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.

Keywords: De-Democratization, Democracy Ranking, Democratization, Equality, Freedom, Phases of Democratic Development, Quality of Democracy, Quintuple Helix Model, Restriction of Freedom, Sustainable Development

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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 Figure 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 qual-

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Figure 1. The top 20 of the democracy ranking 2009

![The top 20 of the democracy ranking 2009](image)

Source: Vienna Democracy Ranking Association (2009)