Direct democracy opens up possibilities for direct involvement of the citizenry in political decision-making. By fostering popular participation and enhancing responsiveness, direct democracy seems to be an ideal solution to overcome some of the shortcomings of representative democracy. In recent years both the number of states offering possibilities for direct democratic involvement of the citizens and the use of these instruments have considerably grown. However, direct democracy is not a universal remedy for the problems of (representative) democracy. On the contrary, in a historical perspective direct democracy has been regarded rather sceptically. Critics were particularly afraid of the detrimental effects of the “tyranny of the majority” for minority groups. Indeed, the logics of direct democratic procedures tend to sharpen political conflict during the campaign before the ballot and to restrict political decisions ultimately to simple dichotomous alternatives. Their results clearly denominate winners and losers. In spite of these majoritarian features, the effects of direct democracy on minorities are not clear-cut. Recent studies have shown that its impact depends on several factors. It seems clear that direct democracy brings political decisions closer in line with the majority’s preferences. Its positive or negative effects on the minorities, however, are influenced by political culture, institutional design of the instruments, their frequency of use, and the majority-minority relations in general as well as the specific characteristics of the minorities. Furthermore, direct democracy may also offer opportunities for minorities to check majorities’ decisions (veto) or may even help them to raise their own issues. In order to fully exploit direct democracy’s potential for enhancing the quality of democracy in modern societies, minority-majority relations have to be further clarified.

Our conference aims at enhancing our understanding of the problems of different kinds of minorities (eg. social, political, religious, linguistic, ethnic etc.) in different direct democratic settings and exploring innovative approaches to minority-majority relations. The conference will start with a historical survey on conflict structures that determined the emergence of direct democratic problem solving approaches, and will discuss some illustrative historical examples. In a second step different problems of minority-majority relations will be discussed from a theoretical perspective. The theoretical insights will be deepened and corroborated by a second set of contemporary case studies. Finally, the effects of the emergence of transnational direct democracy for the minorities and further questions will be discussed.
Friday, April 23, 2010

Bendern, Liechtenstein Institute

8:15  Bus transfer from hotel to Bendern
8:30  Address of welcome and introduction

Panel 1 (Chair: Wilfried Marxer)
Popular Votes and Minorities – Historical Perspective

8:45  Theo Schiller
Conflict patterns and the emergence of direct democracy
Franz Cede
Popular votes in Austria after World War I
Discussion

9:45  Hermann Heussner
Minorities and direct democracy the USA
Rolf Friedrich Krause
Popular votes and national independence of Montenegro
Discussion

10:45  Coffee Break and Snacks

Panel 2 (Chair: Zoltán Tibor Pállinger)
Minorities and Direct Democracy – Theoretical Perspective

11:15  Anna Christmann
Direct Democracy and the Rule of Law - Assessing a tense relationship
Andi Gross
The integration potential of direct democracy
Discussion

12:15  Jonathan Wheatley
The disruptive potential of direct democracy in deeply divided societies
Elisabeth Alber
Federalism, minorities, and direct democracy
Discussion

13:15  Lunch at Restaurant Löwen
14:15  Bus transfer from Bendern to Vaduz

Vaduz, Art Museum and National Archive

14:30  Short guided tour at the Liechtenstein Art Museum
Walk to the National Archive

Panel 3 (Chair: Bruno Kaufmann)
Minorities and Popular Votes – Case Studies

15:30  Zoltán Tibor Pállinger
Prevention of direct democracy in the name of “rule of law”: the case of Hungary
Oleh Protsyk
Popular vote and divergent outcomes of ethnic party institutionalization in Eastern Europe

Discussion

16:30  Coffee Break
17:00  
Thomas Benedikter  
Direct democracy and linguistic minorities in Switzerland and South Tyrol - A comparison  
Wilfried Marxer  
Minorities and direct democracy in Liechtenstein  
Rolf Büchi  
Conflict regulation in Switzerland – the case of canton Jura  

Discussion  

18:30  
End of first day session  
19:00  
Dinner in Vaduz  

Saturday, April 24, 2010  

Bendern, Liechtenstein Institute  

8:15  
Bus transfer from hotel to Bendern  

8:30  
Frank Marcinkowski/André Donk  
Media coverage of minority affairs in election campaigns and direct democratic campaigns  
Deniz Danaci  
Religious minorities and direct democracy  

Discussion  

Panel 4 (Chair: Theo Schiller)  
Transnational Direct Democracy and additional aspects  

9:30  
Johannes Pichler  
European citizens initiative  
Kai Oppermann  
The transnational spill over of pledging EU referendums: the case of the European Constitution  
Bruno Kaufmann  
Superdemocracy – a worldwide approach for the benefit of minorities across the globe  

Discussion  

11:00  
Coffee Break  

11:30  
Bill Kissane  
Popular Sovereignty, European Integration and the Irish Referendum  
Klaus Poier  
EU Referendums from an Austrian perspective  
Uwe Serdült  
C2D data collection on direct democracy  

Discussion  

13:00  
End of second day session/End of conference  
Catering lunch at the Liechtenstein Institute  
Transfer to train stations
Speakers

Alber, Elisabeth, Mag., European Academy (EURAC) of Bolzano/Italy, Institute for Studies on Federalism and Regionalism.

Benedikter, Thomas, Social and Political Researcher, Initiative für mehr Demokratie, South Tyrol/Italy.

Büchi, Rolf, Dr., Birmingham/U.K., Initiative & Referendum Institute Europe.

Cede, Franz, Dr., Associate Professor of Diplomacy, Andrássy University Budapest, former Austrian Ambassador in Belgium and to the NATO.

Christmann, Anna, Mag., PhD.-Student, Institute of Political Sciences, University of Zurich.

Danaci, Deniz, lic. phil., PhD.-Student, Institute of Political Sciences, University of Zurich.

Donk, André, M.A., PhD.-Student, Institute of Communication Science, University of Muenster.

Gross, Andi, Member of the Swiss National Parliament, Deputy at the Council of Europe, Strasbourg.

Heussner, Hermann, Prof. Dr., Professor of Public Law and Law of Social Work, Fachhochschule Osnabrück.

Kaufmann, Bruno, Falun/Sweden, President Initiative & Referendum Institute Europe.

Kissane, Bill, Dr., Senior Lecturer in Politics, Department of Government, London School of Economics and Political Science.

Krause, Rolf Friedrich, Dr. Dr., Associate Professor of Diplomacy, Andrássy University Budapest; German Ministry of Foreign Affairs – former Deputy Director for African Affairs.

Marcinkowski, Frank, Prof. Dr., Institute of Communication Science, University of Muenster.

Marxer, Wilfried, Dr., Senior Research Fellow, Liechtenstein Institute, Lecturer at the University of Liechtenstein.

Oppermann, Kai, Dr., Research Institute of Political Sciences and European Affairs, University of Cologne.

Pállinger, Zoltán Tibor, Dr., Associate Professor of Political Science, Andrássy University, Budapest.

Pichler, Johannes, Prof. Dr., University of Graz and Austrian Research Institute of Legal Policy Salzburg, President of „Europa braucht Initiative e.V.“

Poier, Klaus, Ass. Prof. Dr., University of Graz.

Protsyk, Oleh, Dr., European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI), Hamburg.

Schiller, Theo, Prof. Dr., University of Marburg, Forschungsstelle für Bürgerbeteiligung und direkte Demokratie at the University of Marburg.

Serdült, Uwe, Dr., Centre for Research on Direct Democracy (C2D), Zentrum für Demokratie Aarau, University of Zurich.

Wheatley, Jonathan, Dr., Centre for Research on Direct Democracy (C2D), Zentrum für Demokratie Aarau, University of Zurich.