

Research agenda section

Edited by Berthold Rittberger

DIRECT DEMOCRACY AND EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

Sara Binzer Hobolt

ABSTRACT The no-votes in the French and Dutch referendums on the Constitutional Treaty have highlighted the importance of understanding the mechanisms of direct democracy. Despite the increasing use and significance of referendums in the process of European integration, comparative studies of referendums in Europe are still few and many questions concerning direct democracy thus remain unanswered. This article reviews recent advances in the literature on direct democracy and European integration and suggests future avenues for research. To understand the ways in which referendums may influence the European integration process, this article approaches the study of direct democracy from the perspective of voters (how do they decide?) and political élites (which strategies do they adopt?), as well as examining the impact on policy outcomes.

KEY WORDS Constitutional Treaty; direct democracy; European integration; referendum; voting behaviour.

INTRODUCTION*

The rejection of the Constitutional Treaty in referendums in France and the Netherlands¹ has brought about a political crisis in the European Union (EU). Instead of establishing a Constitution for Europe, this public consultation has resulted in a year-long 'period of reflection' to interpret the referendum outcomes and find a way to move forward. Paradoxically, the constitutional process that has set out to 'bring the Union closer to its citizens'² may thus ultimately have fallen at the hands of the people. These negative votes raise many questions: Why did the French and Dutch vote the way they did? Was it sensible to hold referendums on this complex document? Could political leadership have made a difference to the outcome? This article examines how the scholarly community has addressed these questions and suggests avenues for further research.

The referendums on the Constitutional Treaty illustrate a growing use of direct democratic instruments in the process of European integration. The first referendum on European integration was held in France in 1972, and since

then forty-one referendums on aspects of European integration have been conducted.³ Given the increasing use and importance of referendums on aspects of European integration, there is ample scope for researchers to study the mechanisms and consequences of direct democracy in the EU. Until recently, however, the literature on direct democracy in Europe was almost entirely descriptive or normative. Comparative empirical studies of EU referendums were rare, and few scholars proposed questions that could be evaluated theoretically and tested empirically. In recent years, several studies have appeared that offer important theoretical and empirical insights into the study of referendums in the EU.

In this article, the referendum phenomenon is examined primarily as a decision-making process, where citizens make policy decisions that are initiated and implemented by political élites. Hence, the study of referendums is approached from the perspectives of *voters*, *political élites* and *policy outcomes*, by addressing the following questions:

- How do voters behave in referendums on European integration?
- What is the role of political élites in EU referendums?
- Does direct democracy affect policy outcomes in the EU?

By examining these three questions, this article reviews the ‘state of the art’ in the literature and suggests theoretical and empirical puzzles that could be further explored. Moreover, this paper argues that by examining each step of the decision-making process – from vote choices, élite responses to policy outcomes – we can also address the important normative question of *democracy*, and evaluate the extent to which referendums strengthen democratic legitimacy and the accountability of the EU.

HOW DO VOTERS BEHAVE?

The bulk of the literature on direct democracy and European integration has focused on the question of how voters decide in referendums. Most of this literature has examined a single referendum or a single country (see, for example, Svensson 1984; Siune *et al.* 1994a; Widfeldt 2004; Garry *et al.* 2005). While these studies provide a wealth of useful information about individual referendums, single-country studies suffer from the drawback that they rarely allow for generalizations beyond their specific context. Most of the comparative work is either mainly descriptive or normative (see Setälä 1999; Qvortrup 2002; LeDuc 2003; Kaufmann and Waters 2004) and the few edited volumes on European referendums make little attempt to compare or generalize their findings (see Butler and Ranney 1978, 1994; Gallagher and Uleri 1996).

In the wake of the Maastricht referendums a number of studies emerged that presented more general hypotheses about patterns of voting behaviour in EU referendums and tested these propositions empirically using data from a small cluster of referendums (see Franklin *et al.* 1994a, 1994b, 1995). These studies spurred a still-ongoing debate between two competing approaches to voting behaviour in EU referendums: the ‘attitude’ school and the ‘second-order

election' school. The first approach focuses on individuals' values and beliefs and argues that voting behaviour in EU referendums reflects people's underlying, broad attitudes towards European integration (Siune *et al.* 1994a, 1994b; Svensson 1994, 2002). Behaviour in an EU referendum is thus not dissimilar to *issue voting* in elections where voters opt for the choice (or candidates) that has the closest proximity to their own ideal point on an issue dimension (Downs 1957). An alternative explanation of voting behaviour in EU referendums is inspired by the 'second-order' theory of elections (Reif and Schmitt 1980). In 'second-order elections', national issues tend to dominate the campaigns and voters are thus expected to use their vote as a means of signalling their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the government or to follow the recommendations of national parties (Franklin *et al.* 1994b, 1994a, 1995).

In the literature, these two approaches are often presented as distinct and there is a continuing debate about which approach provides the most accurate explanation of patterns of voting behaviour. The implications of our interpretation of referendum outcomes are far-reaching: on the one hand, referendum outcomes are seen as a reflection of reasoned decisions by voters about the future of European integration (see Svensson 2002). On the other hand, they are plebiscites on the performance of national governments (see Franklin 2002; Garry *et al.* 2005). As Palle Svensson notes, it is a question of whether voters 'really address the issues and involve themselves actively in the policy-making process on a vital issue or do they merely vote for or against the current government' (2002: 733). But these approaches are not necessarily mutually exclusive and an alternative approach points to the question why and under what circumstances individual voters are more likely to rely on attitudes rather than second-order factors and vice versa. Some authors have examined how the institutional context affects patterns of voting behaviour. Simon Hug's book *Voices of Europe* (2002) is one of the very few examples of studies in the field that presents both a general theoretical framework of voting behaviour and examines this framework empirically in a comparative analysis. Hug (2002) develops a formal model of behaviour in referendums, focusing mainly on the impact of legal-constitutional factors, such as whether the government is required to hold the referendum and whether or not the outcome is binding (see also Schneider and Weitsman 1996; Hug and Sciarini 2000). He argues that punishment strategies (second-order voting) are more likely to occur when governments employ referendums in an attempt to shore up support and when the outcome is legally non-binding (Hug 2002). Other studies have examined how the *salience* of the issue of European integration affects attitudes and reception of elite cues and, in turn, influences patterns of voting behaviour in referendums (see Franklin 2002; Hobolt 2005a). Whereas European integration is a highly politicized and debated issue in some countries, it remains a peripheral topic in others. Franklin (2002) and Hobolt (2005a) argue that when salience is high, and voters have a great interest in and knowledge of European affairs, they are more likely to rely on their attitudes towards European integration and less likely to treat the referendum as a 'second-order election'.

The last decade has produced significant advances in the study of voting behaviour in EU referendums. An important contribution of these studies has been to highlight that both people's attitudes towards European integration and various elite cues matter in determining the outcome of a referendum. Yet, questions still remain. In particular, more attention should be paid to the context of the vote choice: to what extent do factors such as the news media, campaign spending and the national political context affect the behaviour of the individual voter? We also have a limited understanding of what makes people turn out to vote in the first place and how this affects the outcome. Butler and Ranney (1994) found that on average turnout in referendums is about 15 per cent lower than in elections. But turnout need not always be low. In the 1994 Norwegian referendum on membership, the 2000 Danish referendum on the euro and the French referendum on the Constitutional Treaty turnout levels were higher than in elections (LeDuc 2003). Hence, we should consider what factors influence turnout in these referendums and how low turnout affects the implications and legitimacy of the outcome.

The study of voting behaviour in EU referendums inevitably leads to more normative questions about citizen participation in politics: can EU referendums contribute to the goal of fostering civic engagement in the EU? It also raises more general questions about the use of direct democracy. One of the criticisms often levelled against the use of referendums is that ordinary citizens lack sufficient knowledge to vote on complex policy issues. Hence, we may ask whether voters are sufficiently competent to vote directly on EU treaties and policies. In other words, do they have adequate knowledge to make reasoned decisions on the basis of their preferences towards the issue at stake? Are voters inclined to abstain or 'simply say no' owing to the complexity of the ballot proposition? Some studies have examined these issues in the context of referendums in American states. The key finding is that while voters have very little knowledge on the specific ballot proposal, they can still make informed choices by relying on heuristic shortcuts, such as elite endorsements and campaign cues (Lupia 1992, 1994; Bowler and Donovan 1998; Lupia and Johnston 2001). These studies focus on how information processing in referendums affects the ability of voters to make competent and reasoned decisions. Recent work has also addressed this issue in a European context (see Christin *et al.* 2002; Hobolt 2005b), but more research is needed to understand what type of cues are available to voters, how voters process information and, in turn, how this affects behaviour. Consequently, vote choices in a referendum cannot be examined without considering the domestic political context in which these decisions are taken. While referendums in theory give citizens the ultimate power to decide on aspects of European integration, they are in practice often used strategically by governments.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF POLITICAL ÉLITES?

The distinctive characteristic of referendums is that the electorate participates directly in policy-making. Scholars therefore have a tendency to focus almost

exclusively on voters and ignore the role of élites, and this has also been the case in most of the literature on direct democracy and EU referendums. However, examining the role of political élites is crucial if we want to understand the nature and implications of direct democracy in the EU. Whilst some EU referendums are required by the national constitutions,⁴ others are the product of strategic élite considerations. Political élites, and not voters, determine whether or not to hold a referendum, when to hold it, and how to phrase the ballot question. They are also in a privileged position to influence the interpretation of the meaning of the outcome, *ex post*, and decide how to proceed if the public rejects the proposal.

To begin with, we may ask ourselves why governments decide to hold referendums on European integration in the first place. Hug (1995) has argued that non-mandatory referendums can normally be explained by ‘policy maximizing’ motivations. Yet, it is still a puzzle that governments would voluntarily introduce another veto player in the decision-making process – or in the words of the former British Prime Minister, James Callaghan: ‘why would they climb into “a rubber life raft”⁵ when they are not required to do so? Morel (2001) has presented four specific reasons why governments decide to initiate referendums. First, governments may want to consolidate their power by calling a referendum that they feel relatively certain will pass. In the European context, the French EU referendums on enlargement of the Community in 1972, on the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 and on the Constitutional Treaty in 2005 provide examples of such ‘plebiscites’, motivated by an incentive to strengthen the position of the incumbent president. But the negative outcome of the most recent of these referendums also illustrates the dangers inherent in such a strategy. Second, referendums may be used to resolve internal divisions within the governing party or coalition of parties. When the British Labour Party came to power in 1974 shortly after British accession to the Community, it was split on the issue of membership of the European Economic Community and decided to call a referendum in 1975 to resolve the debate within the party. Third, referendums may be used to pass treaties that would not otherwise be ratified. In 1986, the Danish minority government decided to call a referendum on the Single European Act, because a majority of the Danish Parliament refused to ratify the Act. In the subsequent referendum, 56 per cent of the Danes accepted the treaty. Finally, referendums may be ‘de facto’ obligatory even when they are not constitutionally required. Norway, for example, has no constitutional provisions for referendums, but it would nevertheless have been unthinkable for the Norwegian government to join the EU in 1994 without a referendum after the failed membership referendum in 1972.

These explanations provide a good starting point for understanding why governments may choose to hold referendums on aspects of European integration. But they do not fully explain why some countries, for example, opted for a referendum on the Constitutional Treaty, whilst others chose a different ratification procedure. We can also imagine that governments may have other reasons for calling a referendum on European integration. They may decide to hold a

referendum on a treaty to isolate the issue of European integration from the domestic party political debate. For example, it is plausible that the British Labour Party announced that it would hold a referendum on the Constitutional Treaty in 2006,⁶ because it did not want the EU issue to dominate the general election campaign of 2005. An alternative explanation is that governments may call a referendum to strengthen their bargaining position in the EU (see Schneider and Cederman 1994). More research is thus needed to establish when and why governments opt for the referendum strategy, despite the obvious risks.

Besides deciding whether or not to call a (non-mandatory) referendum, governments also have important agenda-setting powers after the decision is taken. In their seminal articles, Romer and Rosenthal (1978, 1979) develop an agenda-setting model of resource allocation by direct democracy. According to their 'monopoly model', governments have considerable agenda-setting power as they can determine both the ballot proposal and the reversion point (that is, the outcome if the proposal is rejected). Romer and Rosenthal show that by making a 'take-it-or-leave-it' proposal to the voters, governments can make voters accept a proposal that is far removed from the median voter's preferences, because the policy resulting from a rejection appears even worse. These insights from the agenda-setting literature can be extended to the European setting. Given the multi-level nature of EU treaty negotiations, the agenda-setting role of member state governments is reduced, since governments lack monopoly when it comes to determining the ballot proposal as well as the reversion point. Yet, they still have a strategic advantage in terms of the timing of the referendum and the interpretation of the available options. Moreover, governments may have an informational advantage *vis-à-vis* the electorate, since they are better informed about the location of the proposal and the reversion point and this presence of asymmetric information is likely to enhance the ability of governments to dictate the final outcome (Banks 1990, 1993).

Another promising avenue for further research is to focus on the effect of political parties on the conduct of referendums and vice versa. Parties are at the heart of the decision-making process in European democracies, but how do they respond to and how are they affected by the increasing use of direct democracy? Budge (2001) argues that referendums do not harm political parties, because 'direct democracy, no more than any other type of democracy, cannot function without them' (2001: 85). The central role of parties in the referendum process⁷ raises some important questions: does the presence of referendums in certain member states affect the EU positions taken by parties? Is it, for example, more likely that party systems are polarized on the issue of European integration in countries with frequent use of referendums? In recent years, an increasing number of studies have looked at the positions of parties on the European integration issue. These studies have analysed the relationship between the left-right and the anti- and pro-European dimensions of contestation. The key finding is that opposition to European integration is mainly found on the ideological fringes of the party systems (Hix 1999;

Marks *et al.* 2002; Hooghe *et al.* 2002). Yet, little attention has been paid to how referendums affect the role that the EU issue plays in domestic politics, or indeed whether it affects policy outcomes at the national and international level.

DO REFERENDUMS INFLUENCE POLICY OUTCOMES?

Another important question that can be asked about direct democracy is whether it affects policy outcomes in the EU – and if so, how? Investigating the direct impact of referendums on policy outcomes may seem straightforward: direct democracy has decided accession to the Union, membership of the euro-zone and treaty ratifications. A number of single-country studies have examined the implications of referendum outcomes on relations with Europe, such as the consequences of the Danish ‘no’ to Maastricht in 1992 (e.g. Siune *et al.* 1992) and the Norwegian rejection of membership in 1972 and 1994 (e.g. Wyller 1996). However, in addition to these tangible ‘direct’ effects, referendums may have equally important ‘indirect’ effects on policy outcomes in the EU. For example, we could imagine that national governments adopt a specific position on a treaty *in anticipation* of a forthcoming referendum vote; or, we could imagine that an extra veto-point at the national level will strengthen the bargaining position of individual governments during the intergovernmental negotiations. Examining these ‘indirect’ effects of direct democracy is crucial if we want to understand the impact of referendums on the integration process; yet, so far only a few studies have examined this in the context of European integration (see Schneider and Cederman 1994; Hug 2004).

Most research on the indirect effects of direct democracy on policy outcomes has focused on polities with frequent referendums, mainly US states, such as California, and Switzerland (for an overview, see Gerber and Hug 2001; Bowler *et al.* 1998). Some studies find that states with provisions for referendums adopt policies that are closer to the wishes of the voters (see Gerber 1996; Gerber and Hug 1999; Hug 2002).⁸ Hence, referendums are potentially ‘median-reverting’ institutions, pushing policies in the direction of the median voter’s preferred policy. These results are in line with the expectations derived from the formal theoretical work on referendums, which finds that provisions for direct democracy tend to move the final policy outcome closer to the policies preferred by a majority of voters (Romer and Rosenthal 1979; Hug 2004).

Based on the findings in the theoretical and empirical literature, it is reasonable to expect that direct democracy will have similar effects on policy outcomes in the EU, since such institutional provisions are likely to make governments more responsive to public opinion owing to the threat of a popular veto (Hug 2002). In particular, we would expect that provisions on referendums affect the extent to which governments are responsive to public opinion during treaty negotiations. ‘Involuntary defection’ of countries during the ratification stage is a possible *direct* implication when the referendum hurdle is not passed, as the French and Dutch constitutional referendums have illustrated (Iida 1996). Moreover, we would also expect certain *indirect* effects during the negotiations stage. The multi-level

character of EU treaty negotiations adds an additional layer of complexity to the study of the indirect effects of direct democracy. The standard approach to examining the influence of domestic ratification institutions on the outcome of negotiations at the international level relies on two-level game models. According to the two-level game model, negotiators at the international level have two audiences since they take into account domestic constraints as well as interstate interaction (Putnam 1988). From the perspective of this model, referendums create a further ratification hurdle at the domestic level that may affect the bargaining outcome at the international level. Several studies have applied the two-level game framework to the study of treaty negotiations in the EU (Moravcsik 1993, 1998; Patterson 1997) and recent studies have also explicitly included considerations about the effect of referendums. Schneider and Cederman's (1994) game theoretic model shows how government may use the 'ratification threat' of referendums strategically to enhance their own power in the international bargaining situation. They argue that governments can exploit uncertainty about domestic situations to improve the terms of an integration agreement. Equally, other models of bargaining at the European level have shown that the referendum hurdle will strengthen the bargaining power of the national government, because of the reduced win-set⁹ (Stoiber and Thurner 2000; Hug and König 2001, 2002). Hence, the greater the domestic ratification constraint a government faces, the greater the international bargaining leverage (Stoiber and Thurner 2000).

These theoretical models thus give rise to certain expectations about the impact of referendums on EU treaty negotiations: first, the position of governments is expected to be closer to the median voter in countries holding referendums than in countries with other ratification procedures (median-reverting effect) (Hug 2002, 2004). Second, governments with more severe domestic constraints are expected to be more influential in the bargaining process and thus have a greater impact on the negotiation outcome. However, scholars have struggled to provide an answer to the more substantively important question of how referendums make a qualitative difference to policy outcomes. A plausible expectation would be that more referendums will lead to more cautious (less integrationist) treaties owing to the presence of additional veto players. Hug (2002) writes that 'allowing for referendums inevitably introduces a new veto player into the decision-making process, which does not increase the potential for policy change' (2002: 117). But the extent of the 'conservative bias' crucially depends on the preferences of voters in countries with referendums. If voters were very pro-integration, a shift towards 'median-reverting' policies would also be integrationist. On the other hand, if voters have preferences that are very much in line with those of the negotiators, a referendum is unlikely to have any significant effect on the policy outcome (Hug and Schulz 2003). Hence, although considerable progress has been made in explaining the impact of referendums, in particular within the formal two-level game literature, more sophisticated models are needed to generate precise predictions about the effect on actual policy outcomes in the EU context.

The empirical testing of these models poses perhaps even greater challenges. Any study of the indirect effects of direct democracy must rely on strong counterfactual arguments – that is, claims that policy outcomes would have been different if referendums were not possible (Gerber and Hug 2001). The recent negotiations on the Constitutional Treaty provide us with suitable data for examining these effects, since there is considerable variation in domestic constraints (referendum or no referendum) as well as voter preferences (more or less support for European integration). In a sense, these Treaty negotiations thus provide a treatment and a control group and thereby enable us to examine the effect of direct democracy on policy outcomes. Some advances have already been made in this regard. Hug and Schulz (2003) have designed an ambitious study examining the impact of referendums on the constitutional negotiations.¹⁰ In a recent paper, they analyse voter preferences (using Eurobarometer surveys) and government preferences (using expert surveys) to estimate whether governments have benefited from referendums in the bargaining situation (see Hug and Schulz 2005). So far the results are inconclusive, but this project may still provide important insights.

Any researcher who wants to examine the effects of referendums on treaty negotiations faces several methodological challenges. First, when we examine whether the position of governments in referendum countries is ‘median-reverting’ (closer to the position of the median voter), we face the obvious problem of selection bias. Since most governments have a choice as to whether or not to hold a referendum, the preferences of the voters may have affected this decision in the first place. A second problem is endogeneity of preferences. It is well known from studies of opinion formation that elite positions affect public opinion (Zaller 1992). Hence, we cannot necessarily assume that voter preferences are truly exogenous to the position of governments. Third, if we want to know whether governments facing ratification through referendums are more influential in the negotiations, we face similar challenges. It is very difficult to get a precise measure of who ‘won’ the negotiations, and we do not have access to information on the actual negotiations and exchanges between governments. Moreover, even if the outcome is close to the preferences of a ‘referendum government’, we cannot conclude that this is because of the ‘threat’ of the referendum. Finally, we may ask how the anticipation of additional veto-points has affected the outcome of, for example, the Constitutional Treaty. Would the Constitution have been bolder and more federalist had it not been for the increased use of referendums? This is a counterfactual that is almost impossible to answer with any certainty. The greatest methodological challenge in studies of the effect of direct democracy on policy outcomes is therefore to construct a research design that is fundamentally comparative, and that incorporates insights into the reciprocal relationship between voters, governments, institutions and policy. This is not an easy task, but the expanding number of referendum cases as well as the availability of public opinion and elite survey data should make it feasible for researchers to provide at least preliminary answers to some of these important questions.

CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, the issue of direct democracy and European integration has been approached from three perspectives: the behaviour of voters, the strategies adopted by political élites and the impact on policy outcomes. As this review has shown, the study of direct democracy and European integration is a burgeoning sub-field within the literature on European integration. Yet, many important theoretical and empirical puzzles remain unresolved. The normative question that underlies most of our concerns about voters, élites and policy outcomes is the issue of democracy; whether direct democracy on EU questions strengthens the democratic legitimacy and accountability of the EU. In theory, referendums could strengthen democracy in the Union, by giving citizens a say on the integration process and making governments more responsive to mass preferences when they negotiate in an EU setting (see Barber 1984, Schmitter 2000). But despite the rise in direct democracy in the EU, many aspects remain controversial (see Cronin 1999). Are voters sufficiently competent to take decisions on policy – and do they really vote on the relevant issues? Do élites use referendums for strategic manipulation? Does direct democracy threaten our representative institutions? Do referendums produce ‘conservative’ policy outcomes that tend to be biased against further integration? The scholarly community may provide (at least some of) the answers to these important questions by examining the issues discussed in this article.

The recent advances in the literature on referendums and integration bode well for the future research in this field. The study of EU referendums not only enhances our understanding of the workings and consequences of these referendums, but can also contribute to the wider field of politics and international relations. EU referendums provide a unique opportunity to study direct democracy comparatively, since no other issue has led to as many referendums cross-nationally as the process of European integration. The study of these referendums can thus improve our understanding of democratic theory and practice more generally by addressing issues such as civic participation, élite manipulation and voter competence in a comparative perspective. Moreover, the unique multi-level character of European integration referendums encourages researchers to study how domestic political processes affect international bargaining and it places citizens at the heart of the analysis of decision-making in the EU. By bringing together the comparative politics literature on voting behaviour and the international relations literature on international bargaining and European policy-making, the study of EU referendums could potentially generate new insights in both fields.

Address for correspondence: Sara Binzer Hobolt, Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Oxford, Manor Road, Oxford OX1 3UQ, UK. email: sara.hobolt@politics.ox.ac.uk

NOTES

- * I would like to thank Keiko Ono, Berthold Rittberger and an anonymous reviewer for useful comments and suggestions on earlier versions of this paper.
- 1 The Constitutional Treaty was rejected by 55 per cent of French voters on 28 May 2005 and by 62 per cent of Dutch voters on 1 June 2005. Previously, 77 per cent of Spanish voters had voted in favour of the Treaty in a referendum on 20 February 2005. Originally, ten countries had announced that they would hold referendums on the Constitutional Treaty, but after the negative votes in France and the Netherlands, most member states decided to put these referendums on hold. Only Luxembourg decided to go ahead with its referendum on 10 July 2005 in which a majority of 57 per cent of voters in the Grand Duchy approved the Treaty.
 - 2 Quotation from the Laeken Declaration adopted by the European Council, 15 December 2001.
 - 3 This figure was correct as of July 2005 and excludes referendums in the principality of Liechtenstein and the autonomous territories Greenland (Denmark) and the Aland Islands (Finland).
 - 4 Denmark, Ireland and Switzerland are the only West European countries with constitutional provisions for mandatory constitutional referendums which have been put into practice (Setälä 1999). Most of the new constitutions in Central and Eastern Europe also contain provisions for referendums.
 - 5 Quoted in Butler and Ranney (1994: 260).
 - 6 After the French and the Dutch no-votes, the British government has postponed any moves towards a referendum on the Constitutional Treaty.
 - 7 Studies of Californian referendums have shown that political parties need not always be the major players in referendums (see Lupia 1994), but in the context of EU referendums, political parties are the key élite actors advocating and opposing specific proposals.
 - 8 This claim of policy responsiveness has been disputed by Lascher *et al.* (1996) who argue that policy outcomes are not in fact closer to the median voter in states with referendum provisions. But their empirical models have been criticized by Matsusaka (2001).
 - 9 'Win-set of the status quo' is defined as the set of alternatives preferred by a certain decisive number of actors against the status quo.
 - 10 This research project is carried out in conjunction with the 'Domestic structures and European integration' (DOSEI) project: <http://dosei.dhv-speyer.de/>.

REFERENCES

- Banks, J.S. (1990) 'Monopoly agenda control and asymmetric information', *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 105: 445–64.
- Banks, J.S. (1993) 'Two-sided uncertainty in the monopoly agenda setter model', *Journal of Public Economics* 50: 445–64.
- Barber, B. (1984) *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Bowler, S. and Donovan, T. (1998) *Demanding Choices: Opinion, Voting and Direct Democracy*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan.
- Bowler, S., Donovan, T. and Tolbert, C.J. (eds) (1998) *Citizens as Legislators. Direct Democracy in the United States*, Columbus: Ohio State University Press.
- Budge, I. (2001) 'Political parties in direct democracy', in M. Mendelsohn and A. Parkin (eds), *Referendum Democracy: Citizens, Elites and Deliberation in Referendum Campaigns*, New York: Palgrave.

- Butler, D. and Ranney, A. (eds) (1978) *Referendums. A Comparative Study of Practice and Theory*, Washington: AEI Studies.
- Butler, D. and Ranney, A. (eds) (1994) *Referendums around the World. The Growing Use of Direct Democracy*, Washington: The AEI Press.
- Christin, T., Hug, S. and Sciarini, P. (2002) 'Interests and information in referendum voting: an analysis of Swiss voters', *European Journal of Political Research* 41(6): 759–76.
- Cronin, T.E. (1999) *Direct Democracy. The Politics of Initiative, Referendum and Recall*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Downs, A. (1957) *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, New York: HarperCollins.
- Franklin, M. (2002) 'Learning from the Danish case: a comment on Palle Svensson's critique of the Franklin thesis', *European Journal of Political Research* 41: 751–7.
- Franklin, M., Marsh, M. and McLaren, L. (1994a) 'Uncorking the bottle: popular opposition to European unification in the wake of Maastricht', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 32(4): 455–72.
- Franklin, M., Marsh, M. and Wlezien, C. (1994b) 'Attitudes toward Europe and referendum votes: a response to Siune and Svensson', *Electoral Studies* 13(2): 117–21.
- Franklin, M., van der Eijk, C. and Marsh, M. (1995) 'Referendum outcomes and trust in government: public support for Europe in the wake of Maastricht', *West European Politics* 18: 101–17.
- Gallagher, M. and Uleri, P.V. (eds) (1996a) *The Referendum Experience in Europe*, London: Macmillan Press.
- Garry, J., Marsh, M. and Sinnott, R. (2005) 'Second order versus issue voting effects in EU referendums: evidence from the Irish Nice Treaty referendums', *European Union Politics* 6(2): 201–21.
- Gerber, E.R. (1996) 'Legislative response to the threat of popular initiatives', *American Journal of Political Science* 40(1): 99–128.
- Gerber, E.R. and Hug, S. (1999) *Minority Rights and Direct Legislation. Theory, Methods and Evidence*, La Jolla: University of California, San Diego.
- Gerber, E.R. and Hug, S. (2001) 'Legislative response to direct legislation', in M. Mendelsohn and A. Parkin (eds), *Referendum Democracy: Citizens, Elites and Deliberation in Referendum Campaigns*, New York: Palgrave.
- Hix, S. (1999) 'Dimension and alignments in European Union politics: cognitive constraints and partisan responses', *European Journal of Political Research* 35(1): 69–106.
- Hobolt, S.B. (2005a) 'When Europe matters: the impact of political information on voting behaviour in EU referendums', *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties* 15(1): 85–109.
- Hobolt, S.B. (2005b) 'Taking cues on Europe? Voter competence in EU referendums'. Paper presented at the EUSA Conference 2005, Austin, Texas.
- Hooghe, L., Marks, G. and Wilson, C.J. (2002) 'Does left/right structure party positions on European integration?', *Comparative Political Studies* 35(8): 965–89.
- Hug, S. (1995) 'What causes referendums? Uncertainty? Preferences? Institutions?'. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of APSA, Chicago.
- Hug, S. (2002) *Voices of Europe: Citizens, Referendums and European Integration*, Boulder, CO: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Hug, S. (2004) 'Occurrence and policy consequences of referendums', *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 16(3): 321–35.
- Hug, S. and König, T. (2001) *Divided Government and the Ratification of the Amsterdam Treaty*, Austin: University of Texas at Austin.
- Hug, S. and König, T. (2002) 'In view of ratification. Governmental preferences, and domestic constraints at the Amsterdam Intergovernmental Conference', *International Organization* 56(2): 447–76.

- Hug, S. and Schulz, T. (2003) 'Referendums and ratification. A research design'. Unpublished manuscript.
- Hug, S. and Schulz, T. (2005) 'Using mass survey data to infer political positions', *European Union Politics* 6(3): 339–52.
- Hug, S. and Sciarini, P. (2000) 'Referendums on European integration: do institutions matter in the voter's decision?', *Comparative Political Studies* 33(1): 3–36.
- Iida, K. (1996) 'Involuntary defection in two-level games', *Public Choice* 89(2): 283–303.
- Kaufmann, B. and Waters, M.D. (eds) (2004) *Direct Democracy in Europe. A Comprehensive Reference Guide to the Initiative and Referendum Process in Europe*, Durham: Carolina Academic Press.
- Lascher, E.L., Hagen, M. and Rochlin, S. (1996) 'Gun behind the door? Ballot initiatives, state politics, and public opinion', *Journal of Politics* 58: 760–75.
- LeDuc, L. (2003) *The Politics of Direct Democracy. Referendums in Global Perspective*, Peterborough: Broadview Press.
- Lupia, A. (1992) 'Busy voters, agenda control, and the power of information', *American Political Science Review* 86: 390–403.
- Lupia, A. (1994) 'Shortcuts versus encyclopedias: information and voting behavior in California insurance reform elections', *American Political Science Review* 88(1): 63–76.
- Lupia, A. and Johnston, R. (2001) 'Are voters to blame? Voter competence and elite maneuvers in Referendums', in M. Mendelsohn and A. Parkin (eds), *Referendum Democracy: Citizens, Elites and Deliberation in Referendum Campaigns*, New York: Palgrave.
- Marks, G., Wilson, C.J. and Ray, L. (2002) 'National political parties and European integration', *American Journal of Political Science* 46(3): 585–94.
- Matusaka, J.G. (2001) 'Problems with a methodology used to test the responsiveness of policy to public opinion in initiative states', *Journal of Politics* LXIII: 1250–6.
- Moravcsik, A. (1993) 'Preferences and power in the European Community: a liberal intergovernmentalist approach', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 31: 473–524.
- Moravcsik, A. (1998) *The Choice for Europe: Social Purpose and State Power from Messina to Maastricht*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Morel, L. (2001) 'The rise of government-initiated referendums in consolidated democracies', in M. Mendelsohn and A. Parkin (eds), *Referendum Democracy: Citizens, Elites and Deliberation in Referendum Campaigns*, New York: Palgrave.
- Patterson, L.A. (1997) 'Agricultural policy reform in the European Community: a three-level game analysis', *International Organization* 51(1): 135–65.
- Putnam, R. (1988) 'Diplomacy and domestic politics: the logic of two-level games', *International Organization* 42(3): 427–60.
- Qvortrup, M. (2002) *A Comparative Study of Referendums. Government by the People*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Reif, K. and Schmitt, H. (1980) 'Nine second-order national elections: a conceptual framework for the analysis of European election results', *European Journal of Political Research* 8(1): 3–44.
- Romer, T. and Rosenthal, H. (1978) 'Bureaucrats versus voters: on the political economy of resource allocation by direct democracy', *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 93: 445–64.
- Romer, T. and Rosenthal, H. (1979) 'Political resource allocation, controlled agendas, and the status quo', *Public Choice* 33: 27–44.
- Schmitter, P.C. (2000) *How to Democratize the European Union ... and Why Bother?*, Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Schneider, G. and Cederman, L.-E. (1994) 'The change of tide in political cooperation: a limited information model of European integration', *International Organization* 48(4): 633–62.

- Schneider, G. and Weitsman, P. (1996) 'The punishment trap: integration referendums as popularity contests', *Comparative Political Studies* 28(4): 582–607.
- Setälä, M. (1999) *Referendums and Democratic Government: Normative Theory and the Analysis of Institutions*, London: Palgrave.
- Siune, K., Svensson, P. and Tonsgaard, O. (1992) *–det blev et nej*, Aarhus: Politica.
- Siune, K., Svensson, P. and Tonsgaard, O. (1994a) *–fra et nej til et ja*, Aarhus: Politica.
- Siune, K., Svensson, P. and Tonsgaard, O. (1994b) 'The EÜ: the Danes said "no" in 1992, but "yes" in 1993: how and why?', *Electoral Studies* 13(2): 107–16.
- Stoiber, M. and Thurner, P.W. (2000) *Der Vergleich von Ratifikationsstrukturen der EU-Mitgliedsländer für Intergouvernementale Verträge: Eine Anwendung des Veto-Spieler Konzeptes*, Mannheim: MZES.
- Svensson, P. (1984) 'Class, party and ideology: a Danish case study of electoral behaviour in referendums', *Scandinavian Political Studies* 17(1): 69–82.
- Svensson, P. (1994) 'The Danish yes to Maastricht and Edinburgh. The EC referendum of May 1993', *Scandinavian Political Studies* 17(1): 69–82.
- Svensson, P. (2002) 'Five Danish referendums on the European Community and European Union: a critical assessment of the Franklin thesis', *European Journal of Political Research* 41: 733–50.
- Widfeldt, A. (2004) 'Elite collusion and public defiance: Sweden's euro referendum in 2003', *West European Politics* 27(3): 503–18.
- Wyller, T.C. (1996) 'Norway: six exceptions to the rule', in M. Gallagher and P.V. Uleri (eds), *The Referendum Experience in Europe*, London: Macmillan Press.
- Zaller, J. (1992) *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.