

Olimpija Hristova:

Impetus for Parliament's Change: Comparative Approach - Macedonia and Switzerland

133

## Impetus for Parliament's Change: Comparative Approach - Macedonia and Switzerland

*Olimpija Hristova*

### Abstract

*Can the work of parliaments improve and become what it is meant to be: a place of genuine representation of citizens in the modern democracies? It is of vital importance that political scientists address this question, since many indicators point to the democratic deficit in the European countries. The decline in electoral turnouts, lack of participation in public deliberation and party membership all the more pronouncedly challenge the future legitimacy of the democratic institutions of the political system. However, if one carefully follows the current trends in democratic research, namely, quality of democracies and democratic deliberation; Switzerland remains a prime example of a small European consensual democratic state, where states with similar configuration of the political system could look for ideas. In this paper I look at the growing relevance of the Swiss Parliament apparent in its increased quality of deliberation, due to greater research activities and professionalized knowledge backing of the Swiss Parliament's activities on one hand, and the direct democratic practices on the other as the backbone of its political system. The paper presents a comparative study of particular findings in the work of the Swiss and the Macedonian Parliament regarding their increased importance as democratic institutions, calling attention to the lessons that Macedonia can draw from the Swiss practices for improvement of its institutional capacities. The tentative conclusion is that Macedonia has to invest more in research activity concerning the parliamentary deliberation and legislative procedures in order to increase its relevance as a representative institution, reinforced by revitalizing the direct democratic practices.*

*Keywords: research, direct democracy, deliberation, Parliament, Switzerland, Macedonia, quality of democracy, institutional design*

## Introduction

Parliaments are often times perceived as symbolic institutions merely confirming policy decisions and representing a décor underneath the shadows of the executive governments, while loosing their impetus for real change. Therefore, parliaments that infuse a dose of uncertainty especially in consensual democracies are a worthwhile subject of evaluation for getting insight into how their work can be improved. Correspondingly, the concept of democracy at this point of political system development may sound quite tedious and myopic if one does not really approach it with the hope to make it sanguine. Numerous criticisms and attempts to remedy parliaments as a stronghold of democracy are present in the literature and the political scene, which to me only proves that this concept is alive and gives boundless chances for change! As Philippe Schmitter asserts: "We are dealing with a moving target" (2012). Believing that democracy actually goes much beyond elections, government formation and the power of the executive increases the significance of the lively institution a parliament could be. Why? Simply because of its nature - to represent the citizens in a process of decision-making and the creation of the rules they are further required to abide by. Gerardo Munck put it nicely: "democracy is all about guaranteeing a political process in which no outcomes are placed beyond the reach of the people" (2009, p. 124).

Fortunately the work of parliament is gaining greater interest, especially among academic institutions in Switzerland, constructing Discourse Quality indexes (Steiner et.al, 2005), evaluation of deliberation in parliaments, particularly in the committees etc. Hence the broader question of this essay is how can parliament become a more relevant and influential institution in consensual democracies? For this reason, and because of already available data for deliberation in the Swiss Federal Assembly, I look at developments concerning parliamentary work in the last decade, when Tretchel and Kreisi argue the parliament is both changing and strengthening its position in the political system (2008, p. 75). The hypothesis is that the Swiss Parliament gains greater relevance and becomes more influential because of two features of the Swiss political system combined: parliament deliberation based increasingly on research activities and constant use of direct democratic practices. Looking at institutions separately may bring skewed conclusions and emphasize characteristics that are not really that influential if

put into a broader context of institutional design. Therefore, my argument is that Macedonian Parliament has to pursue the deliberative practices reinforced with quality research and more robust direct democracy, in order to gain greater legitimacy as a key representative institution of the political system.

From a comparative point of view, it is important to notice at the very beginning that the differences between the countries are pronounced, both in terms of history and economic development. Switzerland is one of the richest and most highly developed democracies and Macedonia - a developing, semi-consolidated democratic country (Nation in Transit, 2011, p. 21). Another major difference is the way in which the countries have gained their statehood. Macedonia got its independence after the dissolution of Yugoslavia in 1991, whereas Switzerland on the contrary, is a federation built from below - with a consensus of the cantons to become a modern federal state in 1848. Switzerland is a federation, while Macedonia is a unitary state with a consociational complex power sharing model (Weller, 2011). Furthermore, Switzerland has crosscutting cleavages: linguistic, religious and ethnic, whereas in Macedonia there are overlapping ethnic and religious cleavages, but also to some extent political party cleavages that generally overlap with the ethnic. Still, they are both small European states, more or less consensual democracies in Lijphart's sense, both divided in cleavages, sharing similar direct democratic mechanisms.

### Theoretical Underpinnings

"Consensus politics" describes the ongoing effort to achieve a balanced compromise among key political factors and among the different cultural, linguistic and social communities (Dryzek, 2008, p. 12), while Cohen defines deliberation as reasonableness in the decision making process where those governed by the decision, are treated as equals (2009, p. 250). The main issue is to what extent does legislation really matter in a liberal democracy, since the legislations as Jean Blondel argues are "still docile to the executives and play rather symbolic roles because of party discipline" (1995, p. 253). For setting up the scene and going deeper into the Swiss and Macedonian case, I start with Blondel's emphasize on the importance of research activities in the legislation for the quality of deliberation and Vatter's empirical findings for this argument in the Swiss Parliament. Research in this context refers to

academic and scientific constant support that is at disposal to the MPs in parliaments. To this I add the concept of deliberation in parliament developed by Steiner and other scholars, grounded in Habermases idea of deliberation in the public sphere, and finally embrace the importance of practicing direct democracy in Switzerland for the high quality deliberation in parliament though the mechanism such as citizen's initiatives, citizen's assemblies and referenda. I approach these conditions as reinforcing one another and adding to the greater legitimacy of the Swiss Parliament. Across my comparison, I also use Kreisi and Trechsel's broad account on the Swiss political system and Florin Bieber's accounts on Macedonia after the ethnical conflict in 2001. I additionally present survey data in order to present citizens' confidence and expectations from the Macedonian Parliament.

### **Legislation - Participation, Research Quality and Agenda Setting**

The main formal tasks of parliaments are the legislative or making laws, discussions on financial provisions, voting the budget and setting up an agenda for a debate (Blondel, 1995, p. 256). Redundant parliamentary debates wherein everyone knows the outcomes, are not new to the public in liberal democracies. Since citizens at large are represented in national parliaments, those by default should be as diverse as possible. Another important task of the legislation is the choice to initiate "great debates" and set an agenda for a broader discussion, rather than merely "follow" (Blondel, 1995, p. 264). This influence "depends on the research support members enjoy, the size of government's majority and on the standing of the executive in the country" (Blondel, 1995, p. 263). In combination with this, the role of Parliamentary committees is becoming more influential in the crafting of the legislative acts as well. In a state where the legislatures are limited in their participation in policymaking, their involvement is growing once members of parliament become more specialized and gain greater research support. Current findings of Swiss Parliamentary research are confirmed by international comparative studies. In his studies on the relationship between the executive and the legislature in eighteen Western European states, Döring (Vatter, 2008) allocates Switzerland in most cases to the group of countries characterized by the lowest level of governmental control on parliament and simultaneously the most developed powers of parliamentary committees and individual MPs (Vatter, 2008). Therefore, Switzerland is a case where we find

how the *good research* establishment creates fertile ground for greater professionalization and expertise of the MPs, and hence contribute to the smooth functioning of the legislation.

What we see on the other hand in the case of Macedonia is that the research support for policymaking in the Macedonian Parliament is just becoming realized as essential for the quality of legislation, and for the first time a Parliamentary Research Institute is in its initial phases of being established in the Macedonian Parliament (NDI, 2011). The absence of such a research center until now poses immense challenges to the parliament as well as the other state institutions with regards to evaluation and setting a quality basis for policymaking and informed legislative processes.

### The Swiss Political System

Switzerland represents a unique case of a consensual federal democracy, with many of its practices based in a tradition that is to some extent still resistant to greater changes. Namely, since it became a modern federal state in 1848, Switzerland has a pluralistic party system without a single dominant party but four major parties: Swiss Social Democratic Party (SP), The Liberals (FDP) and the Christian Democrat Party (CVP). Even the Swiss People's Party (SVP), a far right wing, is a system party and it is in Swiss Parliament. Since 1959 these parties formed a grand coalition for the Federal Council, which is the executive, by the authentic Swiss "magic formula" that creates grand coalitions including representatives from the major political parties (The Swiss Confederation Guide, 2011, p. 43). However since 2007, the SVP is not part of the Federal Council, despite being the country's party with the greatest number of votes. The system is also characterized by the dispersion of the political power in the 26 cantons with a hybrid parliamentary-presidential system and their popularly elected executives. Being the least populace federation, federalism in Switzerland is acquired because of the plurality of the society with four official languages; twenty-two cantons are unilingual, three are bilingual (Bern, Fribourg and Valais), and just one (Graubunden) has three official languages. Cross cutting cleavages stabilize the country and represent polarized pluralism, which is why the country is not considered a consociational model in its strict sense. Nevertheless, today classic religious and ethnic divides show up only on a few issues like EU integration. It could be argued, however, that because of

the vanishing of the religious cleavage, Switzerland is getting closer to the classical model of competitive democracy. Since the classic divisions Catholic vs. Protestant, French vs. German speaking are vanishing, a possible vacuum is in sight, which will present a challenge for the new generations to maintain a common identity. However, both historically and presently, Switzerland is a country of the “willing” (Pelinka, 2011) where the will of the people keeps the country together.

### Swiss Legislation

The government of liberal democratic countries lets legislatures debate major issues, yet Blondel continues, “they also generally succeed in ensuring that the policymaking process is not markedly affected as a result” (1995, p. 251). This is not the case with Switzerland, since it has a stronger Parliament than executive. The Swiss legislature is undergoing changes and is gaining greater relevance in the last decade besides the great power vested in the cantons. Both chambers in the Federal Assembly: the National Council and the Council of States are directly elected, reflecting the horizontal control and balance of power. According to Lijphart’s classification of legislatures, “Switzerland is one of the rare examples of bicameral legislatures with formally equal powers” (in Blondel, 1995). Furthermore, the functioning of the Swiss Parliament is semi-professional and among the cheapest in the OECD countries; the MPs besides their professional engagements, dedicate about half of their time to the Federal Parliament. In line with Blondel’s aforementioned arguments on the importance of legislature, he also claims that “since the activities on the floor do not always give the legislators marked opportunities to exercise influence, committee work has an impact in boosting the morale of the legislators who can see that they are not reduced to supporting” (Blondel, 1995, p. 263). Each chamber in the Federal Assembly has ten legislative and two supervisory committees. In the case of Switzerland, new research on the role of legislature grant the credit of greater legislative influence to the work of the committees.

The Federal Assembly not only strengthened its legal influence, but also made sure, by way of structural adjustments (*reform of the commission system, streamlining council debates, strengthening council committees*), that it is also able to exercise its rights in a more effective manner. For instance, the Parliamentary Administration Control was created as an exclusive unit to

conduct evaluations for the oversight committees that were responsible to evaluate the effectiveness as a new important criterion to control the administration (Rist & Sandahl, 2002, p. 378). But mere evaluation and checking of legality and bookkeeping was not enough for the Swiss institutions, realizing that the social sciences can develop more sophisticated perceptions of social problems, and the institutions should embrace this knowledge. The process of introducing scientific knowledge from the social sciences research was started in the 1960's and increased in the 1990's when methodological approaches were brought to the administration and there was a proliferation of research and development within the state institutions (Rist & Sandahl, 2002, p. 380). These processes were overseen by the Swiss Development Corporation, The Federal Office of Justice, and The Swiss National Fund of Scientific Research, providing numerous studies on policy creation and implementation. More specifically, the Swiss Association for Political Science, Swiss Association for Administrative Science, the Swiss Evaluation Society (SEVAL), and the National Center of Competence in Research Challenges to Democracy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century have contributed greatly to the research. The universities and the cantonal institution that themselves set up research departments in order to improve their policies and effectiveness also play important roles.

Besides the fact that until recently the Parliament in Switzerland was still slow in terms of considering scientific and strategic long-term perspectives for the policies by the Parliament (Rist & Sandahl 2002, p. 384), the studies I here refer to show that the last decade drastically changed the approach towards the research at disposal to the MPs. One study by Vatter concludes that in the years 1996-2004 the Parliament amended around 39 % of government drafts (Schwarz et al. in Vatter, 2008). Thus, in recent times, Lüthi (in Vatter, 2008) concludes that, overall, the Parliament has at its disposal a range of differentiated legal instruments that enables it to effectively participate in the legislative process and exercise its supervisory function.

### Swiss Direct Democracy as an Impetus for Efficient Federal Legislature

Besides the improvement of legislative procedures backed by research activity, which boosts the efficiency of the Swiss Parliament, this I argue is also due to the robust direct democratic system. Its represents not only Swiss pride where 41 % of the population is very proud and 45.7 % are proud it (Trechsel & Kriesi, 2008, p. 66), but also I argue key to a functioning parliament, which is always under latent constraints of the sovereignty of the citizens. A key idea is that there is no opposition in the Swiss Parliament, but the opposition is the citizen through the practice of direct democracy. Several times a year the citizens of the Swiss cantons go out and vote either for issues in their communes, cantons or on a federal level. Through a petition, any canton at any time can raise a legislative initiative to the Federal Council, or eight cantons can launch a referendum against a Federal law. The cantons can become strong veto players if they coordinate their action (Trechsel & Kriesi, 2008, p. 40). After the last revision of the Constitution in 2003, there is an incremental pattern of extension of direct democracy on the federal level, taking the experience on the cantonal level (Trechsel & Kriesi, 2008, p. 51). More empirical support is required to show correlation between greater practice of direct democracy on the federal level and improvement of the parliamentary performance. Still, by the practice of direct democracy, Switzerland is an open political system, where interaction between MPs and citizens influences deliberation in parliament (Lutz, 2008, p. 7).

The anecdotal nature of the argument that parliament should be the place for civilized deliberative discussions, moves scholars like Jürg Steiner to search for empirical grounds for the normative judgments on how important deliberation is in democracies, particularly in parliaments (Steiner *et.al*, 2005). Tschentscher *et. al.* found that "in the Swiss case, a more deliberative political system is coupled with direct democracy" (2008, p. 18). In this institutional scenario, deliberating politicians are more directly accountable to citizens, who can scrutinize deliberatively achieved political decisions via direct democratic votes. The possible drawback of this conclusion is that the deliberative behavior of parties strongly varies within the same institutional setting, showing that deliberative willingness is a potent driver of the quality of political discourse (Steiner *et.al*, 2008, p. 21). Also, the high quality deliberation in Parliament does not explain much of the outcomes, but most



certainly sets an example for a case such as Macedonia where the quality of deliberation has rudimentary if any research; and the heuristic conclusions so far show that it conveys a meager perception of the institution itself.

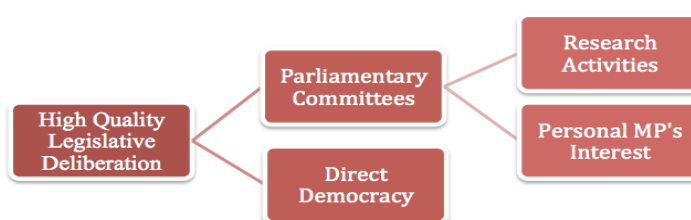


Diagram 1. High Quality of Deliberative Legislation

Based on the conclusions of Tschentscher, Axel, André Bächtiger, Jürg Steiner and Marco Steenbergen and personal conclusions from these researches. Both the research activities and the personal interest of MPs to engage in their parliamentary work professionally, positively influence the work in the committees, which also affects higher quality of parliamentary deliberation. Also, direct democracy itself positively affects higher quality deliberation in Parliament (Tschentscher et al, 2008).

The shortcomings of the Swiss model are generally located in the lower turnouts on referendums, but they are still significant (Pelinka, 2011). The referendum in many cases has a conservative structured bias where direct democracy practices are structurally conservative and status quo oriented" (Pelinka, 2011). This explains why we cannot observe anti system parties of a new type since the last new Swiss People's Party emerged in the 1920's. Switzerland has especially low turnouts in elections, and the level of participation in direct democracy is between 45 and 55 % (Trechsel & Kreisi 2008, p. 62). Regardless, the complaints that direct democracy also slows down the legislative processes and poses an obstacle for greater international integration, it still works very well as an efficient control or rather impetus to improving the work of the Federal Assembly. Concerning Parliament itself, Swiss MPs work 70 % of their time in the committees, but until recently, the MPs were not paid. Even though citizens trust Parliament, they were not ready to support greater funding for MPs greater specialization. These perceptions of citizens' for a while were making them permeable to social group interests and lobbying. But the important fact is that Swiss MPs are moderate, injecting uncertainty between government and Parliament

(Trechsel & Kreisi, 2008, p. 74). This was seen in the last Federal Election in October, 2011, when again the center was strengthened and hindered some trends of greater polarization. This I argue is not uncertainty, but rather the way the parliament should work if there is high discourse quality and real interest for the broader society. All in all, Swiss pride is more concerned with the direct democracy but it certainly has a positive effect on the Federal Legislature, which has been noted empirically.

### **What Lessons Can be Drawn?**

The relatively new democracies in consolidation are looking at the example of the Western democracies, figuring out how to apply the principles, where the assembly, the legislation, or the house of representation is an inevitable feature. Still, the fatigue for its vital democratic role seems to expire. Should the role of parliament remain purely symbolic or do efforts in the direction of infusing life to this institution make sense at all, especially after some backsliding examples from developed democratic parliaments? But we do find examples that are not perfect, yet moving towards improvement such as the Swiss one presented herein. Of course, the suggestion is not to apply practices as they are in Switzerland, but my approach is meant to display some possible directions for contemplation that I believe would thrive in the Macedonian context and solidify in time. Even more, some initiatives between the two countries regarding parliaments are in progress and it will be noteworthy to see their provisions and evaluate the progress they bring. Therefore, in the next section, I will briefly lay out the important features of the Macedonian political system for comparison with the Swiss one.

### **Macedonian Political System**

Macedonia consists of several main cleavages: ethnical, religious and political. Ethnical minority groups contain 35% of the population, with the Albanian as the largest one. The country pursues consensual institutional practices in order to integrate the society and offer stability. To its credit, the Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA) that came into power after a short ethnical conflict between Macedonians and Albanians in 2001, "did incorporate key aspects of complex power-sharing and the consociationalism encouraged collaborative decision-making by the parties" (Ilievski, 2008, p.

29). The process of decentralization, double majority in Parliament and greater inclusion of the minorities was a major outcome from the OFA. Bieber argues that the OFA transformed Macedonia into a "self-defining nation state with informal grand coalition" (2008, p. 24), where the parties are required to cooperate on an ethnical basis since they need a majority in parliament. The double majority is necessary for questions on culture, use of languages, education, personal documentation, use of symbols and local-self government. In this sense, the minorities cannot really affect the economic policies, which present a kind of compromise for smoother legislative processes. This actually forces the parties to form coalitions more out of a sense of pragmatism than actually moving towards greater integration. On the basis of Blondel's accounts of parliament's character, I argue that generally the Macedonian Parliament even though very diverse ethnically and politically, is more a symbolic institution that merely confirms already drawn legislation. The reason for this problem is sometimes given as the proportional electoral system, which is still in favor of the larger parties, or the non-use of direct democratic initiatives (referendum and national initiative guaranteed by the Constitution). But one of the biggest factors is, I argue, the weak consideration of research support on parliamentary legislation. Hence I find Switzerland a good comparative case for Macedonia.

### **Lack of Research Backing in Parliament**

In Macedonia the Parliamentary Committees are gaining greater attention; especially the one introduced with the Ohrid Framework Agreement. This is the Committee for Inter Ethnical issues which has seven Macedonians, seven Albanians, and one representative from each other minority. This Committee in the absence of a second parliamentary chamber is supposed to balance the debate in the Macedonian Parliament. In praxis so far, this Committee has only marginal significance. Instead, the greatest emphasis goes to the grand coalition and the informal leadership meetings, which overshadow the transparent power-sharing institution that should be closer to the citizens. The Macedonian Parliament therefore is far from being a body for deliberation, but a reference point of political power. The former is not a surprising observation, since the grand coalition has a double majority in Parliament, which does not give incentives for greater deliberation or uncertainty. Taleski argues, "if you control greater majority in Parliament, you

will cooperate less with the opposition and vice versa" (2009, p. 4). Such ill quality deliberation creates more pressure and degrades the institutions itself, since as Talevski continues, "it serves as mere procedure and political revanchist through very inappropriate behavior." Regardless of how pessimistic this conclusion may sound, I see greater research backing within the Macedonian Parliament as one of the key goals to be pursued in the Macedonian case that will have its positive implication on the parliamentary discourse quality.

In ethnically and religiously divided societies, this gets greater weight since it would slowly shift the debate to better-grounded and informed discussions in plenary and committee sessions, which can have an integrating effect in regard to the diverse ethnical composition of the Parliament. It will also lead to professionalization of MPs, since profound knowledge would make MPs debates better augmented, and concentrate the debates on the substance of the particular policy. For instance, it can focus on new findings in how parliaments improve their communication with citizens or use researches and surveys from comparative politics to improve accountability mechanisms of MPs or government representatives.

The debilitating experience of research quality in the Macedonian Parliament infers an urgent need of supporting such endeavors since social scientific research is not generally appreciated as a policy tool or good background for policymaking. One indicator is the fact that there are hardly any research methodology courses for familiarizing the students of social sciences with scientific research in their disciplines during their undergraduate studies. The motions of MPs on the floor are very speculative and often times the debate simply turns into offences not founded in argumentative debate and deliberation based on empirical findings. Even the analysis on how satisfied citizens are with the work of the Parliament are scarce, and without noticeable domestic interest for research on improving the quality of the Parliament as a democratic institution. Again foreign funding like Westminster Foundation for Democracy in Macedonia and the US National Democratic Institute, NDI supports the researches that have happened twice to analyze the perceptions of citizens on Parliament more comprehensively (IDSCS, 2010 and 2012). One of the most important finding in their analysis is that the citizens expect greater initiative from MP's (Figure 1, appendix). Furthermore, the citizens characterize the deliberation on the plenary sessions in Parliament and the committees as predominantly negative (Figure 2,

appendix). Lastly, they still do not have the habit to follow the deliberation in the committees (Figure 3, appendix). Comparing the surveys from 2010 and 2012, there is a constant trend of increase with the response – “I don't know” which can modestly be interpreted as vesting hopes in the representative function of Parliament, yet the citizens are confused on the role of the Macedonian Parliament in the overall political system (IDSCS, 2012). From these results, the citizens still recognize it as an institution with great democratic potential. Hence my argument that Parliament can play a crucial role in the Macedonian society in conjunction with increased direct democratic practices and increased research backing.

### **More Research, More Direct Democracy**

In two ways Swiss accumulated knowledge is currently present in Macedonia, through the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), which reflects the two courses of action regarding greater relevance and policy influence of parliament I previously elaborated on. First comes support for the creation of a Parliamentary Institute for independent analytical and comparative research and training, and second the support for improving the process of decentralization. These subdomains of Swiss assistance through the SDC allow Switzerland to additionally contribute to the democratization process and through these initiatives raises its stake in Macedonia's democracy by “stepping up the lawmaking capacity and resources of MPs, as well as by consolidating opportunities for citizens to communicate their concerns and interests to the legislators” (SDC, 2009, p. 13). By following my previous accounts on what makes Swiss Parliament gaining more relevant, these pledges of the SDC are a pure reflection of the positive experiences Switzerland has acquired in the last decade.

The substantial initiative in the direction of improvement of research hopefully will surpass the theoretical and speculative debates in Parliament lacking empirical grounding. Expanding the quality of deliberation research in parliaments in developing countries is one of the major recommendations of Steiner et. al in their research on *Deliberative Politics in Action* (2005). The new Parliamentary Institute I argue should follow these recommendations, and by this improve and provide data for further comparative researches. Namely, the initiative for a new Parliamentary Institute is driven by the conclusion that “the presence of an independent research center is crucial for

the Constitutional role the Parliament should play and for impartial preparation of laws and effective control of the work of the government " (NDI Webpage). Bearing in mind that the "the policymaking capacity of Macedonia is poor, and rank and file have little opportunity to participate in decisions" (Crisis Group Report, p. 9), the politicians and government should take a responsible and mature approach to these new institutes and profit as much as possible from its research.

The Swiss development implementation projects also subscribe to the country's ongoing decentralization process, which I find relevant to the second major point of my argument, namely, the direct democratic practices. In line with the 2001 Ohrid Framework Agreement, this process was aimed to balance the interests of the various communities. The decentralization process presumably should strengthen the democratic capacities and practice of direct democracy on a local level. Those in the Macedonian case are citizen's initiative for a certain legislative act, compulsory and facultative referendum, citizens' forums and citizens letter of appeal (Siljanovska, 2004, p. 220). The improvement of the direct democratic practices as shown in Tschentscher et. al should be accompanied by greater quality deliberation in parliament. This is quite obvious knowing that the MPs always have in mind the possibility of citizens initiating new law, or calling a referendum.

### Conclusion

A key feature of democracies is effective legislation. The trends in the last decade in Switzerland and the efforts for a Parliamentary Research Institute in Macedonia are moving in that direction. In this essay I elaborated on the factors that influence and increase the importance of the Swiss Federal Parliament accompanied with the direct democratic practices. The analysis on the specific Swiss political system in recent empirical studies come to the conclusion that the Parliament is changing its role in policymaking and gaining greater influence because of greater support of research activity and professionalization articulated in the improvement of the intermediate functions of parliamentary committees. Direct democracy also serves as a mechanism that sets latent control on the Swiss Parliament since citizens use their legislative instruments at their disposal to legislate themselves. These factors make the urge for greater quality deliberation more easily achievable and significant; of course in combination with other factors like political culture, party system, citizens interest in the decision making process etc.

As a model of complex- power sharing, the Swiss model is a good place for drawing lessons and practices for countries such as Macedonia. Given that the political system remained flexible in many regards, such as not formalizing rules for grand coalition (Bieber, 2008, p. 57), it makes it vulnerable but moreover gives an alibi to the politicians to behave opportunistically and speculatively. However, increased research activity and giving impetus to citizens for more direct democracy I consider crucially valuable for making parliament a more influential institution in policymaking. In time, if Macedonia is moving in this direction one could hope for improving deliberation within the Macedonian Parliament and the democratic system as a whole. The greatest challenge for both countries is to constantly maintain a feeling of community among its citizens and keep the state together. Swiss willingness might evaporate in time or Macedonians still fragile consensus has a potential to radicalize again. Still the democratic institutions should strive for creating favorable conditions and balance for the ethnical, linguistic and religious divisions. However, even the institutional capacities as Schneider argues, "exert their impact only in combination with other institutions and the societal context in which they are inserted" (Schneider 2009, p. 113). Hence, the conclusions of this short study and the current events on the ground in Macedonia, give ample material and direction for further research on how the work of parliament can be improved combined with other institutional and social factors.

## Appendix

Figure 1.

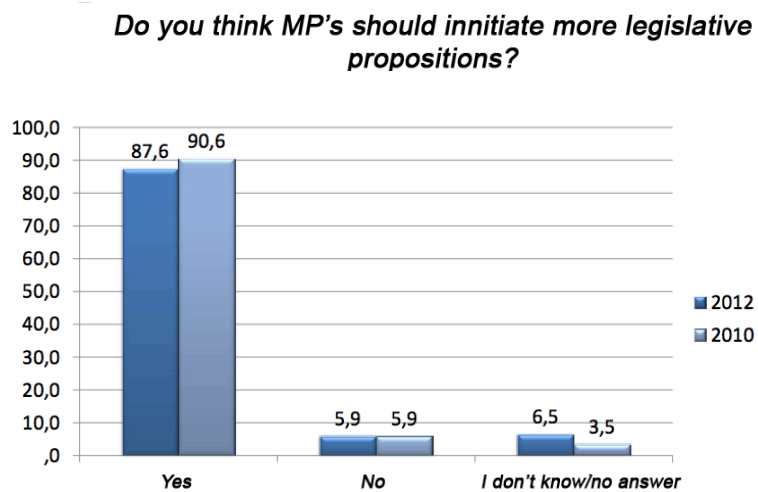


Figure 2

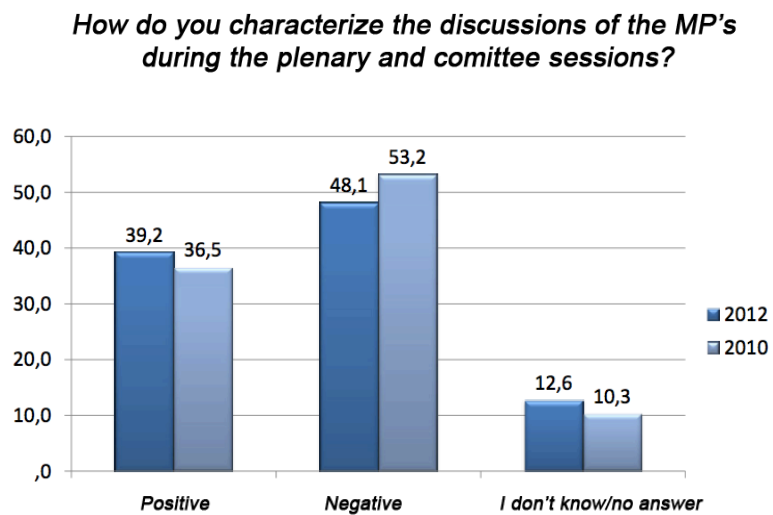
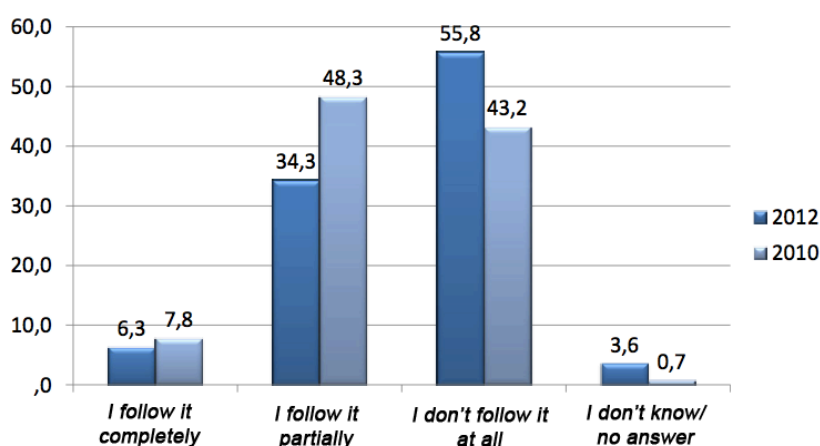




Figure 3.

**How often do you follow the work of the committees?**

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