermine the problem-solving capacity of the nation states. At the same time the problem-solving capacity at the EU-level is limited by very demanding consensus requirements. This is why, according to Scharpf's diagnosis, the European multi-level system suffers from an overall loss of problem-solving capacity, particularly in the domains of macro-economic and social policy-making, which are crucial for output legitimacy.

Beyond the EU, the accountability problems encountered are amplified because the chain of delegation is even longer. Although national governments are represented on the boards of transnational agencies and international regimes, the accountability of their officials is – as in the EU – only indirect. And even if it is true that an increasing number of advocacy groups apply pressure on transnational policy-makers, the participation of such groups is only weakly institutionalized and is no substitute for traditional mechanisms of representation. Moreover, their own legitimacy is questionable, since they are not electorally accountable to anyone.

This estimated loss of accountability is likely to have consequences for the input side of representative democracy. First of all, it tends to reinforce the previously observed trend towards a power shift in favour of the executive. The internationalization of policy-making increases the relative domestic influence of governments – i.e. it shifts power to the heads of governments, some of their ministers and key advisers, and thereby reinforces the trends of

'deparliamentarization' and 'presidentialization' noted earlier. In addition, the loss of accountability reinforces the populist tendencies in contemporary representative democracies. In this case, however, we are dealing with populism not in the sense of 'partyless politics', but in the sense of 'protest politics' (for the distinction of the two types of populism, see Mair 2002). Populist collective actors attempt to 'bring the voters back in' – i.e. they mobilize the voters in the electoral channel in the name of the idealistic face of democracy. Populism is, as Taggart (2002: 67) has pointed out, hostile to representative politics and pleads for a more direct linkage of masses to elites. Populists do not appeal for more representative government, rather for better - i.e. more responsive governance. Ironically, however, populism expresses itself in representative politics; and in the way they mobilize, as already observed, populists often rely on charismatic leadership or at least on centralized political structures. From the point of view of accountability and legitimacy, populist mobilization is ambivalent: on the one hand, and in line with the democratic ideals, it serves to enhance popular control over the representatives; on the other hand, it enhances the personalization of politics, favours simplifications and ready-made solutions, and undermines the deliberation of substantive issues. In short, it enhances the trend towards a 'plebiscitary democracy' that we have already discussed in the context of the increasing role of the media.

It would be a mistake, however, to view this populist challenge simply in terms of protest politics. As we have argued on the basis of a comparison of the transformation of six Western European party systems (Kriesi et al. 2006), the new populist parties of the radical right (or their functional equivalents of transformed mainstream parties) have become the driving force of this transformation by giving voice to the various groups of losers of the current processes of 'denationalization' or 'globalization'. In a Rokkanian perspective, Kriesi et al. (2006) suggest that we should conceive of these contemporary processes as constituting a new 'critical juncture', which is likely to result in the formation of a new structural cleavage that we might call the conflict between 'integration and demarcation'. This conflict is, among other things, articulated in terms of resistance against European integration. As Van der Eijk and Franklin (2004) have observed, European integration constitutes a political potential waiting out there to be mobilized by some political entrepreneur. If the mainstream parties in most countries have so far tried to shut out the issue from the national political contests, it has been taken up by more peripheral challengers. In Switzerland and the UK, it has already become a key issue for mainstream parties and for the national political contest. In these two countries, the question of national sovereignty, which includes the question of national voting rights, is at the origin of widespread Euroscepticism (Kriesi 2007). Similarly, the French referendum on the EU-Constitution in spring 2005 'was first and foremost a retrospective vote on the process of European integration itself, and the unilateral termination by a majority of voters of the 'social welfare and economic growth' confidence pact that they had made with their national political elites on the occasion of the Maastricht Treaty referendum in 1992' (Ivaldi 2006: 49). In a similar vein, Hooghe and Marks (2007) develop a 'post-functionalist' theory, arguing that the permissive consensus in the European public has come to be replaced by 'dissensus' which risks seriously constraining EU policy-makers in the future. As Majone (1998) observed, depoliticization of European policy-making has been the price we paid to preserve national sovereignty largely intact. Once European integration has started to become a key political issue, 'integration by stealth' has ceased to be a viable strategy (Majone 2005), and identity politics move to centre stage. In addition to European integration, it is above all the question of immigration, which has so far served to focus the mobilization in terms of identity politics.

The scale shift to supra-, inter- and transnational policy makers poses the question of identity in an even more fundamental way: it raises the problem of the definition of the political community, or of the 'demos'. Democracy presupposes the existence of a political community, or of a demos. As Greenfeld (1992) has pointed out, the idea of democracy is intimately related to the idea of the nation, and originally, democracy was contained in the idea of the nation as the butterfly in the chrysalis. Today, democracy is institutionalized at the level of the nation-state and the nation constitutes the demos. In Europe, the question of the

demos is particularly acute, given the EU integration process. Starting from a cultural conception of the nation, there is no 'democracy deficit' as long as there is no demos at the EU-level, and the task is first of all to create such a European demos. Adopting a political conception of the nation, however, political institutions precede and produce identities – i.e. the democratic process at the EU-level will produce its own demos, which will coexist with the national demo of the member states. According to this type of reasoning (see Habermas 1995, 1998), the collective identity is the by-product of institutional constructions. Intermediary position, such as the 'bounded institutionalism' defended by Cederman and Kraus (2004), plead for a combination of both perspectives: although conceding that democratic practice is contributing to the integration of the political community, they still maintain that this mechanism alone will not be sufficient. The pre-existing demos and the democratic practice mutually reinforce each other.

As we have already mentioned, the unravelling of the control of the policy-making process by the nation-state is, however, not only due to globalization and Europeanization, but also to changing problem structures, increasing complexity, dynamism and diversity internal to the nation-states, all requiring more flexible governance structures. As Hooghe and Marks (2003) point out, dispersion of governance across multiple jurisdictions is more flexible than concentration of governance in one jurisdiction - i.e. flexible governance must be multi-level, within the nation-state, too. However, as Hooghe and Marks also note, the flexibility of multiple jurisdictions comes at the price of high coordination costs. They distinguish between two fundamental strategies to limit these costs, which correspond to two basic types of governance: Type I (territorial) governance limits the number of actors to be coordinated by limiting the number of autonomous jurisdictions; while Type II (functional) governance limits the interactions among actors by splicing competencies into functionally distinct units. Type I governance corresponds to the federalist model with territorially-based, general-purpose jurisdictions, nonintersecting membership, a limited number of levels and a durable architecture. Type II jurisdictions, by contrast, are task-specific, with intersecting memberships, many levels and flexible design. Their model is the Swiss 'Zweckverband' or the 'special district' in the US. They are also exemplified by Bruno Frey's FOCJ (functional, overlapping, competitive jurisdictions) (Frey and Eichenberger 1999). Such jurisdictions are not constrained by national boundaries, but can reach across borders to address specific problems. From the point of view of democratic accountability and legitimacy, the multiplication of both types of subnational jurisdictions and the delegation of decision-making competencies to such jurisdictions becomes problematic when they are weakly codified, lack visibility, and when they are not constituted and controlled/monitored by elected representatives. In the final analysis, just as the scale shift to supra-, inter- and transnational policy making, the corresponding shift to subnational jurisdictions of the territorial and functional type poses the problem of the political community, or of the 'demos' that is related to each one of these jurisdictions.

Finally, at the national level, within established representative democracies, Papadopoulos (2007, 2007a) witnesses other broad trends that contribute to a reduction in the electoral accountability of political decision-makers, too. First, policy-making takes place in cooperative governance arrangements within policy networks, which tend to be characterized by limited pluralism (they may even fall under the exclusive control of single interests), low visibility, 'decoupling' from representative bodies, and 'peer' accountability (participants are accountable to the other participants in these networks). While this is not new, in combination with already noted trends these governance arrangements tend, as Papadopoulos (2002) has already observed, to increasingly impede accountability. Second, increasingly collectively binding decisions are also taken by courts, independent regulatory authorities (IRAs) such as central banks or regulatory boards, or, in the context of New Public Management (NPM), by more client-oriented government services. Judicialization and delegation are aspects of a continuing expansion of what Mény (2002) has called the 'constitutionalist element' of democracy, inherited from the liberal approach to government. These tendencies limit the obligations of the incumbents to report on their acts to the citizens and the possibilities of the voters to respond with electoral sanctions. This degradation of democratic accountability takes place outside of the public purview and regardless of whether or not the

representatives behave responsively. Summarizing these trends, Papadopoulos (2007) arrives at the pessimistic conclusion that there is an increasing divorce between 'front-stage' and 'back-stage politics', which implies a decline in the accountability of the representative process in established democracies.

The pessimistic perception of a loss of democratic accountability in established public jurisdictions is not the only interpretation of current tendencies in established democracies, however. First of all, there are voices who deny the existence of a 'democratic deficit' or an accountability/legitimacy problem within the EU. Thus Moravcsik (2002, 2004, 2005) maintains that if we adopt reasonable criteria for judging democratic governance, then the widespread criticism of the EU as democratically illegitimate is unsupported by empirical evidence. The substantive scope of its mandate is limited; the vertical and horizontal institutional checks and balances are important; there is direct and indirect democratic accountability; and, a corollary of accountability, EU officials in fact work more transparently and under more intense public scrutiny than that found in almost any of its member states; and, to the extent that there are insulated institutions – constitutional courts, or the central bank, for example – they appear to be more popular with the public than legislatures. According to this point of view, the creation of more opportunities for participation may not generate a deeper sense of political community, or muster a greater popular support for EU institutions. Moravcsik (2005: 376) maintains that 'to transform the EU into an active participatory democracy, it would be necessary to give Europeans a far greater stake in creating new political cleavages based on self-interest' at the EU level. To wrap it all up, Moravcsik (2005: 364) suggests that the 'European Constitutional Compromise' may have just 'reached a plateau', a stable endpoint of European integration. This means that we should not worry about possibly increasing accountability and legitimacy problems.

As an alternative to the pessimistic voices, one may postulate a process in which an increasing range of domains in citizens' everyday life has come under the purview of authoritative political decision making that used to be located in the 'private' sphere of markets and self-organized solidary communities (families, churches, etc.). Accordingly, it is this increase in authoritative decision-making, rather than the unaccountability of democratic politicians in established domains, that characterizes modern democratic politics. Another rival interpretation may assert that citizens have sharply raised the standards of democratic accountability to which they hold their representatives. Because of increased education and cognitive sophistication, more citizens are no longer practicing deference, but become activists who have no trust in political authorities. A further rival interpretation of changing perceptions of democratic accountability could simply point to recent political-economic developments, namely a declining rate of increase (but not necessarily of absolute levels) in public benefits and private wages, creating relative deprivation that generates a sense of public disaffection with the democratic process.

2. The structure of the NCCR

We study these issues in four independent modules and a cross-sectional transfer module, each composed of several projects. The first two modules mainly focus on the challenge of denationalization, while the second pair of modules mainly deal with the challenge of mediatization. Political scientists predominate in the first two modules, while communication scientists do so in the second pair. Our research projects can, of course, not cover the whole panoply of problems we have discussed in the previous pages. Instead, they take up very specific issues that have been raised in the introduction.

Module 1 addresses the opportunities for, and the limits of, the expansion of democracy beyond the liberal democracies where it has been established for some time. This module intends to draw parallels between processes of horizontal and vertical democratization. It intends to study how the questions of accountability and legitimacy can be solved in efforts of

democratization that reach beyond established democracies – both vertically and horizontally. Given the challenge of denationalization and the increasing transfer of decision-making authority from nation-states to a web of international and supranational institutions, this module asks whether democracy can be extended vertically to supra- or international decision-making bodies in order to hold these institutions accountable to the citizens of the world. Given the problem posed by ‘bad neighbourhoods’ to established democracies, the module also asks whether democracy will be extended horizontally into unstable regions, and to what extent this political transformation will reinforce efforts to stabilize these countries. There is no undisputed blueprint for democratization, and nation-building represents a great and immediate challenge in many parts of the world. In these regions, the key challenge is to deploy strategies of democracy promotion without destabilizing the fragile foundations of stability even further. The importance of stability and democratization in these regions for the West should be clear, since the spread of terrorism and other types of political violence threaten to undermine the ‘consolidated’ democracies of the West where political stability has long been taken for granted.

Module 2 addresses the changes in national and subnational decision-making systems in established liberal democracies. These systems most fully experience the transformations described by Papadopoulos. The module investigates policy-making processes of established democracies under conditions of globalization and European integration, pressure from below resulting from the increasing internal fragmentation (functional and cultural differentiation) of modern societies, and issue complexity, which makes control over information a high priority. The projects of the module treat such processes both as dependent and as independent variables. They examine their origins as well as their impact on policy outputs and outcomes, and also how they are perceived by the citizen public. The effective operation and the limits of decision-making processes are assessed and compared with the requirements of responsiveness, accountability and government performance.

The remaining two modules focus on the increasing role of the media in politics and its implications for the political process. In the ‘mediatized audience democracy,’ political action has increasingly become public action. Module 3 studies the forces driving the intrusion of the media and its logic into the political process, as well as its consequences. The projects of Module 3 all take up Manin’s (1995) thesis that contemporary societies witness a profound transformation of democratic institutions due to the greatly increased importance of the media-centred public sphere. They all view the media as actors having their own goals and rules that do not necessarily coincide with, and indeed often clash with, those of political communicators. Because of the power of the media, the latter are forced to adapt to the constraints imposed by the media. The projects of this module all take up the idea formulated in the introduction that the debate in the quality of the debate in the public sphere is of crucial importance for democracy. Moreover, they all start from the communication-based model of democracy displayed in Figure 3; in fact, this model has been provided by Module 3.

Module 4 raises the question of the ‘manufacturing of the popular will’, which becomes particularly acute in the audience democracy, where political communication is no longer party-centred, but focused on the media. As we have seen, there is much controversy about the expected impact of the increasing role of the media on democratic politics. The projects of module 4 all address the implications of the ‘mediatization of politics’ for political participation and representation by analyzing in detail the communication strategies of the political actors and the media as well as their impact on the information processing of the citizen public in the context of specific political campaigns. They start from the assumption that campaigns matter, but they neither share the pessimism of those who believe that politicians manipulate the public, nor of those who think that politicians pander to the preferences of the public. Instead they suggest that the densification of political communication during campaigns may have an enlightening function for the general public.

Finally, the cross-sectional transfer module is devoted to the elaboration of instruments designed to reduce the gap between the two faces of democracy. In particular, we propose to develop a ‘Democracy Barometer’ for measuring the quality of democracy at the national

level and for tracking progress towards democracy worldwide. This module will also generate pedagogical tools for civic education and e-learning in Swiss schools and universities, develop technical tools for the effective use of e-voting, and develop training modules for journalists and public relations specialists. Altogether, this module currently contains 7 projects.

Box 1 presents an overview of the 22 projects that currently constitute the programme. In the following sections of this paper, we shall present the four basic modules one by one. As far as the cross-sectional module is concerned, we shall limit ourselves to a presentation of Project 14 on the 'Democracy Barometer'.

Box 1: Overview over the projects

IP1:	Democratizing global institutions: The WTO as an emerging polity / Cédric Dupont
IP2:	Promoting democracy in the EU and its near abroad / Sandra Lavenex, Frank Schimmelfennig
IP3:	Democratizing divided societies in bad neighbourhoods / Lars-Erik Cederman
IP4:	The impact of internationalization on Swiss policy processes in comparative perspective / Yannis Papadopoulos
IP5:	Assessing the trend towards 'new regionalism' in Swiss metropolitan areas / Daniel Kübler
IP5a:	Cantonal strategies for the development of metropolitan areas: potential and limits / Daniel Kübler
IP6:	Information on public performance – creation, diffusion, and utilization / Thomas Widmer, Heinz Bonfadelli
IP7:	Democratic structures and processes and the provision of public goods / Vally Koubi
IP8:	Democracy in the media society – Theoretical support and empirical validation of a societal term / Kurt Imhof
IP9:	Mediatization and structural change within political actors and organizations / Otfried Jarren
IP10:	The dynamics of political institutions in mediated societies / Frank Marcinkowski
IP11:	The strategies of political actors: process and message / Hanspeter Kriesi
IP12:	The strategies and processes of issue selection and construction / Gabriele Siegert
IP13:	The strategies and processes of attitude formation and public participation / Heinz Bonfadelli, Werner Wirth
IP14:	Democracy Barometer for established democracies / Marc Bühlmann, Wolfgang Merkel
IP15:	Civic education / Béatrice Ziegler, Andreas Ladner
IP16:	Smart-voting as a tool for electronic campaigning / Andreas Ladner, Heiri Leuthold, Alexander Trechsel
IP16a:	Judging candidates in e-democracy: implications of smartvote, profile and ratings from a legal perspective / Andreas Lienhard, Pierre Tschannen
IP17:	The quality of journalism / Vinzenz Wyss
IP18:	Democratic processes and political behaviour / Heiri Leuthold
IP19:	Media performance for democracy – media and democracy monitor / Josef Trappel
IP20:	From national to supra-national democracy in Europe / Daniele Caramani
IP21:	Legitimacy and democracy in multilateral integration / Francis Cheneval
IP22:	Explaining differences in political news – a comparative analysis across four Western democracies and four decades / Frank Esser

2.1. Module 1: Expanding democratic governance in the international realm

General questions

Whereas the other modules of this NCCR focus on how to improve and consolidate democracy within the Western World, Module 1 confronts the challenge of extending democracy beyond this realm, to where democratic governance has so far been absent or has had a very tenuous hold. In this sense, challenges to democratization, rather than challenges to stable democracy, are the main priority of this module.

This push for democratization follows two dimensions, namely a 'horizontal' one, from the zone of stable, mostly Western, democracies, to geographic regions outside this area (see especially IP2 and IP3), and a 'vertical' dimension, featuring democratization that reaches the multilateral realm 'above' the nation-state, and primarily concerns international and supranational organizations (see IP1, IP20, and IP21).

Main research questions of the module

The main conceptual contribution of Module 1 is to explore vertical and horizontal democratization together by comparing and exchanging concepts and theories between the two types of processes. We ask whether one can learn something about the process of vertical democratization by drawing on theoretical and empirical research that covers primarily horizontal expansion of democratic governance, and vice versa.

Compared to the problems of maintaining, and further developing, well-established democracy, the horizontal and vertical processes of democratization are especially challenging as regards the input processes of democratic legitimacy (see Introduction). Given the fragmented populations and loose governance structures in these cases, the difficulties of aggregating and representing popular will are often staggering. This is also the reason why output legitimacy, other than traditional representative democracy, is often resorted to *faute de mieux*. However, this does not mean output legitimacy can be easily guaranteed. Therefore, Module 1 investigates both input and output legitimacy and how the latter is sometimes treated as a substitute for the former.

So far, the discussions within Module 1 have pinpointed a number of problems that conspire to make efforts to establish democratic legitimacy especially difficult, both vertically and horizontally. We suggest that input legitimacy depends on the existence of a *demos*, a civil society and a sufficient level of economic development and equality. In contrast, the challenges of achieving output legitimacy have often been associated with the difficulties of establishing the rule of law and improving governance capacity. By singling out these particular factors, we do not want to imply that they should be seen as necessary conditions under all circumstances. In some cases, these factors may operate as substitutes. Ultimately, their role is an empirical question.

In the following, we start by considering the factors that contribute to input legitimacy:

The demos

Compared to the situation in most established democracies, the vertical and horizontal cases considered in Module 1 often centre on the *demos* question, i.e. how to determine the outer boundaries of the polity. This dilemma, sometimes referred to as Rousseau's paradox, is well known in the literature, although it is often ignored as a result of 'methodological nationalism'. The crux is that it is logically impossible to let the 'people' decide who is the people.

The *demos* dilemma has been studied most intensively as a vertical shift up from the nation-state to the international realm (Cederman 2001). Roughly speaking, there are two schools:

one that is optimistic and one that is pessimistic. Representing the latter, Dahl (1989) singles out the demos as an important precondition of democratic governance in general. Dahl traces three historical transformations that produced city-state democracy and national democracy in the past, and that could, at least theoretically, bring about post-national democracy. Far from concealing his scepticism as regards the last transformational process, Dahl (1994: 33) states that 'the danger is that the third transformation will not lead to an extension of the democratic idea beyond the nation state but to the victory in that domain of de facto guardianship'. This argument is perhaps most boldly stated in an article entitled 'Can international organizations be democratic?' (Dahl 1998). Dahl doubts that citizens can hold decision-makers accountable beyond the nation-state. Rejecting the putative link between the nation and the demos, other theorists are much more optimistic about the prospects of creating a 'post-nationalist' or 'cosmopolitan' notion of democracy (Held 1995; Habermas 1998; Cheneval 2005).

Along the horizontal dimension, in contrast, we encounter the question of the demos more indirectly, but it plays an important role here too.⁷ While some well-established democracies are constantly plagued by debates over the limits of the polity (e.g. Belgium and Canada), the situation is even worse among less developed democracies. In such cases, there is fundamental disagreement as to who belongs to the polity and who does not. Minorities that do not agree tend to push for outright secession. Under such conditions, horizontal democratization is particularly risky because it opens the floodgates to mass participation that can easily be high-jacked by nationalist separatists who do not hesitate to resort to violence, and who refuse to accept the overarching identity of the country in question, regardless of whether it is democratically run or not (Mansfield and Snyder 2005). Ethnic federalism seems to be especially vulnerable to such centrifugal tendencies (Bunce 2003). Wherever boundary issues come to dominate the political debate, ethno-nationalist entrepreneurs tend to draw on ethnic outbidding and other types of polarizing tactics (e.g. Horowitz 1985; de Nevers 1993).

Directly linked to the demos issue is the challenge of cultural diversity. John Stuart Mill famously thought that multiethnic societies and representative democracy are fundamentally incompatible. More recent scholarship comes to the same conclusion, but there is no consensus in the literature. A large literature in comparative politics has emerged to deal with the challenge of culturally diverse countries. For example, Arend Lijphart's (1977) famous notion of consociationalism can be seen as a direct answer to more pessimistic assessments, such as that of Dahl (1971).

Originally, the literature on diversity focused explicitly on horizontal democratization. On the pessimistic side, classical studies, such as Rabushka and Shepsle (1972), conclude that plural societies are predestined to fall into the trap of ethnic polarization and mistrust, as illustrated by the aforementioned phenomenon of ethnic outbidding. Under such circumstances, democratization is doomed to fail. On the optimistic side, critics argue that such a characterization is much too deterministic. However, they disagree as to how to overcome these difficulties. Whereas Lijphart (1977) proposed power sharing along the formula of small European countries for ethnically diverse countries in the Third World, such as Lebanon, Malaysia, and India, others find that such consociational schemes tend to reinforce existing identities and instead propose electoral mechanisms that are designed to produce cross-cutting cleavages with the ultimate aim of reducing polarization (Horowitz 1985; Rothchild and Roeder 2005).

Unsurprisingly, this debate has also migrated up to the European level. In an early piece, Lijphart (1971) argued that his notion of consociationalism offers advantages over prevalent theories of integration (see also Taylor 1991). By explicitly applying concepts from comparative politics to European integration, Hix (1994) pursues this reasoning in greater detail. By definition, vertical democratization encompasses a larger scope than do domestic

⁷ Because of their country focus, comparativists have typically taken the polity unit for granted, but there are exceptions, see e.g. Rustow (1970).

processes of democratization. It goes without saying that such democratization efforts have to cope with massive cultural diversity in terms of the sheer number of languages and religions encompassed.

Cultural diversity is often the issue cited as the main reason to be pessimistic about extending democratic governance to the supranational, and more generally multilateral, realm. Some of these critiques are essentialist, in the sense that they treat ethno-nationalist identities as if they were fixed and given. Some of the reasoning supporting the German Constitution Court's famous 'no demos' decision fits this pattern (e.g. Grimm 1995), but students of nationalism have also subscribed to this logic (e.g. Smith 1992). However, many pessimists adopting what could be called 'bounded integration' (Cederman 2001), transcend such critiques by pointing to the inertia of specific institutional mechanisms that render democracy beyond the nation state extremely difficult without ruling out the possibility of an emergent supranational identity (see also Cederman and Kraus 2005). Such institutions operate within the nationally framed educational establishments (Theiler 2005), linguistic regimes (Kraus 2000), and, especially importantly for our NCCR, media systems (Gerhards 1993). In brief, it is argued that all these are fundamentally nationally rooted, and that without thorough reforms, the hope is scant that identity formation would take place.

As argued in the introduction, this is, of course, explicitly challenged by the post-nationalists, who argue in favour of politics' primacy over culture. Switzerland is often provided as an example that democracy can thrive despite linguistic fragmentation (e.g. Habermas 1998; cf. Sciarini, Hug and Dupont 2001). According to Habermas' notion of constitutional patriotism, political identities will be produced spontaneously through democratic practice and deliberation, without there being any need to wait for a cultural demos to form.

Weak or non-existent civil society

Building on the heritage of de Tocqueville, pluralist theorists rely heavily on civil society as a main ingredient of democracy. Defined as voluntary associational life outside both the state and the economy, civil society serves an important function as a counter balance to these sectors (Young 1999). In established democracies, civil society is well-developed and vibrant, though there is of course considerable variation among and within countries (Putnam 1993). Under such relatively benign conditions, its advocacy function contributes directly to input legitimacy, as a support and complement to electoral mechanisms. In addition, in its role as a watchdog, civil society promises to improve accountability by putting pressure on governmental representatives who fail to provide public goods and violate basic principles of good governance.

As I have argued with respect to the demos dilemma and cultural diversity, the creation of civil society poses a particular challenge to democratic governance outside the realm of established democracy. Despite the tension between civil society and the state, civic organizations are less likely to emerge in cases where a totalitarian state has previously suppressed society as a whole, or where the state fails to provide basic functions, such as security and stability (Posner 2004). As we will see below, similar weaknesses have been observed along the vertical dimension of democratization.

In the context of democratization following the fall of the communist regimes in the early 1990s, emancipatory and anti-authoritarian strands of theorizing complemented the neo-Tocquevillian 'rediscovery' of civil society (Goodhart 2005). Following decades of state repression, the push for democratization in Eastern Europe came mostly from liberation movements. Inspiring as this process was, it also illustrated the dangers of illiberal, nationalist tendencies that could degenerate into crude ethno-nationalism (Gellner 1992).

In more remote and difficult cases of horizontal democratization, there has also been a fair amount of enthusiasm in support of civil society-promotion as a way to democratize and stabilize 'bad neighbourhoods'. However, these efforts have met with mixed success. For example, despite sustained international investments in civil society promotion, the results

have been meagre and even counter-productive (Belloni 2001). More broadly, Sardamov (2005) argues that foreign aid of this type risks strengthening the wrong types of associations, including clientilistic NGO-networks that come to block the emergence of more profound, self-organized associational structures. In the case of EU democracy promotion, Young finds that 'the EU did not push hard to gain access for political aid work', and was 'unwilling to risk tension with recipient governments' (2001: 193). Finally, it is an open question whether, and under what conditions, the empowerment of civil society is translated into democratization.

When the focus shifts to vertical democratization, things do not get much easier, despite considerable enthusiasm surrounding the notion of 'global civil society' (GCS), which is expected to promote democratization and peace building alike (e.g. Kaldor 2003). Analogously to domestic civil society's control function vis-à-vis the state, GCS supposedly complements and checks international organizations. Thanks to the activities of border-transgressing and transforming networks of transnational social movements making use of the Internet and international media, it is hoped that GCS will provide a viable model of democratization in an increasingly globalized world, thereby filling the democratic void left open by the retreating state (Goodhart 2005).

What remains less obvious, however, is the extent to which the neo-Tocquevillian and anti-authoritarian models of civic democracy allow themselves to be transplanted from the national to the international level. This is the core of Goodhart's (2005) critique, who accuses the GCS enthusiasts of having failed to notice how much their own theories depend on the state as a basic precondition for democratization. In the absence of statehood and traditional, representative institutions of democracy, associational life has to develop without the legitimizing and stabilizing guidance of accountable democratic governance. For sure, advocacy groups can put IGOs under pressure, but ultimately there is no electorate that 'can throw the rascals out'.

Development and equality

The material prerequisites of democratization have also been hotly debated in the political science literature, especially along the horizontal dimension. As a representative of modernization theory, Lipset (1959) famously postulated a positive effect of economic development on democracy. More recent contributions to the democratization literature take issue with this causal link. For example, Przeworski et al. (2000) assert that development does little to improve the chances of democratization. Instead, according to these authors, the statistical link between development and democracy is due to the fact that democracies are less likely to revert to authoritarian rule because of declining income. Other scholars, such as Boix and Stokes (2003), defend the 'endogenous' effect of development on democratization.

The level of development says very little about the issue of income distribution. All the same, it can be postulated that acute inequality undermines societal cohesion, not unlike the aforementioned hypothesis linking cultural diversity to weak or absent democratization. Extreme poverty may also stand in the way of participating in the democratic process. As a way to account for weak and even absent democratization among countries with medium income levels, Muller (1988; 1995) has argued that the development-induced effect becomes distorted by increasing economic inequality, though other scholars disagree for theoretical and methodological reasons (e.g. Bollen and Jackman 1985).

While these debates have not been conclusively resolved, it is worth taking seriously the arguments that poor economic development and dramatic skewness of wealth distributions can thwart horizontal democratization. The issue is somewhat less clear along the vertical dimension, especially when we focus on international organizations that contain mostly democratic and wealthy member states. Inequality, however, may be an important issue as regards the unity of international organizations. For example, it has been feared that

adhesion of relatively poor member states to the European Union could imperil the effectiveness and legitimacy of the entire institution.

So far, we have focused our attention mostly on the threats to input legitimacy. Because of actual or perceived challenges, many scholars have proposed that flaws on the input side can be compensated by improvements in terms of output legitimacy. We now turn to this possibility.

The rule of law

Perhaps the most important 'watered down' notion of legitimacy concerns the rule of law. Again, it is easy to find examples along both of our main dimensions. In horizontal terms, it has been suggested that basic political rights and *Rechtstaatlichkeit* are not just more realistic goals, but that attempts to aim higher may trigger conflicts (Mansfield and Snyder 2005). Similarly, the Western enthusiasm for electoral democracy has also come in for criticism by scholars who worry about 'illiberal democracy' without the proper safeguards against populism and power abuse (e.g. Zakaria 2003).

This 'democratic pessimism' is not shared by everybody. Recently, Carothers (2007) argued against 'sequencing' according to which the rule of law and other basic state functions need to be established before democratization can be safely introduced. In a nutshell, the argument is that authoritarian systems are bad frameworks for the development of the rule of law, and that it therefore does not make any sense to wait for the introduction of electoral functions, although this should be done gradually in tandem with reforms improving the rule of law.

The vertical story exhibits strong parallels to these debates. As argued in the Introduction, some students of the European Union have suggested that analysts of the 'democratic deficit' apply inappropriately demanding standards of democratic legitimacy drawn from domestic, parliamentary systems. For example, Majone (1998) contends that weaker measures of good governance suffice to legitimate supranational governance. Because of its strictly regulated function-specific authority, the EU can guarantee the rule of law through proper delegation procedures. Similarly, Moravcsik (2004) argues that compared to some of its major member states, the Union has little to be ashamed of in terms of legitimate and transparent governance.

Be this as it may, there can be no doubt that the failed constitutionalization process within the EU has led to a distinct malaise affecting the effectiveness of the institution. Whatever the opinion of the experts, the 'democratic deficit' stubbornly refuses to disappear. At a minimum, the legitimacy of the EU, whether one aspires to democratic principles or not, seems to be an unresolved problem.

Because of these lingering problems, Dahl (1998) expresses doubts about the ceding of democratic legitimacy to supranational bodies. This does not mean that international institutions, viewed as 'bureaucratic bargaining systems', could not be made more responsive, but it is dangerous to dilute the core meaning of democracy in such a way that almost any political system could be seen as democratic. This would threaten to undermine the historical achievements of the cumulated waves of democratization.

Governance capacity

Whether vertical or horizontal, democratization in the international realm often has to take place in the absence of a strong central power. Traditional notions of democracy depend crucially on state control over the entire territory in question, even though some functions may be delegated to federal subunits. However, such delegation has to be well regulated in order to provide public goods and to prevent free-riding and obstruction by regional

minorities. Most crucially, basic building blocks of democracy depend on uniform standards, including the regulation of citizenship and voting procedures.

Unfortunately, the opposite is very often the case in the Third World, where weak or collapsed states struggle to assert a minimum of central control (Rotberg 2004). The challenge of democratization, then, typically presupposes considerable state-building and shoring up of bureaucratic functions. Democracy can also be undermined by the outbreak of civil war, which has been linked to state weakness (Fearon and Laitin 2003).

Interestingly enough, vertical democratization also needs to overcome a similar weakness, because even the EU falls well short of the Weberian ideal of statehood and territorial control, not to mention the lack of central power characterizing the UN and other more specialized IGOs. Of course, there may be a silver lining in this deficiency, especially in the eyes of scholars like Castells who celebrate the 'network state' and other modes of decentralized governance. However, in the absence of input legitimacy, it would seem that strong economic performance and other efficiency criteria loom large. Such an output-oriented legitimization of the European integration process can be found in classical (neo-) functionalist arguments. More recently, some scholars have expressed concerns that the decline in the provision of welfare-state functions may undermine the legitimacy of the European Union (e.g. Streeck 1995).

Theoretical approaches and working hypotheses

The members of Module 1 employ a wide range of theoretical approaches, at different levels of aggregation, from individual-based, rational-choice theory to systemic approaches, such as theories of socialization, ethnicity and nationalism, supranational integration, and institution building, including theories of federalism and power sharing. These primarily explanatory perspectives are complemented by the development of a normative framework of multilateral democracy extending the principles of contractual liberalism.

Our working hypotheses are best summarized along the two main dimensions:

Along the horizontal dimension, our projects analyze different conditions of successful democratization.

- IP2 hypothesizes that the success of democratization varies with conditional external incentives, the intensity and quality of transactional contacts, and indirect effects of cooperation in functional sectors. Because the EU does not offer the neighbourhood countries a membership perspective, we expect intergovernmental leverage in this region to be weak. Likewise, there are scant prospects for powerful democratizing transnational links due to the weakness of civil society. The project therefore focuses on the promotion of democratic governance rather than full-blown democracy.
- IP3 hypothesizes that democratization causes conflict in deeply divided societies that lack a democratic tradition, but that the mechanisms operate at a regional level and vary widely from case to case. Four regions are selected out for intense scrutiny: the Balkans, the Caucasus, the Middle East, and the region of the Great Lakes in Africa.

The projects that focus on the vertical dimensions analyze the conditions of democratization in the following manner:

- IP1 hypothesizes that, despite previous treatments of the WTO as a mere IR regime, it makes sense to view it as a polity and to ask questions about legitimacy although it is an unsustainable polity due to a lack of working rules. It is also hypothesized that WTO membership may have a democratizing effect on non-democratic member states.
- IP20 claims that full democratization at the EU level can take place only if a European-wide left-right alignment dominates over national differences in policy orientations. It hypothesizes that the presence of a left-right cleavage in most national

systems provides the preconditions for such an alignment to emerge also at the EU level.

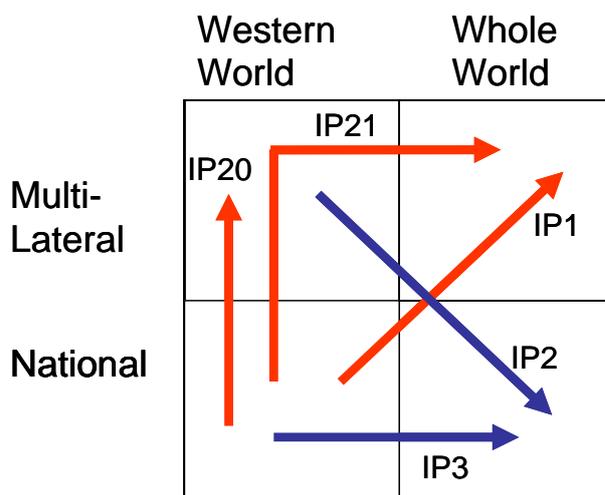
- IP21 hypothesizes that the commitment of economic liberalization constitutes the basis for an incremental application of normative principles to empirical theories of multilateral democratization of the WTO and the EU.

Connections of the projects to the module

Above, we have already alluded to the division of labour among the five projects of Module 1. Roughly, they can be divided in those that focus on vertical democratization (IP1, IP20 and IP21) and those that prioritize the horizontal expansion of democracy (IP2 and IP3).

The 2 x 2 table shown below summarizes the structure of the module (see also Figure 5). The figure depicts both the vertical and horizontal dimensions. Whereas the former contrasts the national level to multilateral situations, the latter brings in the geographic extent of democratization. Modern representative democracy has its origins in the Western World (see the lower left box). Our module explores the ways that democracy has migrated from this traditional setting both horizontally and vertically.

Figure 5: The structure of the module



Box 2: The five projects shown in relation to the vertical and horizontal

Projects mainly focusing on vertical democratization:

IP1: Democratizing Global Institutions (Dupont, Hauser)

IP20: From National to Supranational Democracy in Europe (Caramani)

IP21: Democracy and Legitimacy in Multilateral Integration (Cheneval)

Projects mainly focusing on horizontal democratization:

IP2: Promoting Democracy in the EU and its Near Abroad (Lavenex, Schimmelfennig)

IP3: Democratizing Divided Societies in Bad Neighbourhoods (Cederman, Hug, Wenger)

Several links between the two dimensions will be further researched. As an illustration, here are some possible links that deserve to be explored:

- IP 1 and IP2 share a focus on democratic governance in sectoral policy networks and regimes;

- The effect of cultural diversity on democratization is a topic that will be considered explicitly by both IP3 and IP20;
- The search for legitimacy in the absence of statehood is a topic that brings together IP2 and IP21;
- Both IP3 and IP21 will be considering the application of consociationalist and federal theories to domestic and multilateral settings.

These topics by no means exhaust the possibilities, but should be seen as a sample of conceptual and empirical bridges that could contribute to theory development.

Contributions to the overall goals of the NCCR

In a basic sense, democratization along the vertical and horizontal dimensions is driven by denationalization, which is a trend highlighted by the NCCR. This process has rendered state borders more permeable, with the result that isolationist impulses defending a western 'democratic fortress' make little sense. Terrorism, migration and other security interdependencies are the most obvious manifestations, but denationalization is linked to several other dimensions of interdependence. Notwithstanding the increasing scepticism as to the success of the US attempts to democratize Iraq, democracy promotion is now a well established component of most Western governments' foreign policy agendas. The EU itself is no exception from this trend.

Along the vertical dimension, denationalization is even more tightly linked to democratization. In fact, the shift from national to international governance forms a constitutive part of the general process of globalization. It is this shift that increases the pressure on supranational and multilateral institutions, such as the EU and the WTO respectively, to conform to democratic, or at least more legitimate, principles of governance.

Module 1 contributes to general theory-building in the areas of democratization along both dimensions, through a fruitful exchange of concepts, theories and models. Thanks to IP21, we will also make a special contribution to normative analysis of democratization that will benefit all modules. That project provides an analytical basis for the justification of certain normative principles of democracy in the multilateral realm. By using the citizen and the democratically organized people as constitutive units of reference, IP21 interconnects the national, federal, and multilateral forms of democracy.

2.2. Module 2: Changing relations between input, throughput and output in public governance

Introduction

The projects in Module 2 scrutinize some of the major transformations occurring within the decision-making systems of established democracies and their effects on policy making. They empirically investigate key aspects of transformations of policy-making processes in established democracies and their origins (i.e. processes as dependent variable). They also examine the impact of such changes on policy outputs and outcomes, as well as on the way they are perceived (processes as independent variables). This is particularly relevant since several procedural changes (regulation by independent agencies, cooperative governance arrangements, evidence-based policy-making, etc.) intend to generate legitimacy primarily through the (perceived) quality of 'outputs' rather than through traditional 'input' legitimacy based on democratic participation (although such a dichotomy is too simplistic because a positive evaluation of outputs by policy addressees should also translate into enhanced input legitimacy for public authorities through stronger electoral support).

Main research questions of the module and theoretical approaches

The module's projects focus on the links between the input and output aspects of multi-level forms of governance. They are concerned with the process of translation of inputs into outputs, and with mediating factors that complicate or inhibit this process. The fact that input-output links are changing is a centerpiece of 'post-parliamentary governance' theory (Andersen & Burns 1996), according to which representative institutions are no longer an effective actor in this conversion process, but other theories – such as those emphasizing the role of experts or of interest groups – come to similar conclusions, too.

The process of conversion of democratic inputs into policy outputs is challenged and complexified by a number of (exogenous) factors. Changes in forms of governance are generated by pressures associated with globalization and European integration. Thus, it is pointed out in the relevant literature that internationalization leads to a stronger domestic role for governments that enjoy comparative strategic advantages ('two-level game') over other domestic actors such as parliaments. It is also argued that interests with an 'exit' option have now fewer incentives to concede payoffs in domestic concertation procedures. Moreover, by shifting the decisional level beyond the nation-state, internationalization adds further steps to the chain of delegation in policy-making, and empowers unaccountable actors. Also determining what counts as a functionally relevant and politically legitimate policy-making arena becomes a matter of controversy.

How far are concertation procedures and corporatist decision-making in small consensual European countries challenged today by the process of Europeanization? To answer this general question, IP 4 ('The impact of Europeanization on Swiss policy processes in comparative perspective', project leader Y. Papadopoulos) combines the literature on Europeanization with the literature on neo-corporatism and comparative political economy. Whereas the largest part of the literature on Europeanization addresses the impact of the European Union on the content of policies, IP 4 focuses on policymaking patterns; that is, on the way these policies are produced (relationships between government, interest groups and parliament). Following Katzenstein's (1985) comparative study, external constraints may shape those patterns in small and export-dependent countries. But are the effects of these constraints today similar to those described by Katzenstein more than twenty years ago, thereby leading to domestic compromises, or are they different? Katzenstein emphasized the domestic impact of structural economic vulnerability, whereas the impact of the EU today is mainly exerted through regulatory pressure, whose effects on the domestic power balance and coalitions may be quite different. Also the role of governments, and particularly of

administrative segments and bureaucratic politics, or of the parliamentary arena, is a blind spot in Katzenstein's approach.

National political systems are also subject to pressure 'from below' as a result of the increasing internal fragmentation (functional and cultural differentiation) of modern societies. In order to cope with that other aspect of 'denationalization', increased participation of civil society organizations in horizontal and cooperative forms of governance is advocated, as it is deemed to improve the quality and the acceptance of collectively binding decisions. It may be assumed that the configuration of actors in policy networks and the balance of power in such networks are contingent on the specifics of individual policy fields. Moreover, comparison across time seems necessary: although the 'governance' literature emphasizes the current shift towards less statist forms of policy-making, such allegations are not based yet on rigorous empirical evidence. IP 5 ('Assessing the trend towards new regionalism in Swiss metropolitan areas', project leader D. Kübler) focuses on precisely those questions related to change of multi-level governance structures over time, and it does so by examining the development of the conditions and governance structures for area-wide policy-making in Swiss metropolitan areas since World War II. On the one hand, the researchers are interested in the question of whether and how political cleavages in metropolitan areas have been transformed by the process of ongoing urbanization in this country. More precisely, the project draws on Bartolini and Mair's (1990) threefold definition of political cleavages as incorporating: (1) a socio-structural element; (2) a normative/behavioural element; and (3) an organizational element, which develop as part of the cleavage. Hence, the first hypothesis to be tested is that the socio-structural differentiation that has occurred in Swiss metropolitan areas over time has resulted in a spatial differentiation of values and political behaviour, as well as in a spatially differentiated pattern of party mobilization. On the other hand, the project looks into the processes leading to the production of new institutions and governance structures as a reaction to such urban-territorial restructuring – as emphasized by the growing strand of literature on 'new regionalism'. It draws on the tenet of historical institutionalism and particularly on the concept of path dependency. More precisely, the hypothesis will be tested that territorial and political urban restructuring leads to critical junctures in paths of governance, and ultimately results in a shift of scales in metropolitan policy making.

Finally, a third challenge comes from the fact that political systems face a high degree of issue complexity, which makes control over information a high priority. This requires the growth of expertise, which in turn necessitates the establishment of policy networks including actors with sectoral and technical knowledge, networks that may be only loosely connected to electorally authorized representative institutions that enjoy input-legitimacy (notwithstanding 'Politikverdrossenheit'). The need for expertise and credibility also leads to technocratic decision-making (the role of bureaucracy and agencies). Hence the chain of delegation becomes lengthy again, impeding democratic accountability. It is argued for such cases that legitimacy will be provided by novel sources: the evaluation of performance becomes the domain of 'stakeholders' who can credibly argue that they have a particularly intense interest in receiving adequate public goods. However this entails a risk of fragmentation of the public interest, and it is useful to check to what extent the role of the media helps to reconnect such piecemeal evaluations to the public sphere. On the other hand, one may suspect that most media drastically simplify complex policy issues, or that in cases of policy failure they blame the most visible actors, who are not necessarily the most influential.

Starting from the assumption that political systems are increasingly judged in terms of their performance, IP 6 ('Information on Public Performance – Creation, Diffusion and Utilization', project leaders T. Widmer and H. Bonfadelli) investigates the questions of how to measure policy performance, how the media system selects and communicates news about it, and how information about performance is used in decision-making. The project is structured along the following three phases: creation, diffusion, and utilization of information. The integration of these three parts is achieved through a common model of the information

process and through the analysis of the same case studies. The generation of public performance information is primarily conceptualized as an independent variable that explains the diffusion of performance information by the media system and its utilization in the decision-making process. The process of diffusion is conceptualized as an intervening variable, and the project investigates not only the selection of performance information but also the framing of this information by the mass media. Furthermore, emphasis is laid on the communication strategies by the actors who try to attract media attention, and to communicate performance information. To analyze the utilization of performance information in policy-making processes the literature of knowledge and evaluation utilization is combined with policy-analysis literature. Finally, democratic theory is relevant in all three research phases, and shifts our focus to questions of transparency, accessibility and representation of the concerns of the citizenry and/or of the affected people. For instance, are the stakeholders (i.e. interest groups such as labour unions or environmental protection groups) involved in information production? Is the performance information accessible to the general public? How transparent and complete is the information on public performance communicated by the media?

IP 7 ('Democratic Structures and Processes and the Provision of Public Goods': project leaders V. Koubi and T. Bernauer) starts from the same assumption that political systems are today strongly performance-oriented since they substantially rely on output-legitimacy. It focuses on whether and how democratic structures and processes (input) contribute to or hamper the provision of public goods (outcome), in particular environmental quality, and draws on theories of public goods provision (public choice), globalization and international cooperation. Key questions are: How do degrees and forms of democracy affect the level of environmental quality? Has globalization enhanced or eroded the capacity of democratic states to provide environmental quality? How does public awareness on environmental issues in democratic societies affect environmental commitments and policy outcomes?

Contribution to the overall goals of the NCCR

The module's projects seek to assess the impact on current forms of governance of important challenges such as denationalization, mediatization, social differentiation, or the need for public bodies to behave as learning organizations. By focusing on policy-making, all projects contribute to the uncovering of the 'pragmatic' face of democracy. It is the effective operation and the limits of democratic processes that are assessed and compared with the requirements of responsiveness, accountability or performance that are centrepieces of normative evaluations of the quality of democracy.

Using qualitative methods such as process-tracing applied to case studies, IP 4 and 5 offer detailed descriptions of the complexities of the policy-making process under conditions of multi-level governance, and scrutinize to what extent any changes affect the 'democratic anchorage' and the accountability of this process. They thus open the black box of 'backstage' politics. IP 6 combines the study of back- and front-stage politics by focusing on the role of different kind of information – i.e. the input by policy experts, and the evaluation of policy outputs by the media. IP 7 focuses directly on policy performance, and employing a quantitative comparative methodology it assesses the degree of responsiveness of policy measures.

2.3. Module 3: Changing structures and actors of political communication

Introduction

Many Western mass societies have witnessed the emergence of seemingly common patterns that are associated with concepts of mediatization, mediated politics or audience democracy. The projects in this module are joined together in their effort to understand the nature, significance, and implications of a process in which the mass media are moving from being merely a channel of communication to being a major player in the political process.

In Europe and elsewhere, the decline of party-controlled media and the rise of independent, commercially minded media have transformed the traditional arrangements of mass communication. As an increasingly independent power centre, mass communication today operates autonomously, according to its own economic and symbolic 'logic'. Those in charge within party organizations or government institutions are aware of the presence and logic of the media and therefore anticipate the selection and processing of messages by the media. This is often referred to as the mediatization of politics: As Mazzoleni and Schulz (1999: 250) have pointed out: 'To characterise politics as being mediated goes beyond a mere description of system requirements. Mediated politics is politics that has lost its autonomy, has become dependent in its central functions on mass media, and is continuously shaped by interactions with mass media. This statement of the mediatization hypothesis is based on observations of how mass media produce political content and interfere with political processes.'

The mediatization of politics is of academic interest because it is seen as a challenge to democracy. In one of his last speeches in office, British Prime Minister Tony Blair admitted that 'a vast aspect of our jobs [at 10 Downing Street] is coping with the media, its sheer scale, weight and constant hyperactivity. At points, it literally overwhelms. ... Not to have a proper press operation nowadays is like asking a batsman to face bodyline bowling without pads or headgear' (Blair 2007). He also said that the changing communication environment, in which he admitted his own complicity by trying to control news coverage in his early years, has seriously adverse effects on public life. In his experience, today's news media 'to a dangerous degree is driven by 'impact''. Impact is what matters. Impact gives competitive edge.' This economically motivated devotion to impact leads in his view to an orientation to scandal, controversy, character attacks, pack journalism, and a loss of substance and balance in the news (Blair 2007). This, of course, is just one subjective perception of the changing structures of political communication. But, as the projects in this module show, the widespread perception of media power has led to considerable changes in many political organizations and decision-making processes (see IP 9, IP 10).

This is intensified by a tendency of some news organizations to become more interventionist in the political process when they assume functions and powers that had belonged to political leaders, political institutions and political organizations. Those more proactive media organizations act as if they also had a mandate to represent the public, which allows them to act 'politically' on the public's behalf. This trend of journalists becoming more politically assertive has to be seen as part of a general trend of increasing institutional autonomy of the media system and increasing autonomy of journalists as a profession (see IP 8, IP 22). Yet, there are at least two basic reasons for concluding that media organizations may not be very well equipped for acting 'politically' in a self-acclaimed role of the public's representative.

First, the news media are not subject to the level of accountability required of a public representative. Politicians are held responsible to the public by a formal mechanism of accountability – elections. Journalists are neither chosen, nor removed, by the people. The second obstacle is that journalists do not consistently represent the political concerns of the various segments of society. They respond to what they see as opportunities for news, not to political interests. Turnover and revenue, rather than the public interest, are increasingly the drivers of news coverage. So far, these concerns have been voiced most prominently in the

United States. The projects in this module – IP 8, 9, 10, and 22 – are interested in finding out whether these trends can also be detected in established Western European societies.

Against this background, IP 8 ('Democracy in the media society – Theoretical support and empirical validation of a societal term', project leader Kurt Imhof) studies the emancipation of the mass media from traditional intermediary institutions (e.g., political parties, churches) in five European democracies, traces the associated changes of this 'disembedding' process on public-political communication (as conveyed by the media), and reflects these changes against the democratic demands for public communication and the basic functions of the public sphere.

Based on a better understanding of the mass media acting as an autonomous intermediary, IP 9 ('Mediatization and structural change within political actors and organizations', project leader Otfried Jarren) examines to what extent the rules and repercussions of the 'media logic' challenge long-established existing intermediaries (e.g. mass parties) in their execution of core democratic functions (e.g. interest aggregation).

IP 10 ('The dynamics of political institutions in mediated societies', project leader Frank Marcinkowski) shifts the focus from the intermediary system to government decision making. It analyses to what extent the mass media (and their specific logic of publicizing politics) are a challenge to political institutions, especially to their mode of operation and the degree of public support. The project focuses on negotiating institutions in Switzerland and Germany, which have gained increasing importance in democratic governance.

By taking an explicit comparative view, IP 22 ('Explaining differences in political news – a comparative analysis across four Western democracies and four decades', project leader Frank Esser) is interested in the structural and cultural factors (e.g., media policy, media ownership, organizational news routines, professional values), which explain cross-national differences and similarities in mediated political communication. It focuses especially on those influences that challenge the mass media's ability to meet democratic norms in their political news coverage

Main research questions

This module first asks how the mass media emerged as an independent institution within the intermediary system (IP 8). Theoretically, the increasing autonomy of the media is understood to result from a fundamental process of functional differentiation of society. This process led to the development of specialized and competing new subsystems (most prominently among them the mass media) which have replaced a historically discursive public sphere by a mediated one. This process seems to seriously irritate or even undermine traditional structures of political authority and decision making (e.g. party organizations or government institutions).

In a 'disembedding' process, the media system differentiated itself from its old social and political ties and generated its own rules and operations for conveying political information through its channels of mass communication. Mediated mass communication is primarily constructed by journalism and constitutes the modern manifestation of the public sphere. Other contributing factors to today's mediated public sphere are public relations, advertising and entertainment, but these influences are not at the centre of this project. IP 8 focuses on the relationship between structural change in the media (as measured by a system of media society indicators, SMI) and accompanying changes in the mediated public sphere (as measured by a content analysis of political news coverage).

IP 8's main research questions are:

- To what extent is structural differentiation of media systems linked to discursive patterns of news selection and interpretation with regard to topics and actors?
- More specifically the study assumes, among other things, that:
 - the stronger the commercialization of the press and the deregulation of broadcasting, the greater the shift in the power of definition of the main public actors;
 - the greater the dominance of popular (tabloid) titles and of infotainment, the stronger political communication is subject to mediatization effects;
 - the stronger the disentanglement of the mass media from the political domain and from a citizen audience, the more important the media logic will be.

IP 9 takes up an important hypothesis of IP 8, namely that the rise of the mass media undermines the traditional structures of interest aggregation. It is hypothesized that the mediatization process – resulting from dynamic changes in the media environment as analyzed in IP 8 – has serious repercussions for political organizations. Parties and governments have understood that they depend on the mass media and, in the process, have rearranged their internal structure and decision-making procedures according to these new demands. But it is too early to announce the decline of the mass party or of traditional forms of government. In fact, the transformation process is assumed to be complex, uneven and highly conditional on national contexts, media structures and institutional media arrangements, which will create variable conditions in which mediatization takes place.

IP 9's main research questions thus are:

- What is the impact of mass media and mediated communication on political organizations – and how do these organizations change their internal structure as a reaction to a perceived increase in importance of the mass media?
- More specifically the study assumes that mediatization will lead:
 - to an increase of financial and personnel resources for communication;
 - to changes of rules concerning party communication;
 - to a homogenization of political organizations;
 - to centralization of planning and implementation of communication activities;
 - to an increase in the communicative output.

IP 10 picks up on the mediatization concept and links it to several approaches of political science – especially theories of neo-institutionalism, governance and bargaining theory. It argues that the problem-solving capacity of the modern state is dependent on compromise solutions. Compromise solutions, in turn, are a result of negotiations, the most widespread form of non-hierarchical decision-making in Western democracies. The success of such negotiations rests upon consensus orientation, discretion of negotiation partners and collectivization of negotiation results. The media, however, are much more interested in focussing on individual negotiation partners (personalization), issue differences (conflict), quick outcomes (actuality) and a clear distinction between winners and losers ('game' orientation). Conducting democratic negotiations and composing journalistic news stories are subject to very different logics of operation. For this reason IP 10 expects a collision of both logics with effects on both: the problem-solving capacity of political negotiations as well as public confidence in political institutions.

IP 10's main research questions are:

- To what extent do input legitimacy (i.e. citizens' confidence in the decision-making procedures and in the quality of the negotiated output) and output legitimacy of negotiating institutions (the capacity to work as intended by the internal rules) suffer under the influence of media attention and scrutiny (given that media coverage follows an operational logic that often collides with the political logic prevalent in the institutions under study)?
- More specifically, the study assumes that:
 - Due to different journalistic cultures, Swiss and German media will use different frames to cover hierarchical and non-hierarchical decision making;
 - Citizens' perceptions of political institutions can be traced to media coverage, which also shapes public confidence in political institutions (input legitimacy);
 - The media's specific rules of news selection and presentation in covering democratic negotiations offer new opportunities for political actors in the policy-making process. The formal and informal rules of negotiating institutions will change under the conditions of varying media attention, as will the quality of their outcomes (output legitimacy).

IP 22 is interested in the structural and cultural influences (e.g. media policy, media ownership, organizational news routines, and professional values) that challenge the mass media's ability to meet democratic norms in their political news coverage. It strives to explain and predict differences in news content with regard to macro-level variables situated in the political system, political culture, media system and media culture. To that end, a new model for explaining news content from a cross-national perspective will be developed by the project team that incorporates elements of existing classifications of media systems and political communication systems. Based on the results of this analysis, the project also aims at assessing the quality of news coverage in Switzerland, Germany, Great Britain and the United States with regard to normative standards for democratic quality of news. This is a challenging task because there is no uniform consensus on the meaning of democracy across the countries. While the various models have important features in common, each of them carries different normative expectations about citizens, politicians and the news media. Which model of democracy a country 'realizes' within its political communication arrangements does not only depend on the behaviour of its citizens or elected representatives. Of equal or even greater importance is the kind of democracy the news media contribute to in their daily political affairs coverage. The question of what kind of model of democracy a national media system supports and endorses lies at the heart of this study. IP 22's main research questions are:

- What 'models of democratic news standards' can be distinguished in political affairs coverage of liberal (Anglo-American) media systems and in democratic-corporatist (Central-European) media systems?
- How did these models change across time?
- How can cross-national and cross-temporal differences in news performance be explained by structural and cultural features of the respective media systems?

In short, news theories are used to identify those structural and cultural factors that explain differences in political affairs coverage across nations; theories on the media/democracy nexus are used to identify those models of democracy that the news media in their daily coverage reflect and promote. This study does not expect the news media to be undemocratic in any country but rather to reflect different democratic expectations and norms.

Theoretical approaches

The projects of Module 3 all take up Manin's (1995: 247-303) thesis that contemporary societies witness a profound transformation of democratic institutions due to the greatly increased importance of the media-centred public sphere. Of special importance is the mediatization concept (Mazzoleni and Schulz 1999). This concept assumes that the mass media are not mere passive channels for political communicators and political content. Rather, they have their own aims and rules that do not necessarily coincide with, and indeed often clash with, those of political communicators. Because of the power of the media, political communicators are forced to respond to the media's rules, aims, production logics, and constraints.

As spelt out in the general introduction, the quality of the debate in the public sphere is of utmost importance for democracy. It forms the basis for public opinion, which is channelled into the political arena by intermediary institutions. Yet the public sphere of many contemporary societies has been subject to a profound transformation process (Münch 1995). To study the effects of this macro-level mediatization process, IP 8 takes sociological theory as a starting point. IP 8 concentrates on one key aspect of social change in modern society, namely the separation of the media system from the political system and its re-orientation towards the logic of the economic (Habermas 1990, Münch 1997). The macro-level framework of media society as developed by Imhof (2006) serves as a guideline. Operationally, the structural composition (and change) of media systems is measured with indicators devised to tap the functional, stratificatory and segmentary differentiation of media arenas in Germany, France, Britain, Austria and Switzerland. These structural characteristics will then be systematically linked to indicators on the content side to examine the quality of public-political communication. Here, the project is interested in mediatization effects on public-political communication, such as the shift in the power of definition (regarding actors in the public sphere), the changing dominance of media types and the growing importance of media logics.

IP 22 also assumes that factors of the media structure and political structure influence patterns in media content. Its main goal is to test, contextualize and extend Hallin and Mancini's (2004) assumptions that systemic and cultural characteristics of media systems can explain current differences in news discourse and democratic media performance. The project is based on a most-similar systems design (Western mass democracies with highly industrialized societies and stable political cultures) where differences in news output are being traced back to key features that are different among similar countries. It will conduct a content analysis of political news coverage from 1960 to 2007 in major TV and print news outlets of two Anglo-American and two Central-European countries. The United States and Great Britain can be categorized as 'liberal' media systems, whereas Germany and Switzerland represent examples of a 'democratic-corporatist' media system. The project has identified several important economic, political and cultural influences that have been formative for the evolution of these media systems: high vs. moderate commercial pressures, interventionist vs. non-interventionist media policies by the state, majoritarian vs. consensus politics, strict vs. weak press/party parallelism, party-oriented vs. media-oriented political communication cultures, and national vs. global forces. Based on a clearly set-out series of hypotheses related to key features, the project strives to explain differences in the shape of news that provide citizens in various types of democracy with information necessary for critical public debate. The link between media system variables and media content variables will be established via news theories and political communication theories (here, a reconceptualization of existing theories and a construction of a new model for explaining news content from a comparative perspective is necessary). On the content side, the project will draw on recent work that developed different news standards for various models of democracy. This study does not expect the news media to be undemocratic in any country but rather to reflect different democratic standards and norms.

IP 9 and 10 do not try link the macro and micro-level but stay on the meso-level when studying mediatization effects. Both IP 9 and IP 10 use the framework of the 'New

Institutionalism' to conceptualize the news media (and their operational logic) as an institution that interferes with democratic organizations and processes. IP 9 focuses on the challenges news media pose for long-established organizations in the intermediary system (especially parties), while IP 10 concentrates on the polity dimension and investigates media-initiated challenges for long established institutions of governance (especially those concerned with bargaining and negotiations).

IP 9 studies the thesis of a media-initiated demise of the mass party. Theoretically, it views political party organizations as open and loosely coupled systems of action, whose structures and practices are affected by their environment (Mair 1997; Katz and Mair 1993; Scott 2003). The project focuses especially on the dynamics between organizations and their institutional environments. One main assumption is that organizations with the same environmental conditions tend to homogenize their organizational structures and practices due to processes of isomorphism (DiMaggio/Powell 1983). Operationally, the mediatization effect upon political organizations is studied as media-imposed changes in the structural set-up of mass parties in Austria, Britain, Germany, Switzerland (later, governments will be added). Three categories of empirical indicators are used for measurement - indicators concerning: (1) structural change of party organizations; (2) perceptions of media power within parties; and (3) communication output of parties. They are used to measure the study's hypothesis that mediatization will lead: (1) to an increase of financial and personnel resources for communication; (2) to changes of rules concerning party communication; (3) to so-called homogenization of political organizations; (4) to centralization of planning and implementation of communication activities; and (5) to an increase in the communicative output. The aim is to provide: a) a theoretical framework of mediatization at the level of single organizations; b) a theoretically based set of indicators to measure effects of mediatization; and c) empirically consolidated findings on the subsistence and the extent of structural changes within political actors and organizations.

IP 10 also uses the framework of 'New Institutionalism' to conceptualize the news media as an institution. But whereas IP 9 focuses on media effects on intra-organizational change, IP 10 studies media effects on public perceptions of these institutions, the negotiating processes, and their actual outcomes. Put differently, whereas the effects of mediatization in IP 9 are analyzed with respect to organizational theory, the effects of mediatization in IP 10 are analyzed within the framework of democratic legitimacy. As for the input legitimacy, the project argues that the public image of governance structures is influenced by journalistic rules and routines. Therefore, mass media affect political institutions' legitimacy as it is perceived by the citizens. Concerning output legitimacy the project argues that media attention and media access also extend the window of opportunity for political actors within the policy-making process. Consequently institutional rules – either formal or informal – may change. Since structures moderate political outcomes this might lead to altered terms as regards output-legitimacy.

Connections of the projects and their contributions to the overall goals of the NCCR

The individual projects of this module are linked by three overarching frameworks:

- the concept of mediatization;
- the news media's normative functions in democracy;
- the communication-based model of representative democracy.

The four research projects' common goal is to examine to what extent we see a mediatization of politics in core Western European nations. All projects in this module are convinced that European politics is mediated, but they consider it an open empirical question whether it also has become mediatized. In agreement with Mazzoleni and Schulz (1999), we see mediation of politics as entirely unproblematic. The political system requires mass

communication for central processes such as interest aggregation, problem definition, publicizing policy decisions. In this sense, all Western mass democracies are characterized by mediated politics. Mediatized politics is an altogether different ballgame, though. It has been defined as a form of politics that has lost its autonomy, has become dependent in its central functions on mass media, and is continuously shaped by interactions with the mass media (Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999). For US scholars this distinction between mediated and mediatized politics may seem artificial, but for us it is very helpful because it allows us to describe the similarities and differences between the United States and Europe in a more accurate way.

The projects in this module study mostly representative (or liberal) democracies, although some of the countries strive to embrace participatory and deliberative elements also. Given the variations in their political and media systems one cannot easily generalize about their news media's relation to democracy. Taking a cross-national and longitudinal perspective, Blumler and Gurevitch (1995, ch. 8) and Norris (2000) identified five possible functions of the news media in democratic societies: the signaller role, the forum role, the watchdog role, the mobilizer role and public representative role. There are indications that the ways many contemporary media organizations fulfil these functions actually create more problems for society than they solve. Therefore, the projects in this module are interested in whether the European media systems are still well-equipped to fulfil their normative expectations.

The third umbrella framework of the module is the communication-based model of representative democracy as displayed in Figure 3 above. The communication flow in democratic systems starts with the citizens whose demands and expressions of support (i.e. inputs) are channelled into the political arena by intermediary institutions. In the past, this was mainly accomplished by political parties; today, the media play a powerful role in this process. This can be seen as problematic for two reasons:

- First, media organizations do not process citizens' demands and expectations according to a party-political logic but transform them into 'news stories' or 'media issues' according to their own operational logic. As a result, the democratic 'public debate' in contemporary society predominantly takes place in the media and is shaped by news formats;
- Second, it is nowadays almost exclusively left to the news media to decide which actors and voices of society have access to the public debate. The media's power lies not only in their ability to award certain actors with status by granting them attention, the media also assign political relevance and importance to social problems by selecting and emphasizing some issues while neglecting others. Besides input, the media also shape throughput and output processes. They are thereby able to influence the entire political decision-making process – and they also communicate political outcomes back to the citizens.

A last common *methodological* theme is that all projects in this module agree that processes of mediatization can best be understood when looked at in both their historical and comparative context. Therefore, all projects use similar cross-country designs that examine transformation processes in news and politics over a similar period time.

IP 8 is linked to the overall theme of the NCCR in that its results will enable a better understanding of the different effects of societal transformation processes on mediated public communication, relate these changes to the democratic functions of political communication, and generate orientation knowledge for regulation of the media.

IP 9 studies challenges to democracy that result from fundamental shifts in the intermediary system. Here political parties are the main actors of interest aggregation. The fact that parties have to deal with the new (irritating and highly demanding) logic of the media has negative effects on their ability to fulfil their traditional political functions: interest articulation, recruitment of political officials, mobilization of citizens and – most importantly – interest aggregation.

IP 10 addresses two major challenges to democracy: firstly, the media's impact on the development of citizens' trust and confidence in political institutions; and secondly, the media's impact on the development of problem-solving capacities of negotiating institutions.

IP 22 studies the structural and cultural influences that challenge the mass media's ability to meet democratic norms in their political news coverage. It argues that news coverage has not necessarily become undemocratic but that the models of democracy their coverage contributes to have changed.

2.4. Module 4: Changing processes and strategies of political participation and representation

Introduction

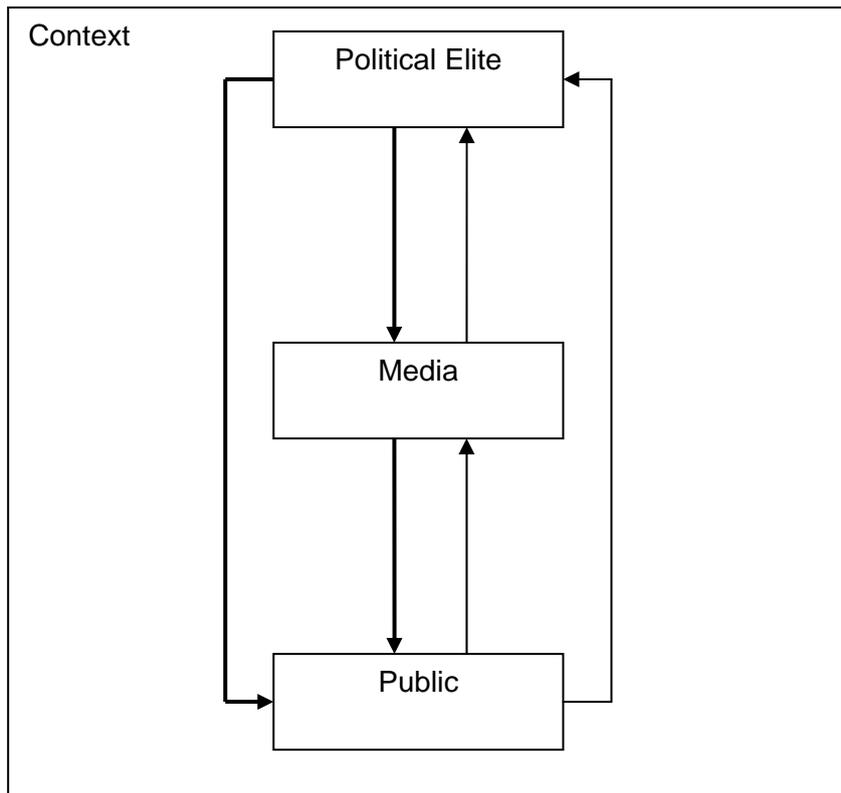
As we have argued in the general introduction, the question of the 'manufacturing of the popular will' becomes particularly acute in audience democracy, where political communication is no longer party-centred but focused on the media. We have seen that there is much controversy about the expected impact of the increasing role of the media on democratic politics. Some argue that there is not much of an impact of the media at all. We believe that, given the conditions of audience democracy, one can no longer maintain that the media only have a weak effect on politics. Some argue that politicians and policy makers manipulate voters, while journalists and media owners set the agenda of government and dictate its party composition (by making and breaking the image of politicians), and citizens become passive, distrustful and even cynical spectators of politics. According to this view, contemporary politics has become a space for decisionism. Some others argue that politicians and policy makers pander to the current preferences of the electorate (supporting popular policies, even if they believe them to be against the interests of the people and the country); while journalists and media owners constitute a countervailing and enlightening power and citizens are empowered and critical. According to this view, contemporary politics has rather become a space for populism. Last but not least, there are those who argue that the political contest in the media, especially during political campaigns when political communication is intensified, has an 'enlightening effect' which allows the citizens to make a choice in line with their preferences.

We set out to study whether or not, and under what conditions, the political contests in the public sphere (i.e. political campaigns) give rise to such an 'enlightening effect'. In other words, we would like to study whether or not political campaigns are able to reduce the complexity of contemporary politics for the voters, and to provide them with the relevant cues, primes or frames for making 'enlightened choices'. Our point of departure is a simple model of audience democracy. Following de Beus (2006), we view this kind of democracy as a system of information processing involving politicians, journalists and media owners, as well as the public (see Figure 6), the operation of which we propose to study in the context of selected political campaigns. From a methodological point of view, political campaigns have the great advantage that they are clearly delimited in time and space, which facilitates the study of information processing. Studies of communication strategies adopted by political actors and the media allow us to identify the stimuli to which the public is exposed in the course of a campaign. Panel studies – i.e. repeated interviewing of the same sample in the framework of a campaign – allow for tracing the processes of learning and opinion formation in the general public and for analyzing the way they are influenced by the stimuli provided by political actors and the media (Lazarsfeld et al. 1944).

It has long been taken for granted that political campaigns only have minimal effects - i.e. that strategic political communication fails to change opinions. Accordingly, the study of campaign activities has long been neglected in political science. But if political campaigns had no impact on voters at all, why would political actors spend money on advertising, campaign information and political marketing? And why would the media pay attention to the political campaigns at all? Indeed, more recent studies provide evidence for substantial and systematic campaign effects on citizens' voting behaviour. As Stimson (2004: 112) observes, one of the best established findings in voting research is that voters rarely hold a preference for a candidate and then change it to the opponent. What happens instead is that the campaign, by increasing the information about the voting decision available to the voters, helps them update their beliefs regarding the issues at stake and to reach a decision in line with their preferences. Under ordinary circumstances ordinary citizens are paying too little attention to, and know too little about, politics to reliably make coherent choices. Thus, before the campaign starts, large numbers of people have not paid attention to politics, have not

thought about it, and do not really have any views about the specific issues at stake. During the campaign, however, the citizens' attention becomes focused on politics more generally (during election campaigns) or on specific political issues (during direct-democratic campaigns), and the citizens learn a lot about the choice they have to make. As pointed out in the introduction, campaigns are information-rich events that allow the citizens to connect their preferences to the choice at stake and to make a decision in line with their preferences.

Figure 6: A simple model of the relationship between the protagonists of audience democracy



This module attempts to integrate the two approaches distinguished by Entman and Bennett (2001: 471f.) in the studies of political communication: the one focusing on the characteristics of communication processes through which messages and political information are constructed by political actors and the media; and the other mainly concerned with individual responses to persuasive messages about particular choices. Each project focuses on a particular type of actor: the political actors (IP11), the media (IP12) and the public (IP13).

At the module level, our goal is to specify the reciprocal interaction processes among all the relevant actors. While the three projects focus on different and complementary aspects, they are closely linked by the common focus on the same cases – i.e. the same political campaigns, and the common data pool that is jointly created and available to all of them.

Main research questions of the module

Module 4 starts from the assumption that 'campaigns matter' and proposes to study a limited selection of political campaigns in Switzerland in order to determine how the political actors' and the media's communication strategies determine the political knowledge and the opinion formation of the citizen public.

IP 11 ('The strategies of political actors: process and message', directed by Hanspeter Kriesi) studies the elaboration and the impact of the communication strategies by political actors. Under what conditions do political actors participate in a political campaign, what do they try to achieve in the campaign, how do they attempt to mobilize their target public, how do they attempt to influence the opinion formation process of the target public and what determines the success of their strategic choices? Part I of the project is mainly concerned with the determination of the campaign strategies of political actors, while Part II of the project focuses on the impact of the strategic choices on the attention/support by the media and the public.

IP 12 ('The strategies and processes of issue selection and construction', directed by Gabriele Siegert) focuses on the media and their communication strategies. It is divided into two parts. Part I asks about the implications of the fact that the media are economic actors for their political communication: how much resources do they generally allocate to political communication? Are the allocation decisions influenced by marketing and branding considerations? Do they take the quality expectations of the public into account? Do they reflect the journalists' quality norms? Do editors make systematic plans on how to cover a given campaign or do they only react to communication strategies of political actors? Are the decisions on how to cover a campaign influenced by the way other media deal with the campaign? What are the editors' beliefs about the opinion formation of the public?

Part II asks about the way the media present the campaign, its determinants and its impact on the outcome of the campaign. Do the strategies of the media corporations that form the object of Part I of the project have an impact on the way the campaign is presented in the media? How intense is the coverage of the campaign? How about the meta-communication about the campaign? Is the coverage determined by the strategies of the political actors?

IP 13 ('The strategies and processes of attitude formation and public participation', directed by Heinz Bonfadelli and Werner Wirth) focuses on the public and its political knowledge and opinion formation. It is also divided into two parts. Part I deals with the knowledge side and asks about the impact of the campaigns on the amount of knowledge among the citizen public. Do the campaigns contribute to this knowledge and what is the role of the media and of the political actors in this process? Part II analyzes opinion formation at the level of individual citizens and asks how the individuals' information processing and their emotions, as well as the media, influence the opinion-formation process.

Theoretical approaches and working hypotheses

The members of Module 4 adopt a common general heuristic framework: the agenda-setting approach. The agenda-setting function of the news media has long been a key topic in communication research and political science. Moreover, as discussed in the introduction, the agenda-setting approach corresponds to a view of democratic politics that is highly promising for the analysis of the increasing role of the media in the democratic political process. The projects build on the development of the agenda-setting approach that has become known under the label of second-level agenda-setting. First-level agenda-setting is concerned with the salience of a given issue compared to other issues. Second-level agenda-setting, by contrast, concerns the communicative impact not only tied to the salience of issues, but also to specific aspects (i.e. attributes) of a given issue. Attributes can either be cognitive (position, arguments, related values, attributions) or affective/evaluative (likes-dislikes, preferences, support). Second-level agenda-setting refers to the capacity of political actors, media actors/content, and of the audience to increase levels of importance assigned to attributes of issues. From the point of view of our module, this approach has several advantages:

- It is a general framework that unites different streams of research (on political actors, media actors, audience);

- It provides a common terminology that is accepted among both political scientists and communication researchers;
- It is not too restrictive: everything fits in very nicely;
- Despite the long tradition, there are specific research gaps to be filled.

Moreover, all three projects share a number of key assumption about the relationship between the three types of actors involved (see de Beus 2006; Ginsborg 2004: 7; Hallin and Mancini 2004; Neveu 1998: 450; Schmitt-Beck and Pfetsch 1994: 115; Schudson 1998: 310; Wolfsfeld 1997: 215ff).

- *Political actors* attempt to control their fellow politicians, the media, and the public. They are the ones who usually initiate events. Political actors try to influence and control journalism by several strategies of news (attention) management and by rhetorical strategies, but they increasingly depend on the media rather than on party sources for information about the public. Politicians and the media interact in complex ways in the public sphere that cannot simply be instrumentalized by one of the political actors, and which is not simply determined by the conditions of political communication imposed by the media. Instead, we assume a 'symbiotic constellation of mutual dependence', where all the participants are trying to optimize their control over the events. The extent to which the different actors arrive at controlling what is happening depends on the respective contexts.

To understand the role of the media in the political communication process, one should consider the competition among the political antagonists along two dimensions: a 'structural' ('standing'/'attention') and a cultural ('rhetorical'/'framing') one. Access to the media ('media attention') is important in structural contention, with resources and organization playing an important role; while arguments, framing, and interpretations ('media support') are important in the cultural contention.

- The *media* today are largely autonomous with respect to political parties, and their commercial orientation has become more prominent. Although the political and the media systems are differentiated spheres with distinct logics, success in politics strongly depends on the media's goodwill and media resonance. During heightened political conflict, in particular during intense campaigns, the media assume central importance. Journalism is an integral part of a general shift of the politics of representation and participation from the parliamentary and administrative arenas to the arena of the public sphere.

The media bend politics to their own logic, their own sense of time, and their own commodity-driven needs. In particular, negativism has become a selling option for both media owners and editors-in-chief. What is more, the media, dominated by television, do not just personify and simplify democratic politics; their mode of operation reinforces/selects certain types of personalities (persons with rhetorical competence, the ability to practice politics 'front stage', charisma, prominence and prestige) and issues.

Political communication constitutes an ideal example of the reflexivity of social actors. The increasing rationalization of communication by political actors – in the sense of a 'scientific' anticipation of the media logic by 'spin doctors' – creates its reflexive resistance; and journalists acquire new competences allowing them, in turn, to anticipate and understand the communication strategies of the political actors.

- The *public* is composed of voters who are capable and willing to behave according to the standards of bounded rationality. The modal spectator is not very interested in politics and not very aware of the issues of the day. Voters are 'monitoring citizens' or 'scorekeepers', who, although not involved on a daily basis, keep a watchful eye on the political scene and become more interested in politics as the political communication intensifies (such as in the context of a political campaign). Voters respond to the

continuing review of journalism and media coverage with different strategies of information acquisition and processing. Interested and sophisticated voters process political information in an elaborate and systematic way. Less-interested and unaware voters, by contrast, process media messages on political issues mainly on the basis of cognitive shortcuts and heuristics. They must trust politicians and journalists in order to make representation happen. But even among them, electoral trust is relative and conditional. Politicians and journalists have to take into account that dissatisfied voters may rush to the political stage under special circumstances. There is a 'shadow of revolt' of the citizen public hanging over the public sphere.

At the module level, it is assumed that communication processes are heavily determined by the specific context of the campaign. Thus we assume that it makes a big difference whether we are dealing with an election campaign, an issue-specific direct-democratic campaign or an non-institutionalized political campaign situated in an ongoing political debate. A number of hypotheses derive directly from the context characteristics. To give but one example: in a direct-democratic campaign, the campaign hurdles are lower for a direct preserving than for a direct modifying campaign, which means that – independently of other factors – intense minorities mobilizing against a decision submitted to a referendum are in a better starting position than intense minorities mobilizing in favour of an initiative.

Within the common framework, the individual projects employ a wide range of theoretical approaches.

IP11 has encountered the difficulty that the study of campaigns has largely been neglected by political science so far. In developing its concepts, it has mainly built on the agenda-setting approach, literature on political marketing, cognitive psychology and social movement theory. The conceptual challenge has been that 'in strategic action there are few rules...but many choices' (Jasper 2006: 171). In other words, the key theoretical issue so far was to determine the most important strategic choices and to conceptualize them. The project divides the set of choices into three subsets, concerned with coalition formation, mobilisation, and with the crafting of the message. Mobilizing choices include decisions about timing, targeting and the communication repertoire. Crafting the message refers to decisions about agenda-setting and rhetorical strategies. We have formulated a number of hypotheses about the possible determinants, and the likely effects of the various choices involved in coalition formation, mobilisation and crafting of the message, at the level of the public sphere as well as at the level of the citizen public (Kriesi et al. 2007). Given that little is yet known about the interdependence of these various choices, we have to formulate the hypotheses for each one of them separately.

IP12 builds on media economics in Part I. From this point of view, political journalism is looked upon as a special kind of economic good. It is 'special' since in contrast to 'normal' economic goods, media consumers usually cannot discern the quality of the good. In media economics it is commonly held that this 'credence good' feature of journalism leads to precarious principal-agent problems and quality dilemmas in the provision of this good. How these dilemmas are overcome requires explaining how media managers and editors-in-chief decide about the allocation of editorial resources, which largely determines the quality of the substantive content of the media. There are two theoretical approaches that address this issue: the 'theory of strategic media branding' that builds on marketing theory, and the 'theory of media reputation' that builds on new institutional economics and game theory. Part II builds on cognitive processing theories that focus on decision-making.

IP13 also builds on cognitive processing theories. Part I of the project can build on a great amount of empirical research addressing the political campaign effects on voters' knowledge that has been mostly conducted in the US, and deals with presidential or governors' contests, using cross-sectional analyses and without any reference to the substantive content of the communication. It will analyze whether the results of this research can be confirmed in a study conducted in the specific context of the Swiss political and media system, dealing with an issue-specific referendum, applying panel analyses and with

reference to communication content. Key issues in this part concern causality (does communication cause knowledge or vice versa?), learning from different sources (does type of media use play a role?), individual factors (knowledge-gap hypothesis: role of SES and motivation?).

Part II builds on dual process theory, which distinguishes between systematic and heuristic information processing. Its first challenge was to develop measurement instruments allowing the assessment of such processes in a panel survey, since most of the research done on such processing so far has been based on experimental work. Based on these instruments, it seeks to examine empirically how the political heuristics proposed in the political communication literature operate from the perspective of dual processing theory. It also seeks to combine theorizing on political motivations with the dual processing framework. There is a tendency in the political communication literature to neglect the conditions under which individual attitudes change. These conditions include individual factors (SES, psychological factors, motivational factors, cognitive factors (knowledge), habitual media use), but also factors belonging to the campaign context (strategies of the political actors and the media). These campaign context factors, in turn, may also be conceptualized in terms of the dual process theory. Thus the rhetorical strategies of the political actors and the modes of presentation by the media may be characterized as more or less systematic or more or less heuristic.

Contributions to the overall goals of the NCCR

The main contribution of this module to the overall goals of the NCCR is to analyze the role of political campaigns in the process of political decision-making. A strong point of our contribution is that it provides excellent details on the quality of the public debate and its effects on the opinion-formation processes of the citizen public. In addition, it provides an attempt to gauge the latitude for manipulation of the public by political strategists. The weak point is that it does so for only a very limited number of cases. Ideally, analogous projects should be launched in other contexts – possibly in the 7th Framework Programme of the EU.

2.4. IP 14: Quality of democracy – Democracy Barometer for established democracies

Introduction

Project 14 is part of the cross-sectional transfer module. Thus, on the one hand it aims at providing an instrument to measure the quality of democracy at the national level. On the other hand, this 'Democracy Barometer' should serve as a base for pedagogical tools for civic education and e-learning. However, Project 14 also aims at assisting the theoretical debate, as well as the empirical research of the whole NCCR Democracy:

The starting point of the NCCR is the diagnosis that democratic regimes face challenges to their legitimacy. Citizens are disillusioned with the political elite and to a minor degree with institutions. The changing role of the media as an actor of the intermediate system, as well as the process of denationalization, are suggested to be the most important challenges to democratic legitimacy. The Democracy Barometer of Project 14 contributes to the analysis of these challenges in multiple ways:

(A) Measuring the quality of democracy implies observing its deficits. By measuring quality against a root concept, our instrument is comparatively sensitive to shortcomings with regard to crucial components of democracy and possibly able to identify factors responsible for reported increasing disaffection;

(B) By analysing the quality of established democracies in a longitudinal design, we will be able to show changes and to check whether the challenges democracies face are reflected in the development of the quality of democracy. The analysis over time should provide us with insights into the impact of denationalization and the changing role of the media on the quality of democracy. By comparing established democracies and searching for best practices, we can provide possible solutions to cope with the challenges to democracy.

Main research questions

IP 14 aims at providing an analytical instrument for measuring the quality of established democracies. Present measurements (Freedom House, Polity, BTI, the Vanhanen-Index; see Gastil 1978; Gastil 1991; Gurr 1974; Gurr, Jagers, and Moore 1991; Jagers and Gurr 1995; Marshall and Jagers 2001; Vanhanen 1997; Vanhanen 2000; Vanhanen 2003) are too unsubtle to assess the obviously existing fine differences in the quality of democracy between OECD countries. In order to find more adequate and useful indicators for the measurement of democracy, we are developing five interconnected steps ranging from the fundamental principles of democracy, the root concept of democracy, the democratic core functions of the root concept, the components of the functions, to the indicators of the components.

In a first phase, Project 14 focuses on comparing and rating the quality of democracy of the established democracies of the OECD world. We shall pose three main research questions that might apply to NCCR Democracy: (1) Do the OECD countries differ in their quality of democracy? Which polity shows the highest quality of democracy? (2) Is the quality of democracy a function of the institutional design? (3) Which changes in the quality of democracy within a political system can be observed over time? Are there observable tendencies of adapting democratic institutions to new challenges?

Theoretical approach

Basic dimensions of democracy

Drawing on the basic ideas of democracy that derive from contractualists such as Locke (1974 [1689]) and Rousseau (1977 [1762]), the principles of democracy's justification are (individual) freedom and (political) equality (also see Dworkin 1994; Dworkin 1996; Hadenius 1992; Wiesendahl 1981). However, both the guarantee and the optimisation of freedom and equality need a third principle constitutive for democracies: control (Beetham 2004; Böckenförde 1991; Habermas 1992; Habermas 1996; Lauth 2004; Merkel et al. 2003; Sartori 1987). Non-contractualists such as Montesquieu (1965 [1748]) and Tocqueville (1997) – also essential for the modern understanding of democracy – have emphasized that the crucial distinctive feature of democratic rule is that political power is dispersed, contested and controlled. Whereas freedom and equality are the justification of democracy, control of political rule is its defining means. Control and constitutional self-binding are inherent to the democratic logic and not 'external' constraints (Habermas 1992, 1996). Therefore we define freedom, equality and control as the three core principles of democracy. The relative weight of the three principles, their interdependence and proper balance is still contested. Different types of democracy may well result from different balances and trade-offs, ranging from a minimalist Schumpeterian democracy (Schumpeter 1962) to a 'maximalist' democracy (Heller 1971; Meyer 2005), which includes social welfare outcomes as definitional parts of democracy.

The root concept of democracy

The three principles can be systematically conceptualized by a root concept of democracy which illustrates the transformation of the normative principles into institutional structures. We label this root concept 'embedded democracy' (Merkel 2004; Merkel et al. 2003). It comprises five partial regimes: the electoral regime, the political rights regime, the civil rights regime, the control regime of horizontal accountability, and the regime securing the 'effective power to govern'. They incorporate the three principles and they are normatively and functionally interdependent. The electoral and voting regime can only be democratically meaningful if the four complementary partial regimes are functioning properly. This mutual interdependence is what we understand by embeddedness. Embedded democracies are liberal democracies – i.e. democracies based on the rule of law. It is a mid-range concept, which regards democracy as defined by institutional settings and processes, and not by distributional socioeconomic outcomes.

The core functions of embedded democracy

The five partial regimes have to fulfil crucial functions for democracy. They have, individually and collectively, to guarantee the democratic character of the political process. This includes democratic representation, vertical accountability, participation, publicity and responsiveness; the protection of freedom and equality by the rule of law; and horizontal accountability. These functions also include autonomy of democratic governance from democratically non-legitimated veto players. Some of these functions can clearly be attributed to one single partial regime; others can only be fulfilled by some or even all partial regimes.

Norms, institutions and procedures as components of democracy

To guarantee these core functions, each democracy has to establish institutions and procedures which follow a selective set of democratic norms. The most important ones are:

- *Electoral regime*: universal active and passive suffrage, free and fair elections;
- *Political rights*: freedom of opinion, freedom of association and coalition formation, equal rights to participate, transparency;
- *Civil rights*: individual rights, equality before the law, equal access to the courts;
- *Horizontal accountability*: checks and balances, independence of the judiciary, rule of law, constraints for the executive;

- *Effective power to govern*: governmental autonomy in a national territorial, a national functional and a global dimension.

Indicators

A large set of indicators will be derived from these components of democracy. The novelty of our approach is that these indicators are not contingently selected but strictly derived from the components of democracy, which can ultimately be traced back to the three basic principles of democracy. The indicators will measure the reality of democracy, not the set of norms, procedures, and institutions 'on paper' as stipulated by the constitution and other laws. We intend to measure the quality of democracy at two levels: first, we measure the quality with regard to the 'structural' elements (components) of the five partial regimes; and second, we measure quality with regard to the 'functions' fulfilled by the partial regimes. This double measurement will allow us to explore in more detail the relationship between specific democratic structures and their capacity to fulfil the required democratic functions. The way we construct our indicators will allow us to cluster them in these two different modes in order to get two different views of the quality of democracy.

Moreover, some of the functions can be seen as trade-offs, rivalling each other to some extent. Possible trade-offs are those between governance and representation, or participation and representation. Consequently, a simultaneous maximization of all functions seems unlikely from a logical perspective and even less in empirical reality. Thus, we expect that empirical realizations of democracy attempt to achieve different optima. Different combinations of the components are possible. The highest degree of quality of democracy will be attained by a regime that combines the functions in a manner that allows the highest effectiveness in all of them.

This idea is illustrated best by a spider-net with nine axes representing the nine functions. If we plot the quality of each function – measured against the ideal maximum – on the nine axes and connect these points we get a spider-net. One possibility to determine the overarching quality of democracy, then, is to measure the size of the surface generated by connecting the points on the axes; another one to consider the gravity of its centre. The same will be done with the spider-net stretched between the five angles representing the partial regimes of our root concept 'embedded democracy'.

Contribution to the overall goals of the NCCR

As mentioned, the Democracy Barometer contributes in different ways to the overall goals of the NCCR. First, measuring the quality of democracy can help to identify deficits of established democracies, perhaps responsible for growing dissatisfaction. Second, with the longitudinal analysis of the quality of democracy we can observe the impact of the two main challenges: denationalisation and the changing role of the media.

However, there seem to be differences in the manner in which the NCCR and the Democracy Barometer proceed. NCCR Democracy starts from a process perspective aiming at investigating input as well as output processes. With the Democracy Barometer, we rather concentrate on structural and functional aspects of democracy.

However, by relying on a parsimonious definition of the political process according to Fuchs (1993), the partial regimes and the functions can be attributed to different sequences of the political process. Additionally, this sequential process perspective also allows for an analysis of different actors: The civil rights regime and the political rights regime (wants and articulation of demands as action products of individual citizens and/or the intermediary system) can be attributed to the input processes. The same applies to the electoral regime (aggregation of issues into political programmes by political parties and collective binding rules by parliaments). The horizontal accountability regime and the effective power to govern regimes (political decision and implementation as well as checks of the process) are attributed to the output processes.

Finally, the Democracy Barometer can be applied to further research, partially beyond the aims of the NCCR. The quality of democracy measures can be used as a dependent as well as an independent variable. Furthermore, the instrument can also be employed to measure the degree of quality and quality defects of political regimes other than established democracies.

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