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**Direct Democracy
in Nine Countries: A Survey**

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1 Introduction¹

In this article I intend to give a general idea of the procedures, practice and functions of the devices of direct democracy on the supreme state level. The countries here considered are Switzerland, California², France, Italy, Denmark, Ireland, Austria, Liechtenstein and Australia. The emphasis lies on Switzerland and California.

Let me distinguish between six types of popular votes: plebiscite, advisory plebiscite, optional referendum, mandatory referendum, initiative and suggestion. This will be followed by statistical data on the number of ballots, the number of issues decided as well as the subjects and the results.

In the final part the question will be raised as to the function of direct democracy for the structure and processes of political systems. These vary considerably according to political system, political culture and organization of direct-democracy devices. Two of these functions will be studied in detail: the relations between direct democracy and governmental system on the one hand, between direct democracy and a political system's capacity for innovation on the other hand.

2 Person-related and Issue-related Votes

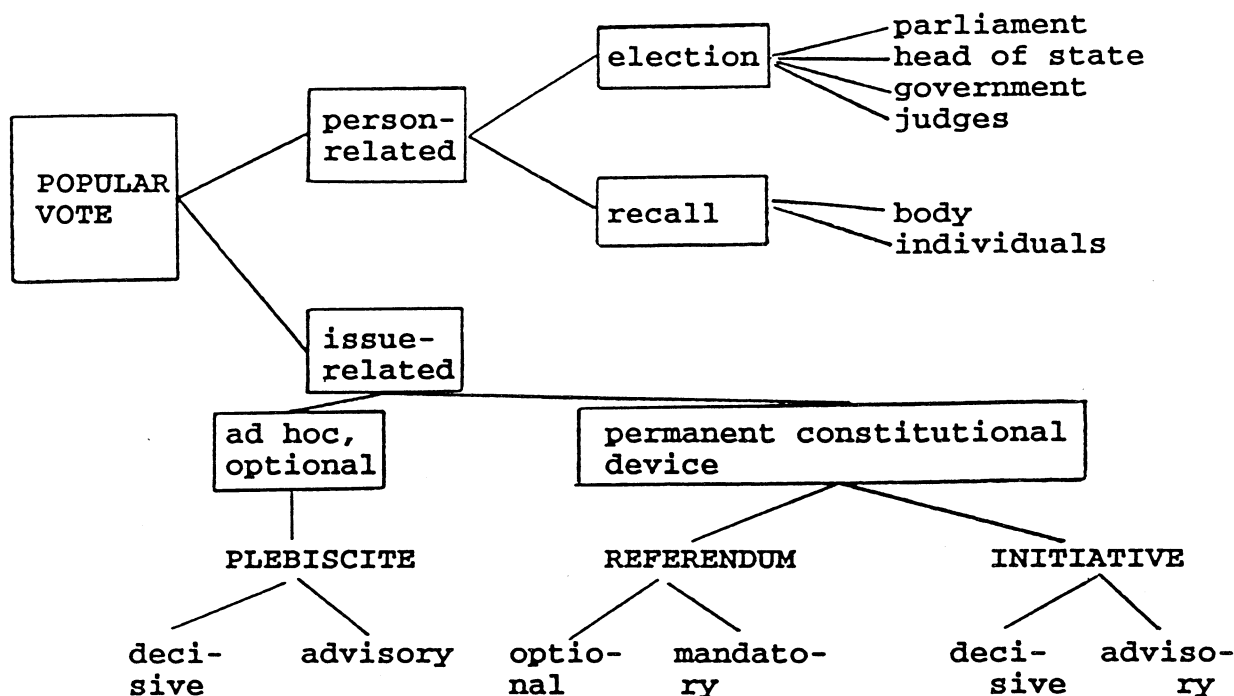
In the following direct-democracy institutions are defined as popular votes that go beyond election of parliament or head of

¹ *This is a shortened version of an article published in: Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte, B 23/1991, p. 31 - 43.*

² California is not a sovereign state. It is, however, justifiable to include California in this survey since nowhere in the world more people do vote on more issues than in California.

state. This includes plebiscites, referendums and initiatives³ (see figure 1). A wider definition of direct democracy would also include primaries, election of government, recall and citizen's assemblies.

Fig. 1: Person- and issue-related votes



Issue-related votes can be differentiated according a number of criteria. A first differentiation according to the criteria of access to ballot and permanence divides issue-related votes into plebiscites, referendums and initiatives. The plebiscite is optional and initiated ad hoc by a state authority. The referendum is a permanent, constitutional device and, according to a set of rules, is either initiated "from the bottom" or "from the

³ It has to be admitted that from a functional point of view there is no strict division between issue-related and person-related votes. An election carried out in the context of a great national issue can assume plebiscitary functions. Issue-related votes on the other hand can have person-related consequences if the political fate of state authority is tied to the outcome of the vote.

top". The initiative is initiated by voters. Going by the legal force we can distinguish between results which for the state authorities are either decisive or advisory.⁴ In addition issue-related votes can be analyzed according to the following criteria:

- Setting the issue: Is the power to set the issue limited to the state authorities or is it open to the voters as well?
- Setting the procedure: Is there a fixed set of rules, are rules created to suit the occasion or are there no rules at all?
- Extent of government control: To what extent does the government control the wording of the ballot-question and the campaign? Is the campaign competitive?
- Time of decision: Is it really the popular vote that decides the issue or has the actual decision been taken beforehand by the state authority?

Using these criteria, we arrive at the six types of issue-related votes already shown in figure 1 (see figure 2).

⁴ On the consultative referendum see Ulrich Rommelfanger, *Das konsultative Referendum. Eine verfassungstheoretische, rechtliche und -vergleichende Untersuchung*, Diss. Trier, Berlin 1988. He draws the conclusion that in Western democracies most consultative decisions can be considered as binding: the state authorities accept the people's will and adjust their work accordingly.

Fig. 2: Types of Propositions

| Type | plebis- cite | adviso- ry ple- biscite | optional referen- dum | manda- tory refe- rendum | in- itia- tive | sug- ges- tion |
|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Access to bal- lot | state author- ity | state author- ity | voters, member state | manda- tory | voters | vot- ers, member state |
| Setting the is- sue | state author- ity | state author- ity | state authori- ty | state author- ity | voters | vot- ers, member state |
| Procedu- re of campaign and vote | ad hoc or le- gally regu- lated | ad hoc or le- gally regu- lated | legally regulat- ed | legally regulat- ed | legal- ly regulat- ed | ad hoc or le- gally regula- ted |
| Binding nature of the result | deci- sive | adviso- ry | decisive | deci- sive | deci- sive | advi- sory |
| Control by gov- ernment | tight | tight | loose | modera- te | loose | mode- rate |
| Actual time of decision | befo- re/af- ter/ with vote | befo- re/af- ter vote | before/ with vo- te | befo- re/with vote | with vote | befo- re/af- ter vote |

Applying this typology to the direct-democracy institutions studied in the nine countries mentioned, we come to the survey shown in figure 3 (the advisory plebiscite is not known in any of these states).

Fig. 3: Devices of direct democracy in nine countries

| Type Country | plebis- cite | optio- nal refe- rendum | mandatory referendum | initia- tive | sug- ges- tion |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Switzer- land | treaties under inter- national law | law | constitution: total and partial revi- sion | consti- tution: total and par- tial re- vision | |
| Califor- nia | | law | constitution and certain laws | consti- tution and law | |
| France | certain laws | | constitution (circumven- tion possi- ble) | | |
| Italy | | law, consti- tution (circ- umven- tion possi- ble) | | | law |
| Denmark | law (by minority of par- liament) | | constitution, voting age | | |
| Ireland | law | | constitution | | |
| Austria | partial revision consti- tution, law | | total revi- sion consti- tution | | law |
| Liech- tenstein | | consti- tution, law | | consti- tution, law | |
| Austra- lia | | | constitution | | |

3 Direct Democracy in Practice

3.1 Number of Ballots and Ballot-Decisions

Table 1 shows the number of issues decided in the states here considered by the end of 1990. The most ballot-decisions were taken in California, followed by Switzerland and (lagging far behind) Liechtenstein. France has the highest (90 %), Australia the lowest proportion of propositions accepted. What is striking is the fact that Switzerland and Liechtenstein show almost the same proportion of acceptance (47 %).

Table 1: Number of issues decided by the end of 1990

| Country | issue-related votes since | number of issues decided | number of accepted propositions | proportion of accepted propositions (%) |
|---------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Switzerland* | 1848 | 379 | 179 | 47.2 |
| California | 1884 | 1098 | 647 | 58.9 |
| France | 1793 | 21 | 19 | 90.5 |
| Italy | 1929 | 21 | 9 | 42.9 |
| Denmark | 1916 | 15 | 9 | 60.0 |
| Ireland | 1937 | 13 | 9 | 69.2 |
| Austria | 1938 | 2 | 1 | 50.0 |
| Liechtenstein | 1919 | 66 | 31 | 47.0 |
| Australia | 1906 | 45 | 8 | 17.8 |
| total | - | 1660 | 912 | 54.9 |

* Counter proposals submitted by parliament voted on the same day as the initiatives are counted as separate ballot decisions.

If we look at the number of ballots over the past twenty years, the number of issues decided and the average voter turnout (see table 2), we find that the seventies and the eighties mark a peak in Switzerland as well as in California: 42 % of all ballot-decisions in Switzerland since 1848 and 30 % of all ballot-decision in California since 1884 were taken in the years after 1969.

Table 2: Number of ballots (without elections), number of issues decided and average voter turnout from 1970 to 1990 on the national level (on the state level in California)

| Country | number of ballots | number of issues decided | average voter turnout in percent |
|---------------|-------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Switzerland | 63 | 158 | 41.4 |
| California | 24 | 326 | 43.8 |
| France | 2 | 2 | 48.8 |
| Italy | 7 | 18 | 70.2 |
| Denmark | 4 | 4 | 77.9 |
| Ireland | 7 | 9 | 48.6 |
| Austria | 1 | 1 | 64.1 |
| Liechtenstein | 22 | 30 | 72.5 |
| Australia | 5 | 17 | 94.1 |

It was only in Switzerland, California and Liechtenstein that over the past twenty years voters were summoned to the ballot more than once a year. Issue-related ballots are an everyday matter in these states.⁵

Voter turnout in Switzerland and California centered around just over 40 %. In Liechtenstein, where the voters were summoned to the ballot no less than 22 times, the voter turnout remains at a constantly high level. Australia's high turnout of over 90% is remarkable; two ballot decisions coincided with general elections, moreover the ballot is compulsory in Australia. The high voter turnout indicates a considerable intensity of conflict.

⁵ It has to be considered that these states have institutionalized direct democracy on both member state and local level.

3.2 Issues

The following categorization of issues into different fields of politics (table 3) is based on Butler/Ranney, Magleby and Bugiel⁶.

To introduce all of the Swiss and Californian issues would be going too far. We shall limit ourselves to grouping the initiatives according to subjects (table 4).

Table 3: Issue-related votes in seven countries

| Subject | FR | IT | DK | IRL | A | LIE | AUS | Tot |
|-----------------------------------------------|----|----|----|-----|---|-----|-----|-----|
| <u>Constitutional</u> Approve constitution | 7 | | 1 | 1 | | | | 9 |
| Constitutional machinery | 10 | 5 | | | | 3 | 8 | 26 |
| Voting age | | | 6 | 1 | | 1 | | 8 |
| Electoral system | | | | 5 | | 18 | 10 | 33 |
| Parties | | 1 | | | | | 1 | 2 |
| Nuclear energy | | 3 | | | 1 | | | 4 |
| <u>Moral</u> Divorce | | 1 | | 1 | | | | 2 |
| Abortion | | 2 | | 1 | | | | 3 |
| Position of church | | | | 1 | | | | 1 |
| <u>Pragmatic</u> | | 8 | 4 | 1 | | 44 | 26 | 83 |
| <u>Territorial</u> EC-membership | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | | | | 6 |
| Other territorial | 3 | | 2 | | 1 | | | 6 |
| Total | 21 | 21 | 15 | 13 | 2 | 66 | 45 | 183 |

⁶ David Butler / Austin Ranney (Ed.), *Referendums. A Comparative Study of Practice and Theory*, Washington 1978, p. 14; David B. Magleby, *Direct Legislation. Voting on Ballot Propositions in the United States*, Baltimore and London 1984, p. 33; Karsten Bugiel, *Das Institut der Volksabstimmung im modernen Verfassungsstaat. Zur Verfassungslage und Rechtspraxis bürgerlicher Sachentscheidungsrechte*, in: *Zeitschrift für Parlamentsfragen*, Jahrgang 18 (1987), Heft 3, p. 418.

Most ballot-issues were concerned with constitutional matters, in particular the constitutional machinery and the electoral system. Liechtenstein and Australia were predominantly concerned with "pragmatic matters" ranging from construction and taxes to hunting (Liechtenstein) and from economic to financial matters (Australia).

Categorizing initiatives according to Lee⁷ is more appropriate for Switzerland and California, as can be seen in table 4.

Table 4: Initiatives in California (voted by end of 1990) and in Switzerland (qualified for ballot by end of 1989) by subject

| Subject | California (by end of 1990) | | Switzerland (by end of 1989) | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------|------------------------------------|------|
| | number | % | number | % |
| Governmental and political process | 51 | 22.6 | 27 | 15.2 |
| Public morality | 42 | 18.6 | 9 | 5.1 |
| Financial matters | 39 | 17.3 | 15 | 8.4 |
| Economy | 34 | 15.0 | 28 | 15.7 |
| Health, welfare* | 27 | 11.9 | 44 | 24.7 |
| Civil rights | 12 | 5.3 | | |
| Environment and transport | 16 | 7.1 | 32 | 17.9 |
| Education and culture | 5 | 2.2 | 8 | 4.5 |
| Defense | | | 13 | 7.3 |
| Other | | | 2 | 1.1 |
| Total | 226 | | 178 | |

* includes liquor, gambling, racing for California

The subjects taken to the ballot by means of the initiative mirror the great controversial issues of society. After the reforms of the Progressives it was constitutional questions and

⁷ Eugene C. Lee, California, in: Butler/Ranney (footnote 6), p. 95.

matters of public morality that dominated Californian politics up to the twenties. In the thirties it was economic as well as social questions that were raised by means of numerous initiatives in Switzerland as well as in California. In post-war Switzerland many initiatives were concerned with social insurance.

Since the seventies new subjects have been put on the political agenda by initiatives, in particular the environment, nuclear energy and transport. In just one year (1990) 7 out of 18 Californian initiatives were related to environmental questions.

4 Functions of Direct Democracy

4.1 General Remarks

"...the whole political machinery runs differently if there is an opposition or a constitutional court or the possibility to submit a question to the people"⁶. Direct democracy is an important structural element within the political system. If the initiative is there it can function as a lever to change other structural elements of the system. It is admittedly difficult to make general statements, valid for all states, about the functions of initiative and referendum. The actual consequences of direct democracy for the structure of a political system and for the political process vary considerably according to the political situation, the institutional framework, the political culture and the political actors. There is no "theory" of direct democracy. Almost every popular vote has its own history. It is only in Switzerland, in roughly half of the states of the U.S. and in Liechtenstein that direct democracy with initiative and referendum is part of everyday political life, whereas issue-

⁶ Otmar Jung, Direkte Demokratie: Forschungsstand und -aufgaben, in: Zeitschrift für Parlamentsfragen, Heft 3/90, p. 496.

related votes are extraordinary political events in other states. If according to common judgement direct democracy functions satisfactorily in Switzerland and in the U.S. that does not mean that it would have to do so if introduced to other states.

The functions of direct democracy can be analyzed with respect to the structure, processes and contents of politics. That can be done on a macro-, meso- or micro-level, i.e. on the level of the system as a whole, on the level of the intermediate range of state and citizen and on the level of the individual citizen. The present analysis limits itself to approaching the functions on a macro-level. To exemplify this, it will focus on the governmental system and the political system's capacity for innovation.

4.1 Direct Democracy and Governmental System

Is direct democracy compatible with a parliamentary system of government, i.e. with a system in which parliament can overthrow the government or the government can dissolve parliament? There is widespread agreement that direct democracy is not compatible with a parliamentary system of government. The Weimar Republic is often used as a most frightening case in point. It was some time before its fall that Maurice Battelli wrote: "One can foresee, however, that direct democracy combined with the parliamentary system will result in a precarious political stability. The right of referendum and initiative originates in states where the different state authorities are not directly responsible to each other and it does not appear that these rights can continue to exist in a parliamentary system without serious grievances."⁹

It is true that in a parliamentary democracy government, parliamentary groups, parties and voters find themselves in a

⁹ Maurice Battelli, *Les institutions de la démocratie directe en droit Suisse et en droit comparé moderne*, thèse Genève, Paris 1932, p. 106.

different situation of decision-making compared to nonparliamentary democracies such as Switzerland or California where the government cannot be overthrown. In a parliamentary democracy, particularly in a majoritarian political system, where power is concentrated in the hands of the parliamentary majority¹⁰, party and group discipline has to go beyond parliament and extend itself to the conduct towards issue-related popular votes if the government is not to be jeopardized. It is then no longer the actual ballot issue which stands in the foreground but the vote of confidence in the government or the head of state. The vote thus becomes a substitute for general elections, the ballot campaign becomes an electioneering campaign in which apart from the parties there are hardly any other actors. If party-affinities are strong, the result of the ballot will reflect the balance of power between the parties. As to the fate of the government, the ballot result has an effect similar to a vote of confidence in parliament: for the government, a lost issue-related ballot can be a reason to resign.

It is in Australia's majoritarian system that the constitutional referendum has become the focus of conflict in the competition between the parties. Issue-related votes, if not coincident with general elections, are often used for a half-term election campaign by the opposition parties. There is a high correlation between the way people vote in elections and in issue-related votes. It is only in the case of a unanimous support of the two big parties that an issue stands a chance in a popular vote. "On the whole, the Australian experience seems to mirror the negative sides of referendum democracy."¹¹ The constitutional referendums in Ireland that have also to be seen in the context of a majoritarian parliamentary system.

¹⁰ See Arend Lijphart, *Democratic Political Systems: Types, Cases, Causes, and Consequences*, in: *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, Volume 1, Number 1, January 1989, p. 33 - 48.

¹¹ Robert Schediwy, *Empirische Politik. Chancen und Grenzen einer demokratischeren Gesellschaft*, Wien 1980, p. 132.

In France's presidential democracy the outcome of a plebiscite is linked very closely with the state president's fate or prestige. De Gaulle's plebiscites were always considered votes of confidence in his person¹²; when, on the 27th. April 1969, he lost a plebiscite, he immediately resigned.

Italy's parliamentary democracy is a much less majoritarian system than Australia's, but the result of an issue-related vote is not without influence on the government's position. The Italian system of government, which in 1990 was a five party coalition government under the dominance of the Democrazia Cristiana, does not owe its instability to the "referendum abrogativo". That in itself promotes neither stability nor instability. It is just another tactical instrument in the competition between the parties, another option for the parties to bring their demands to realization. The government's existence was sometimes directly related to the outcome of popular referendums, such as in the 1985 referendum on the "scala mobile" (the automatic adjustment of wages to the rate of inflation) when Prime Minister Craxi had announced that he would resign immediately in case of a defeat. It was also on the 8th. November 1987, when Italy went to the ballot on five referendums that Craxi, no longer Prime Minister, felt himself to be the winner in the fight against the "nuclear state". He liked to foster the coalition government and the "referendum front" at the same time. "The Italian experience has not proved direct and representative democracy to be incompatible" says Michèle Guillaume-Hofnung¹³. Italy's practice, however, has not yet been long enough to allow for a general assessment.

It has to be admitted that in a nonparliamentary democracy, too, party loyalty plays an important role for the way in which people vote. But the voter can concentrate on deciding an issue and is

¹² See Wolfgang Schröder, *De Gaulle und die direkte Demokratie*, Köln 1969.

¹³ Michèle Guillaume-Hofnung, *Le Référendum, Que sais-je?* No 2329, Paris 1987, p. 108.

not compelled to include in that decision the question of whether to support or to overthrow the government. Absolute group or party discipline is not necessary in that case. On the contrary, there are temporary formations of ballot coalitions between representatives of different parties. Apart from the parties, further actors enter the arena of the ballot campaign: lobbies of any kind, grassroots movements and non-profit organizations. The outcome of the vote has no influence on confidence or lack thereof in the government. It must be admitted, though, that in this way the importance of elections is reduced.¹⁴

Theory and practice in Switzerland, in Liechtenstein and in the U.S. is based on the assumption that the outcome of the vote is not supposed to have an influence on the fate of the government. The same applies to Denmark, whose governmental system, although parliamentary, is based on consensus.¹⁵ In the Swiss federation as well as in many cantons, direct democracy has accelerated the transformation of a majoritarian to a consensus democracy. The so called Swiss "concordance governments" (Konkordanzregierungen) are not only but also a consequence of direct democracy. In the U.S., on member state level, parties do not play an important role in the direct democratic process. In California the government does not owe its existence to parliament because it has been elected by the people. It appears that in Liechtenstein there is a closer interrelation between behavior in issue-related votes and in elections. The position of the coalition government, however, is not questioned by the outcome of the vote. In Switzerland, in the U.S. and in Liechtenstein the non-parliamentary system of government allows the parties to be represented in the government and at the same time to play the role of the opposition by using direct democratic devices.

¹⁴ In a non-parliamentary democracy the position of those elected is stronger through the fact that during a term of office a recall is not possible. It is weakened on the other hand by direct democratic instruments such as initiative or referendum.

¹⁵ Kenneth E. Miller, *Policy-Making by Referendum: The Danish Experience*, in: *West European Politics*, Vol. 5, Number 1, January 1982, p. 63.

4.2 Direct Democracy and a Political System's Capacity for Innovation

It is usually one of the first questions that the political actors ask in the discussion about direct democracy: "What use is this instrument to my policies?" Conservatives hope for effects of conservation, progressives for effects of change. The discussion as to whether direct democracy favors or rather impedes political change is old and pops up regularly and particularly within the ranks of left-wing political movements. It is exactly the forces which are willing to change that are confronted with the dilemma of giving the people more rights on the one hand and not impeding progressive developments on the other hand. Members of the radical left in the Federal Republic of Germany have warned against issue-related ballots. These would make it plain to see, thus the argument run, that the left had no majority. "It was exactly through direct democracy that a widespread identification between the people and the state would be attained. Therefore, the left could only demand a referendum if it was certain that that would never take place."¹⁶

Initiatives have signaling and articulating functions. They point out political problems and fields where action should be taken. They allow groups outside political decision-making to articulate an issue in public and to bring about a people's decision against the will of the state authorities. By means of the initiative political processes of decision can be set going but political decisions can also be reversed. In Switzerland it is the initiative which adds some momentum to an otherwise rather inert political system. In the political system of Liechtenstein, a miniature state, the initiative is an element which favors political change. In Liechtenstein's homogenous society there is an abundance of concordance constraints and an underdeveloped

¹⁶ Claus-Henning Obst, Chancen direkter Demokratie in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Zulässigkeit und politische Konsequenzen, Diss. Giessen, Köln 1986, p. 17.

capability to carry out conflicts openly. Direct democracy is an element of competition in a society which is very much centered on concordance.¹⁷

It seems that, although suited for articulation, direct democracy is not suited for carrying into effect demands for innovation. Thanks to direct democratic possibilities the "input" into the political system is increased. The flow through the political system, however, runs against additional obstacles. Direct democratic processes are difficult to control. Their outcome is often uncertain.

It would be a short cut to use only the results of the ballots as indicators for the innovative effects of initiatives. Looking at Switzerland from this point of view, we would come to the premature conclusion that direct democracy has a conservative effect: only one initiative out of ten has been accepted by the people since 1891. Initiatives have not only direct but also indirect effects, and that holds for the time before as well as after the vote. "In fact, many new ideas have reached the public agenda through the ballot, and even when defeated, have often opened up discussion that led to later adoption of part or all of some proposals."¹⁸ Rejected and withdrawn initiatives as well as those which failed to qualify for ballot are not without function. In three out of four cases, the Swiss government and parliament reacted with concessions to those who launched the initiatives. Those concessions were usually changes. In California an initiative's chances of success are roughly three times as high as in Switzerland. It must be added though that the indirect effects are not as important since it is not possible to withdraw an initiative before going to the ballot and thus

¹⁷ Michael Ritter, *Besonderheiten der direkten Demokratie Liechtenstein im Vergleich zur Schweiz*, in: *Liechtensteinische Juristen-Zeitung*, 11. Jahrgang, Heft 1, March 1990, p. 8.

¹⁸ Betty H. Zisk, *Money, Media, and the Grass Roots. State Ballot Issues and the Electoral Process*, Newbury Park 1987, p. 266.

find a compromise. If we categorize those 178 initiatives which qualified for ballot in Switzerland by the end of 1989 according to their political direction, we find that 125 stood for innovation, 32 for conservation or reversion (21 cannot be classified). According to a categorization by David Schmidt, 74 out of 199 initiatives voted on in the U.S. between 1977 and 1984 were of a conservative, 79 of a progressive tendency. With 45 and 44 initiatives accepted the rate of success in the two categories was almost the same.

In Switzerland as well as in California, initiative and referendum strengthen the link between the political system and society. The initiative tends to be innovative and dynamic in its effect, the referendum conservative and decelerating. The high ratio of success of almost sixty percent in the case of mandatory referendums in Switzerland and in California does not prove that it would be an easy thing to bring about constitutional changes. It rather points to the fact that before the vote good field work has been done which has reduced opposition.

"The referendum favors the legal and constitutional status quo and renders innovation difficult."¹⁹ Indeed, constitutional changes require widespread support to stand a chance in a popular vote. In Switzerland, the mandatory constitutional referendum has a conservative effect. The optional statutory referendum is even "prophylactically" conservative²⁰. It may be argued that the optional referendum in Switzerland is most successful when it is not used, because this shows that it has been possible to include into the compromise all groups strong enough to launch a referendum. This again is possible only when the consensus

¹⁹ René A. Rhinow, Grundprobleme der schweizerischen Demokratie, in: Zeitschrift für Schweizerisches Recht, N.F., Bd. 103, 1984, II. Halbband, p. 234.

²⁰ As Hans Werder (Die Bedeutung der Volksinitiative in der Nachkriegszeit, Bern 1978, p. 48) puts it: "The defensive character of the referendum results in a handicap for all those groups which aspire to change the status quo and which would like to see the state politically active."

reflects the lowest common denominator, which excludes greater reforms.

In Switzerland, a number of innovations were delayed by decades on account of the referendum, and some were even made impossible, such as further elaboration of the welfare state, female suffrage or the decision to join the United Nations. The classical example of the decelerating effect of the referendum is the fact that all efforts for a total revision of the constitution have been in vain so far, although that project was started more than twenty years ago.

Just as in Switzerland and in California, experiences concerning the capacity for innovation are ambiguous in other states, too. In France, plebiscites facilitated the solution of the Algerian question. In Italy, the referendum has supplied statutes concerning divorce and abortion with the necessary legitimation. In Ireland, the illegality of divorce and abortion was confirmed by means of the referendum. In Australia, the constitutional referendum has led to a stalemate for almost all projects of revision. In Liechtenstein, female suffrage was rejected in 1968, 1971 and 1973 before it was accepted in 1984 with a majority of 51.3 percent.

To round off our study, we can draw the following conclusion: there can be no generalization as to whether direct democracy favors conservative or reformist political forces. Thus, we will continue to find actors with little influence on the decision-making process demanding more direct democracy. They will continue their attempt to reach their goals with direct democracy devices.