

Assessing the Democratic Quality of Policy Processes with APES: The Actor-Process-Event Scheme

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Abstract

In recent years, scholars have developed frameworks for assessing the quality of democracy, focusing either on the mode of democratic institutions or on the level of development of modern democracies. Less emphasis has been placed on policy processes, even though how public policies are formulated, decided, and implemented highly emblemizes the relationship between government and civil society. In our paper, we introduce an analytic tool for an assessment of the democratic quality of policy processes – the Actor-Process-Event Scheme (APES). The paper is composed of two parts: First, we present APES, a web-based software tool that allows to harness qualitative case study data for a systematic comparative assessment of policy processes. APES provides a user-friendly tool for data recording, graphical presentation and estimating quantitative analytical measures. Second, we apply APES to existing case study research on policy processes. The assessment of these processes is based on well-defined criteria and consistent with political science research on the practice and activities of the modern state. This branch of research argues that there has been a change over the last decades from the interventionist government to the negotiating or even cooperative government.

Keywords: *Decision-making process, policy network, social network analysis, quality of democracy, Swiss foreign and domestic policy*

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1 Introduction¹

In this paper we try to overcome the difficulties for political scientists usually applying a narrative, process-oriented case study approach to integrate the concept of policy networks as one variable among others to a set of hypotheses. Over the last two decades the concept of policy networks has gained of both importance and acceptance in political science. For empirical research geared towards hypotheses testing, however, one has to combine the concept of policy networks with middle-range theories of the state and public policy-making. From an analytical point of view, we think that the concept of policy network is important for comparative political science research, such as the research on quality of democracy, and that policy networks should be treated as a variable in a theoretical model on political processes. Moreover, Social Network Analysis (SNA), as a quantitative method, can and should be applied more often in order to produce data useful for comparative analysis such as Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA, see Ragin 1998).

For this purpose, we propose that out of well documented case studies about the political process one can develop the structural configuration of political actors in the sense of a policy network by applying some rather simple transformations to an Actor-Process-Event Scheme (APES). Through the obtained data not only conclusions on the structure of a single policy process can be drawn, but the assessment of the democratic quality of policy processes on a comparative basis becomes possible.

2 The Actor-Process-Event Scheme (APES)²

We assume that it is possible to derive a structure – understood as relations between nodes – from process. Every process understood as a sequence of linked events contains the information necessary to derive an underlying structure. In SNA there are many applications based on this idea under the name of *affiliation networks* or *actor-event networks* (Wasserman/Faust 1995: 291ff.; Jansen 2003: 102). For our purposes, we propose that participation of political actors in an event of the decision-making process on one hand and process links connecting these events on the other hand are sufficient indicators in order to operationalize the structure of a decision-making process in the sense of a policy network. In more practical terms, it becomes necessary to systematically extract information on a) political actors, b) process links, and c) events from a case study about a decision-making process.

By agreeing in advance on the events of a decision-making procedure (defined by institutional characteristics and the rules of the political system under study) and the political actors or groups of political actors (such as: the President, the executive, public administration, interest organizations etc.), a descriptive case study can be transformed into an APES in which the political actors interact by a) event participation and b) procedural (institutional) linkages.

¹ A first version of this paper has been presented at the Social Network Analysis Forum, Oxford University, UK, 16-17 July 2005.

² The Actor-Process-Event Scheme in its current version was developed within the NRP42 research project and is also based on work of team members Ulrich Klöti (1984), Thomas Widmer, as well as previous research within other projects, especially see Buser (1984).

2.1 *APES Components: Actor Dimension*

APES is a graphical interface linking the participating actors with the chronological sequences of the decision-making process. It runs within a two-dimensional space, spanned by an axis with the involved governmental and non-governmental actors on the vertical reference line and a timeline in the horizontal that separates the policy process into different stages and events.

In the *actor dimension*, the scheme's focus is on corporate actors (Coleman 1974), which are distinguished along political hierarchy levels and organizational distinctive features. According to our data on both domestic and foreign policy decision-making processes, there are – on the top level – the international actors. Domestic actors are placed on the subordinate levels, subdivided in national governmental agencies, parliament and parliamentary committees, governmental actors from hierarchically subsidiary jurisdictions, and domestic non-governmental bodies. APES indicates actors participating in a specific event of the policy process with a black bullet (●). According to our definition, an actor's involvement in a specific event is given if at least one representative of this specific actor is directly taking part in the specific event under consideration. Actors that are participating together in an event are linked (symbolized as: ●—●). Finally, a dashed line (----) symbolizes the course of the policy process. The dashed line links the actors in charge (indicated by a triangle ▲) with the topic of the policy process (the political program/measure or the dossier on a specific policy problem) on the occasion of the specific events of the policy process.

2.2 *APES Components: Process Dimension*

In the *process dimension*, the scheme is based in principle on the concept of the “policy cycle” (see Howlett and Ramesh 1995: 9-15), in that the scheme deals either with the outflow of a complete policy cycle or with one or more specific stages of the policy cycle of a political program or problem. To simplify matters, our analysis in this paper is phase focused, in that it concentrates on policy formulation and decision-making (i.e. decision-making in the broader sense, in delimitation to policy implementation). In spite of entitled criticism on this “stage heuristic” and the limits of its application (Sabatier 1999: 6-7), the concept serves here a useful purpose by dividing the very complex policy process into discrete stages (see also Parsons 1995: 79-81). Nevertheless, we have to concretize these stages and adjust them to empirically observable events in order to generate a scheme of the policy process under investigation.

2.3 *APES Components: Event Dimension*

The definition and selection of the *crucial events* within the policy process depends on the one hand on parameters of the political system and on the other hand on specific characteristics of the policy process under investigation. Thereby, a “thick description” of a policy process, as we generally find in case studies (Yin 1994; 1993), is the source material of APES. The thick description is a detailed narration of the incidents within and around the defined crucial events of the policy process, with particular attention to the involvement and non-involvement of governmental and non-governmental actors.

Taking into account the domestic and international dimension of the decision-making processes, the following process events are crucial for our analysis of decision-making processes in Swiss foreign and domestic policy:³

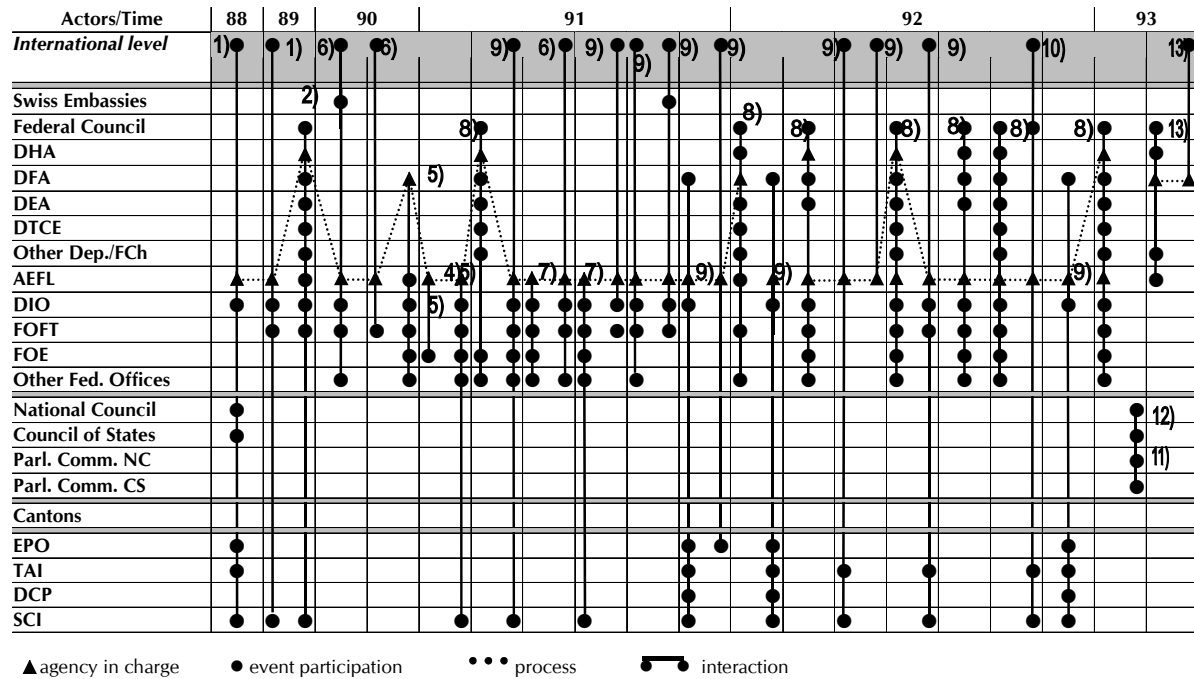
³ In Switzerland, usually an expert group from the federal administration prepares draft legislation which is then presented to the different federal departments for comment. The text is passed to the Federal Council, which in turn engages in a consultation process with the public, including political parties and cantonal authorities.

- 1) *inner-administrative preliminary investigations*, defined as preparatory work within the administration, before a first draft of a political program/measure or a statement on a policy problem is available;
- 2) *development of preliminary draft*, defined as assessment of results of inner-administrative preliminary investigations, leading to a first draft of a political program/measure or policy statement;
- 3) *consultations outside the administration*, defined as inclusion of actors from outside the public administration in the process of discussing/developing an appropriate political program/measure;
- 4) *consultations within the administration*, defined as inclusion of other actors from inside the public administration (besides the agency in charge) in the process of discussing/developing an appropriate political program/measure;
- 5) *international negotiations*, defined as process in which authorized negotiators bargain with international partners;
- 6) *consultations between departments/ministries and proposal to the government*, defined as the submission of an elaborated proposal for a political program/measures from the department/ministry in charge with the dossier to other departments/ministries (“Mitberichtsverfahren”) and the deciding governmental authority (in Switzerland normally the Federal Council);
- 7) *decision of the government (Federal Council)*, defined as authoritative decision of the responsible governmental body (in Switzerland normally the Federal Council), normally based on a proposal of the department in charge and the results from the consultations between other departments, on a) negotiation positions, b) signing, c) adoption of a message to the parliament, or d) ratification;
- 8) *initialization of an international treaty*, defined as event on the international political level on the occasion of the termination of the international negotiations (on a technical level);
- 9) *signing of an international treaty*, defined as event on the international political level on the occasion of the fixation of the subject terms of the international treaty;
- 10) *session of the parliamentary committees*, defined as phase in which the responsible parliamentary committee(s) debate and decide on the proposed program/measure;
- 11) *parliamentary session*, defined as debate and decision-making on the proposed program/measure in the parliamentary plenum;
- 12) *ratification of an international treaty*, defined as event on the international political level on the occasion of the proclamation of the definitive volition according to international law.

Every proposition or bill destined to become federal law has to be approved by a relative majority in both chambers of parliament. In general, laws may be challenged by the people if 50'000 signatures to this effect are collected (obligatory referendum in the case of an amendment to the constitution); the question is then settled through a national referendum (see Linder 1994; Klöti 1984). Analyzing decision-making processes on foreign policy issues, specific events on the international political level have to be taken into account, too (Spinner 1977).

For illustration, Figure 1 shows the APES of the decision making of the Swiss ratification of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in 1992 (Rio Convention).

Figure 1: Actor-Process-Event Scheme of the Swiss ratification of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change 1992



Events (combined):

- 1) Request for political problem solving
- 2) Inner-administrative preliminary investigations on political problem
- 4) Societal consultations on drafted proposal of political program
- 5) Inner-administrative consultations on draft of proposal of political program
- 6) International negotiations
- 7) Inner-administrative consultations on elaborated proposal of political program
- 8) Decision of the government (federal council)
- 9) Initialization and negotiations of an international treaty
- 10) Signing of international treaty
- 11) Session of parliamentary committees
- 12) Parliamentary session
- 13) Ratification of international treaty

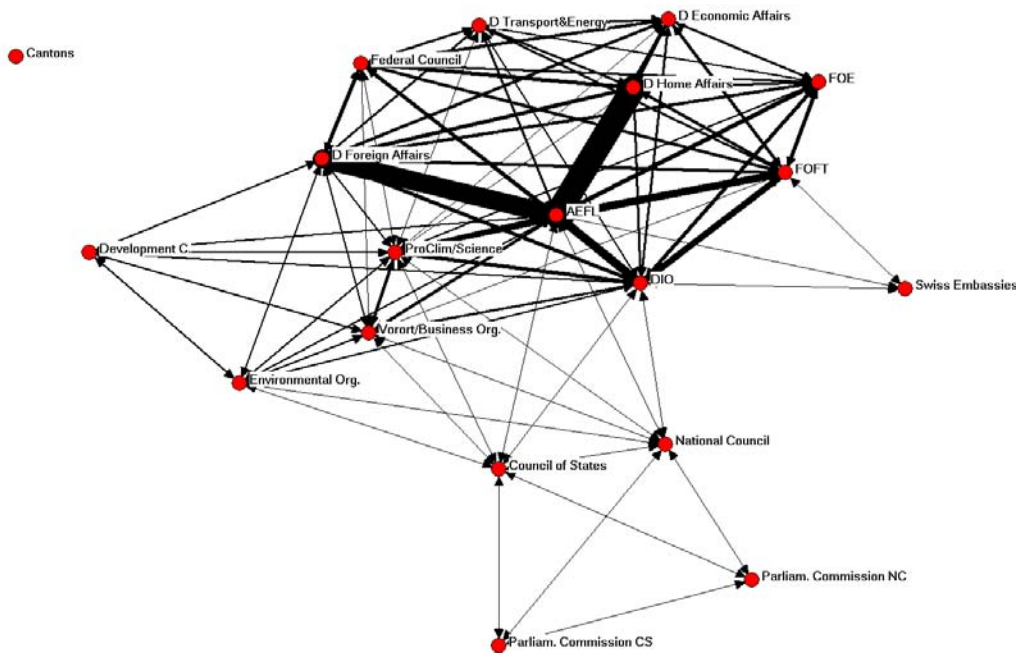
The **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)** was signed at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992 and came into force on 21 March 1994, after 50 states (among them Switzerland) have ratified the international agreement. In Switzerland, an intensive inner-administrative negotiation process on the country's position towards international climate policy has preceded the ratification of the UNFCCC. The agencies in charge with the dossier (mainly the Agency for the Environment, Forests and Landscape and the Directorate for International Organizations in the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs) have consulted from time to time representatives from the civil society, but only scientific circles (ProClim) have been incorporated continuously in the decision-making process.

2.4 From Actor-Process-Event-Scheme to Policy Network

After having established the APES as an intermediate step to gather the information we need out of the descriptive case study, we can prepare the next stage of the transformation from procedural to structural data. The APES serves us to create two distinct data matrices: matrix a) containing data about event participation (two mode actor-event matrix) and matrix b) containing data about the procedural links between political actors (one mode actor-actor matrix). For data entry and transformations we use UCINET 6.64 for Windows (Borgatti et al. 2002).

This whole transformation assumes that there was interaction between all actors participating in an event. We are aware that this is a rather problematic assumption given that event participation does not necessarily lead to interaction with all actors. However, we hold that the resulting matrix a) serves as a good approximation in order to reflect one important aspect of the policy network concept. As an illustration of the result of this transformation, the policy network of the Swiss ratification of the UN Framework on Climate Change in Figure 2 visualizes the strong interaction between the agency in charge (Agency for the Environment, Forests and Landscape) and the two mainly involved Federal Departments (of Foreign and Home Affairs) in the core of the network. The Federal Council is rather in the periphery of the policy network, as well as the parliament and organizations of the civil society are. Thus, the policy network illustrates the inner-administrative character of the analyzed decision-making process in an adequate fashion. From our detailed knowledge about this case study we can claim face validity for the obtained network. Once the final data matrix is established we can compute standard SNA measures such as the density of the network or degree centralities for all actors

Figure 2: Network for the Swiss ratification process of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change 1992 (valued graphs)



3 Assessing the Quality of Democracy

The quality of democracy is a normative concept that is all the more controversial. “Who is to define what constitutes a ‘good’ democracy, and to what extent is a universal conception of democratic quality possible?” (Diamond/Morlino 2005: ix). In this context, the major question is whether the assessment of democracy shall only have analytic purpose, or if a more normative colored analysis of democracy should be applied. To provide a more or less neutral assessment of the quality of democracy (in contrary to a value-lead assessment), we suggest not to interpret democracy as a question of “all-or-nothing”, but rather understand the concept in terms of degree. However, it should be taken into consideration that “democracy in practice often requires tradeoffs between ‘goods’,” as Beetham points out (2005:37). A valid benchmark therefore should not only enable us to identify such tradeoffs, but should also analyze on their consequences.

The difficulty of developing an appropriate benchmark lies first of all in the definition of the concept of democracy itself. There are myriads of definitions found in the literature, which stand in competition with each other. As a basic definition, democracy can be understood as a political concept comprising “(...) collectively binding decisions about the rules and policies of a group, association or society” (Beetham 1994:28), or as Dahl puts it “(...) democracy is the continuing responsiveness of the government to the preferences of its citizens, considered as political equals” (Dahl 1971:1). For as many definitions of the concept of democracy exist, the many models of what a “good” democracy constitutes have been developed. Beetham for instance reduces his model to a quadripartite pyramid, which he calls the ‘democratic pyramid’ (see Beetham 1994). In his model, a democratic society is given, if there are free and fair elections, an open and accountable government, as well as civil and political rights. Dahl, on the contrary focuses on two dimensions: contestation and participation. In the consequence, he develops a four-folded chart confronting the national regime with sub national organizations. Within this model, the contestation and participation can either be high or low for both, national regime or sub national organizations (Dahl 1971:13-14). Dahl however, uses his chart not (only) to assess democracy, but predominantly to categorize national regimes into four different categories reaching from “liberalized” to “fully hegemonic”.

3.1 *Dimensions of Democratic Quality*

In this context, Diamond/Morlino suggest a convincing assessment-framework for the quality of democracy, consisting of nine “procedural” and “substantive” dimensions (Diamond/Morlino 2005). The impressive feature of this model is the integrity, in which the concept of democracy is drafted, without being confining. In their framework, the *procedural dimensions* comprehend the following five conceptions:

- The rule of law

The rule of law implies that the law is clear in its understanding, publicly known, stable, and non-retroactive. Of course, the rule of law can only be evaluated as “good”, or in more analytical terms, as liberal, if all citizens are equal before the law, and if there is an independent judiciary (see O’Donnell 2005).

- Participation

One of the basic assumptions of democracy is the participation of citizens in the decisional process of public policy. No regime can refer to democratic standards unless it grants its individuals the right of political participation, including suffrage. As

Diamond/Morlino stress, the concept of participation is strongly linked with political equality (2005: xvi). The political process must be open to all groups of society, and not only to the elite. With regard to less developed countries, this implies also a broad diffusion of basic education, including knowledge of the political system and democratic rights (Diamond/Morlino 2005: xvi).

- Competition

A political system is to offer regular, free and fair electoral competition including distinct parties. Competition however can be constrained by partisan control of the electoral administration (Diamond/Morlino 2005: xviii), or more generally speaking, by political elites that represent “(...) the driving force in the process of the citizens’ opinion formation”, (Kriesi 2005:10) not only in elections, but as well as in direct-democratic campaigns, where applicable (i.e., Switzerland).

- Vertical accountability

According to the authors of this framework, accountability can either be vertical or horizontal. In those terms, vertical accountability implies the obligation of the elected political actors to inform the citizen-electors about their political decisions, as well as to take responsibility for their doings. As Schmitter points out, citizens usually have to rely on intermediate actors for information retrieval, since a direct relationship between citizens and elected political actors usually does not exist. Therefore “a competitive set of representatives” links the two arenas (appointed rulers and citizens) with each other (Schmitter 2005:18). Of course, participation and political competition are important preconditions for a “good” vertical accountability. If citizens want to express their approval or disapproval with the incumbent through elections, the possibility of participation in the political process, as well as a free and fair partisan competition are indispensable.

- Horizontal accountability

As the name suggests, horizontal accountability refers to the obligation of appointed rulers, to answer to other institutional actors, understood as political equals (Diamond/Morlino 2005: xxi). The political equals that scrutinize those who governs, are for instance parliamentary commissions, the oppositional forces within the parliament, and of course judiciary agencies, most notably the constitutional court.

In their framework, Diamond/Morlino also define two *substantive dimensions* that are to be understood as the cornerstones of a democratic system. Without them, procedural dimensions could not be realized in a proper way:

- Freedom

With reference to Dahl (1971:3), there are three different kinds of rights: political, civil, and socioeconomic rights. From a political point of view, each citizen should have the right to vote, to form and join organizations, to stand for office or to campaign. These rights are strongly linked with political participation and competition, and produces vertical accountability as an output. The civil rights, even though they overlap with the political and socioeconomic rights, focus on the personal liberty of an individual (Beetham 1994:29). This includes the freedom of thoughts, expression and information, as well as the freedom of religion and the right to due process. The socioeconomic rights ensure the right to private property, and all rights associated with employment.

- Equality

A democratic system should warrant that every citizen holds the same rights and legal protections, and has access to justice and power (Diamond/Morlino 2005: xxvii). Of course, the claim of equality entails the negation of discrimination based on gender, race, religion, political orientation, and others. Again one can state that a substantial degree of (political) equality engenders other conditions as accountability, participation, and of course freedom. As Reuschmeier emphasizes, political equality however is an analytical ideal, which is difficult to implement and to perfectly achieve in reality (Reuschmeier 2005:47). Individuals with higher education and larger (economic) resources will inevitably gather more power to articulate preferences, support their choice of political leaders, and shape public debate (Reuschmeier 2005:53-58).

Finally, Diamond/Morlino allude to the *dimension of responsiveness*, which is defined as the government responsiveness to demands, expectations, and needs of its citizens (2005: xxix-xxx). The democratic responsiveness can be seen as the linkage between procedural and substantial dimensions of democracy. If freedom and equality exist, and if procedural dimensions like the rule of law, participation, competition, and accountability are given, the political process can be labeled as responsive. When a political system induces responsive policies on a regular basis, the democracy can be considered as of high quality (Bingham Powell Jr. 2005:62).

3.2 Methodological Challenges

The above depicted models or frameworks are very rich in their analytical funding and most promising for further research. Nonetheless, the empirical analysis, which is needed in order to audit the theoretical frameworks, confronts the researcher with some methodological problems, while applying these models. One important challenge lies in the operationalization of the theoretical concepts. How can the concept of participation or accountability be measured in an empirically valid way, when there is not even a generally accepted definition of democracy?

Additionally, a disaccord within the scientific community can be stated, whether the quality of democracy should be assessed by quantitative or qualitative methods.⁴ Both strategies however, have to deal with the same constraints: the unavailability of data. Even when data from public-opinion surveys are available for the countries to be compared, most certainly the surveys do not employ precisely the same questions to measure the underlying concept. The comparison of democracies therefore becomes difficult if not even impossible in certain cases. What is strongly needed, is a standardization not only in the collection of data, but as well as in the analysis of it. In the meantime, what could attenuate the methodological discrepancies is a combined proceeding using both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Within those discrepancies, we do see a possible use for APES, first of all by delivering certain standardization for a comparative approach to the assessment of democracy, as well as by closing the gap between qualitative and quantitative research. As mentioned above, APES does standardize qualitative case study data by visualizing public policy processes within a particular political system. By doing so, it gets not only possible to compare different cases on

⁴ The most prominent frameworks within the measurement of quality of democracy are usually of quantitative character (e.g., *Freedom House Index*; established as comparative survey of freedom by Raymond D. Gastil and published continuously as *The comparative survey of freedom*, 1975-1989, Boston: G. K. Hall. The index is based on a intuitive rating system of level of democracy, defined by the traditional understanding of political rights and civil liberties of Western democracies).

a more generalized level, but qualitative data can be converted into quantitative data, and used for further research. Since APES most of all focuses on procedural and structural aspects of a policy process, not all of the above mentioned concepts of democracy can be measured with APES tool. However, we see several links to the nine-dimensional model of Diamond and Morlino, or to their procedural dimensions, to be more precisely: When analyzing political processes one can deduce aspects of the *rule of law* (what are the legal procedures of the political system under investigation, and to what extent are they integrated and observable within policy processes), the *participation* (how open is the political system to non-governmental actors), the *competition* (are there only the elites, that shape public policy, or is a broad discourse being led), the *vertical accountability* (does the government answer to intermediate actors about its decisions), and the *horizontal accountability* (to what extent do other governmental actors “control” the ruling elite). Of course, not all theoretical concepts can be measured by APES in an empirically valid way, since APES most certainly is not an all-embracing measuring tool for the assessment of quality of democracy. However, we think that our application could be seen as enrichment for the quality of democracy research, since standardization and therefore comparison of decision-making processes become possible with APES.

4 Assessing the Democratic Quality of Policy Processes

As a very brief outline of how APES could be applied in terms of benchmarking the democratic quality of policy processes shall be presented. By focusing on the concept of *participation* of the above mentioned model of democracy, we have compared our cases with regard to the involvement of societal actors within a policy process. Our basic assumption is, the more societal actors are involved in a decision-making process, the more open the political system and the broader the possibilities of participation for its citizens. A high participation of societal actors within the policy process will therefore work as an indicator for high participation standards (of course, a conclusion from a high participation standard to the entire concept of quality of democracy would be empirically unrealistic and wrong).

As indicators for measuring participation in a policy process we choose a set of key figures that are derived either from the APES table itself, or from APES data that has been converted into network data (see chapter 2.4 above):

APES indicator:

- *Active event-participation of an actor during the policy process*

By measuring the active event-participation of an actor, conclusions on the status of each actor can be made. The greater the number of societal actors that are often actively involved into the policy process, the more open the policy process and therefore, the lower the access bounds for societal actors to enter the process. Of course, there are differences between the societal actors themselves. It has to be assumed that employer’s associations and to a certain extend unions have less constrains to overcome in order to enter a policy process than other, less organized societal actors, such as environmental organizations.

Network indicator (derived from APES data):

- *relative degree centrality per actor category*

Within SNA, centrality is a measure for the most integrated and therefore most important actor in a social network. The simplest definition of centrality is based on the assumption that the most central actors have to be also the most active ones, or

rather speaking in terms of SNA, they are the actors with the most ties to other actors in the network. The centrality therefore is measured as degree (Wasserman/Faust 1995:176).

4.1 Case Study Data

The case studies that we are using, stem from our own case study work over the last few years and from master theses, applying APES (Hirschi 2000, Vögeli 2003, Klöti et al. 2005, Soland 2005, Valero 2005). The following case studies are taken into investigation (cases no. 1-10 are decision-making processes on either bilateral or multilateral international treaties, whereas cases no. 11-13 are policy processes on a domestic issue; *marked in grey within Table 1*)⁵:

1. *DBA*; Double Taxation Agreement between Switzerland and Ivory Coast, 1990.
2. *ISA-G*; Investment Protection Agreement between Switzerland and Ghana, 1991.
3. *ISA-A*; Investment Protection Agreement between Switzerland and Argentina, 1992.
4. *ISA-N*; Investment Protection Agreement between Switzerland and Nicaragua, 2000.
5. *KLIMA*; Swiss ratification of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, 1992.
6. *LVA*; Air Traffic Agreement between Switzerland and Zimbabwe, 1993.
7. *TRANSIT*; Agreement between Switzerland and the European Community about the transport of goods on roads and railways, 1992.
8. *ALV*; Unemployment Insurance Agreement between Switzerland and Germany, 1982.
9. *ALVZA*; Additional Agreement to the Unemployment Insurance Agreement between Switzerland and Germany, 1994.
10. *SchengDub*; Associational Agreement between Switzerland and the EU on the Schengen/Dublin Agreement, 2005.
11. *AVIG*; Revision of the Swiss Unemployment Insurance Law, 1995.
12. *ASYL-P*; Partial Revision of the Swiss Asylum Law, 1984.
13. *ASYL-T*; Total Revision of the Swiss Asylum Law, 1999.

The active event-participation per actor can be deduced from the APES table itself, whereas the relative degree centralities for the main actor categories in the policy network are calculated after the transformations suggested above. For all actor categories including more than one specific actor, e.g., ‘administration’, we refrained from simply taking the average of degree centralities because it would result in a biased view of the importance of the national public administration during the decision-making process. Therefore we rather summed-up all centralities per actor category instead, and calculated their relative centrality compared to the total network centralization, expressed in percentage (see Table 1).

⁵ In both foreign and domestic case studies, we are only interested in the domestic dimensions of the policy process, i.e., we do only consider domestic actors and their position within the policy network.

Table 1: Active event-participation per actor and relative degree centrality per actor category

	DBA	ISA-G	ISA-A	ISA-N	KLIMA	LVA	TRANSIT	ALV	ALVZA	SchenDub	AVIG	ASYL-P	ASYL-T
Active Event-Participation per Actor (absolute figures / relative figures)													
Total event-participation	50/ 100%	21/ 100%	21/ 100%	19/ 100%	125/ 100%	30/ 100%	130/ 100%	48/ 100%	28/ 100%	336/ 100%	62/ 100%	84/ 100%	174/ 100%
Federal Council	4/ 8%	3/ 14.3%	3/ 14.3%	3/ 15.8%	9/ 7.2%	3/ 10%	19/ 14.6%	7/ 14.6%	5/ 18%	21/ 6%	7/ 11.3%	8/ 9.2%	4/ 2.3%
Administration	33/ 66%	18/ 85.7%	18/ 85.7%	16/ 84.2%	109/ 87.2%	18/ 60%	98/ 75.4%	32/ 66.7%	19/ 68%	219/ 65.2%	24/ 38.7%	42/ 50%	80/ 46%
Parliament	4/ 8%	0	0	0	4/ 3.2%	4/ 13.3%	8/ 6.2%	5/ 10.4%	4/ 14%	22/ 6.6%	9/ 14.5%	12/ 14.3%	47/ 27%
Cantons	1/ 2%	0	0	0	0	0	0	4/ 8.3%	0	31/ 9.2%	5/ 8.1%	5/ 6%	11/ 6.3%
Employers/ Trade Assoc.	7/ 14%	0	0	0	0	5/ 16.7%	5/ 3.8%	0	0	15/ 4.5%	6/ 9.7%	4/ 5%	3/ 1.7%
Employees/ Unions	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3/ 1%	6/ 9.7%	1/ 1.2%	2/ 1.2%
Science	0	0	0	0	3/ 2.4%	0	0	0	0	13/ 3.9%	3/ 4.8%	3/ 3.6%	7/ 4%
Other Organizations	1/ 2%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	11/ 3.3%	2/ 3.2%	9/ 10.7%	19/ 11%
Citizens (popular vote)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1/ 0.3%	0	0	1/ 0.5%
Relative Degree Centrality													
Federal Council	0	0	8.1%	9.3%	7.3%	1.6%	0.5%	9.4%	7.9%	2.2%	7.6%	22.6%	0.8%
Administration	79.4%	62.8%	91.3%	90.1%	84%	92.2%	94.8%	67.6%	72.3%	69.1%	33.6%	15.2%	56.7%
Parliament	2.3%	30.8%	0.6%	0.6%	1.6%	6.2%	1.4%	15.1%	18.3%	3.4%	17.6%	5.4%	6.5%
Cantons	3.4%	0	0	0	0	0	0	7.9%	1.5%	7.4%	9.4%	10%	8.9%
Employers/ Trade Assoc.	12.6%	6.4%	0	0	1.7%	0	1.7%	0	0	5.1%	11.3%	9.7%	5.5%
Employees/ Unions	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.9%	0	0	2.6%	11.3%	9.7%	2.2%
Science	0	0	0	0	3.7%	0	0	0	0	3.4%	5.2%	14.4%	2.9%
Other Organizations	2.3%	0	0	0	1.7%	0	0.7%	0	0	6.8%	4.0%	12.8%	16.5%
Citizens	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

4.2 Comparison and Conclusions

The results displayed in Table 1 let us draw the following conclusions in reference to the concept of participation of Diamond and Morlino's model:

- There is an obvious *difference between foreign and domestic policy-making cases* regarding the inclusion of societal actors into the decisional process. Whereas in foreign policy cases the active participation of societal actors, summarized within the actor categories 'employers', 'employees', 'science', 'other organizations', and 'citizens' is, with certain exceptions, relatively low; the participation of the same actors can be valued as comparatively higher within domestic policy processes (AVIG, ASYL-P and ASYL-T). With regard to foreign policy cases, only those with a pronounced domestic dimension, such as the UN Climate Agreement or the Transit Agreement with the EU (KLIMA and TRANSIT) show a stronger involvement of societal actors.
- Out of procedural reasons the *federal administration plays an important role* in foreign policy processes, whereas in domestic cases the federal administration loses some of its influence, since a greater number of actors moves into the centre of the policy network, i.e., participates at the decisional process. Additionally, if a (foreign) policy case is considered as being below the 'threshold of perception', which means is not really perceived by the public because of its non-controversial character (namely DBA, ISA-A, ISA-N and LVA), the federal administration is comparatively more active, than in other cases, which are publicly noticed.
- The *federal council* (Swiss executive body) shows a *lower involvement* into the policy process, compared to administrative actors; this especially holds for foreign policy cases. However, a tendency to a consolidated inclusion of the federal council can be detected in policy cases dealing with social policy in the broadest sense (ALV, ALVZA, AVIG or ASYL-P).
- *Parliamentary actors*, such as the National Council, the Council of States, and parliamentary committees, *tend to show a quite low involvement*, especially in foreign policy cases. One can state a higher involvement of parliamentary actors however in domestic policy processes, as well as in foreign policy cases on social, or more precisely in unemployment issues (ALV, ALVZA).
- For the cantons similar conclusions can be drawn as for parliamentary actors: One can assess a *comparatively higher cantonal involvement in domestic policy cases, than in foreign policy processes*, except in foreign policies on social issues (ALV, ALVZA, SchengDub).
- As for societal actors, employees associations and *unions show a slightly minor degree of active involvement, as employers* and business interests do. As mentioned above, the strongest participation of societal groups, both unions and employers associations, can be stated in domestic issues, particularly in social policy issues.
- *The involvement of (societal) actors depends on the policy issue and the public perception of a policy.* Whereas social or asylum policies, albeit their status (foreign or domestic; ALV, ALVZA, AVIG, SchengDub, ASYL-P, and ASYL-T), show a relatively high involvement of societal actors, cantons, parliamentary actors, and of the federal council, foreign policies on less

controversial issues, such as financial or tax-related policies, mobilize less (societal) actors.

Referring to the concept of participation measured for Swiss policy processes, we state that there are possibilities for societal groups to participate at the policy process, but one has to differentiate. Usually the decision-making process is open to societal groups, such as trade unions or business interests, which hold almost an institutional status within the policy process (most of all within the pre-parliamentary phase). Other societal groups however, e.g., environmental organizations or such, do not have the same status and are therefore not as strongly involved in the policy process as the above mentioned business and trade organizations. Additionally, the Swiss parliament, out of procedural reasons, usually has no major influence on the decision-making process in Switzerland. Political decisions are usually taken within the pre-parliamentary phase, as a product of a broad consensus between all involved actors; this especially counts for domestic issues.

With this brief comparison of thirteen decision-making processes, we tried to operationalize the concept of participation as one concept of the assessment of the quality of democracy with our APES-tool. We agree that a broader operationalization of the concept of participation would be helpful to gain more founded empirical evidence. We do believe however, that with APES certain features of the democratic quality of political processes can be assessed. Like this, our tool could figuratively be described as a small stone added to the construction of a useful and analytically founded benchmark for assessing the quality of democracy.

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