

Chapter 98

Freedom, Equality and the Quality of Democracy: Democratic Life in the United States, Australia, Sweden and Germany

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ABSTRACT

Freedom and equality are the content, the substance and the tension in a liberal democracy of today. Freedom and equality describe the design, stability and the quality of a democracy. Especially in a Quintuple Helix Model, the quality of democracy and sustainable development are closely related, because a high-quality democracy is a prerequisite for promoting sustainability in democracies. By investigating the quality of democracy this article develops two theses: 1.) Democracy with their quality rises or falls with the expression of freedom and/or equality; 2.) Democracy generates its stability from a balanced interaction between freedom and equality. With the concept of Democratic Life this article examines these two theses: Democratic Life as newly developed concept measures the quality of democracy with providing information about the type of a democracy and an approach to measure a democracy's democratic development for the top 20 of the Democracy Ranking (2009). The central keys of the Democratic Life concept are the 'Index of Classification' and the 'Democratic-Life-Index', which are formed from an 'Index of Freedom' and an 'Index of Equality'. By empirical examination of the research question of Democratic Life two essential questions in the modern democratic theory can be investigated: 1.) How democratic is a democracy? 2.) How much freedom and equality does a liberal democracy need? The countries analyzed for the Democratic Life concept in this article are the United States, Australia, Sweden and Germany in comparison between 1995 and 2008. This degree of democratic quality will create a lot of problems towards developing sustainability in a democracy, because in the United States there is currently a big disparity between freedom and equality.

1. INTRODUCTION: THE QUALITY OF DEMOCRACY AND DEMOCRATIC LIFE

Sweden is the best democracy in the world 2007/2008 - This was the conclusion of the Democracy Ranking 2009 (see Table 1).¹ What makes Sweden rank on the first place and better than Germany (ranked 8th), Australia (11th rank) and the United States (16th rank)? What are the differences in the development of these democracies? How can we classify countries in terms of their type of democracy and democratic quality? And is it possible to describe these four countries as liberal and also high-quality democracies? Or do we find other forms of democracy and qualities of democracy? These are the important questions raised in this article and this is the research for the quality of democracy.

Earlier measurements of democracy focused on the central question, whether “democracy” in a country exists or not? (see Dahl, 1971, pp. 248-249). Today’s measurement of democracy goes further and examines, which design or quality a democracy is offering? (see Campbell & Barth, 2009, p. 210) The new study of democratic quality is important, because the quality of democracy and a sustainable development are closely linked in a *Quintuple Helix Model*: It means that a high-quality democracy can be seen as a prerequisite to promote sustainability in a democracy (see Carayannis & Campbell, 2010, pp. 58-62; Barth, 2011, pp. 4-7). This fact shows that the measurement of quality of democracies has a growing relevance in political science (see Campbell & Barth, 2009, Diamond & Morlino, 2005; O’Donnell, 2004; Bühlmann et al., 2008a, 2008b; Barth, 2010). A special focus in the theory of the quality of democracy deals with the lived democratic content a democracy gives to its citizens: The search for the content of a democracy is the search for the values of freedom and equality (see Diamond & Morlino, 2005, xxv; Pelinka, 2008, p.21). Freedom and equality are the substance and the tension

for a today’s liberal democracy (see Diamond and Morlino, 2005, pp. xxv-xxix). Freedom and equality describe the design, stability and the quality of a democracy. In terms of freedom and equality the main questions are: What means freedom in a democracy? What defines equality in a democracy?

While talking about freedom we find different definitions of what freedom could be: Some define freedom as political freedom (or ‘political rights’) in order to participate in the democratic process and to shape democracy. Others see freedom as civil liberty (or ‘civil rights’) in order for citizens to develop their life individually and for example to do what they are dreaming of or to live, where they want to (see Diamond & Morlino, 2005, pp.

Table 1. The top 20 of the democracy ranking 2009

Rank 2007-2008	Country
1	Sweden
2	Norway
3	Denmark
4	Finland
5	Netherlands
6	Switzerland
7	New Zealand
8	Germany
9	Austria
10	Belgium
11	Australia
12	Canada
13	United Kingdom
14	Ireland
15	Spain
16	United States
17	France
18	Portugal
19	Japan
20	Italy

Source: Vienna Democracy Ranking Association (2009)

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