

# The Basic Concept for the Democracy Ranking of the Quality of Democracy

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## **Abstract**

The following paper presents the basic concept for the *Democracy Ranking of the Quality of Democracy* and positions this approach in context of academic discourses about democracy and the quality of democracy. Key dimensions of democracy are freedom, equality and control. Quality-of-democracy models commonly emphasize a democracy understanding that is broader than earlier concepts of primarily electoral democracies. Different global democracy and democratization measurement initiatives (Freedom House, Polity IV, Vanhanen's Index of Democracy, and the Economist Intelligence Unit's Index of Democracy) are reviewed and compared. The Democracy Ranking underscores a conceptualization of the *Quality of Democracy* = *Quality of Politics* + *Quality of Society*. The conceptual formula for the Democracy Ranking (see Figure 5 in Chapter 5), therefore, may be summarized as: **quality of democracy = (freedom + other characteristics of the political system) + (performance of the non-political dimensions)**. This formula offers an opportunity for creating regularly conducted indicator-based rankings of countries, based on the quality of their democracy.

## 1. What is democracy? Short review of conceptual definitions

There exists not only one theory, concept or model of democracy, but clearly a pluralism (or plurality) of different theories and models.<sup>1</sup> Partially these varying theories or concepts could be integrated by a meta-theory or meta-concept; at the same time, however, it also should be acknowledged that some of those theories and concepts of democracy clearly contradict each other. This undoubtedly complicates every attempt of trying to set up and establish on a meta-level a *process of theory/concept integration*. Representatively, we may cite Bühlmann (et al. 2008, p. 5): “There is an abundant literature relating to democracy theory, with countless definitions of what democracy should be and what democracy is.” We can add on by referring to Laza Kekic (2007, p. 1): “There is no consensus on how to measure democracy, definitions of democracy are contested and there is an ongoing lively debate on the subject.”

In a first step, reflecting current mainstream understanding of democracy, one can refer to the free encyclopedia and online resource of Wikipedia.<sup>2</sup> Under the keyword of *democracy*, Wikipedia offers the following definition: “Democracy is a system of government by which political sovereignty is retained by the people and exercised directly by citizens.”<sup>3</sup> The same Wikipedia website also addresses in more detail different forms of democracy (e.g., parliamentary democracy, liberal democracy, direct democracy, socialist democracy, consensus democracy, supranational democracy, and non-

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<sup>1)</sup> In an attempt of relating “theory”, “concept” and “model”, one may postulate: a theory is more aggregative than a concept and in frequent cases also more aggregative than a model. Of course we also could design models for comparing and bridging (linking) different theories.

<sup>2)</sup> Free accessibility of information on the internet often is being regarded as a prerequisite for classifying information as a “globally available knowledge” that may fulfil certain conceptual benchmark functions for general definitions. Internet-based information provides the opportunity for serving as focal points for trans-national debates and discourses. (In Chapter 3 we will show that access to the Democracy Index of the Economist Intelligence Unit requires a subscription of the Economist.)

<sup>3)</sup> See: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democracy> (all indicated website addresses in this paper were retrieved during September 2008)

government democracy).<sup>4</sup> In etymological terms, the word democracy comes from ancient Greek *δημοκρατία* (*dēmokratīā*), which combines *dēmos*, the “people”, with *kratos*, meaning “rule”, “power” or “strength”. Put together, the literal denotation of democracy is “rule by the people”, culminating in a popular form of government. The historic origin of democracy roots in the Ancient Greek city-states of the fifth century BC, with Athens as the most prominent example.<sup>5</sup> Influential for modern politics (with regard to a frequent referencing) is the so-called “Gettysburg Address” of the U.S. president Abraham Lincoln (November 19, 1863), who coined democracy as a “government of the people, by the people, for the people”.<sup>6</sup>

Some conceptual work of academic scholars explicitly reviews the conceptual diversity of theoretical framing attempts of democracy (e.g., Bühlmann et al., 2008; Schmidt, 2006). Michael J. Sodaro (2004, pp. 31, ), for example, defines democracy as: “The essential idea of democracy is that the people have the right to determine who governs them. In most cases they elect the principal governing officials and hold them accountable for their actions. Democracies also impose legal limits on the government’s authority by guaranteeing certain rights and freedoms to their citizens.” In addition, Sodaro (2004, pp. 164, 182) introduces further conceptual aspects or the “four faces of democracy”: popular sovereignty<sup>7</sup>; rights and liberties<sup>8</sup>; democratic values<sup>9</sup>; and economic

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<sup>4</sup>) Moving on a continuum “scale of popular sovereignty” from “indirect” to “direct” democracy, Sodaro (2004, p. 168) plots the following concepts: representative democracy; plebiscitary democracy; techno-democracy; and direct democracy.

<sup>5</sup>) See also the Britannica internet source:

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/157129/democracy>

<sup>6</sup>) The full quote of the crucial passage of Lincoln’s speech is: “It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth” ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gettysburg\\_address](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gettysburg_address)). See also Sodaro (2004, 168).

<sup>7</sup>) “This is the notion that the people have the right to govern themselves” (Sodaro, 2004, p. 164).

<sup>8</sup>) “It consists of certain basic rights and freedoms that must be guaranteed by law to the citizenry” (Sodaro, 2004, p. 164).

democracy<sup>10</sup>. Furthermore, under the heading of “ten conditions for democracy”, Sodaro (2004, pp. 207-220) discusses the following aspects: “state institutions”; “elites committed to democracy”; “a homogeneous society”; “national wealth”; “private enterprise”; “a middle class”; “support of the disadvantaged for democracy”; “citizen participation, civil society, and a democratic political culture”; “education and freedom of information”; and “a favorable international environment”.

As the “three fundamental principles” and the “basic determinants of democracy”, Bühlmann (et al., 2008) identify the following key concepts: *equality*; *freedom*; and “control”. They summarize: “... we define freedom, equality and control as the three core principles of democracy. To qualify as a democracy, a given political system has to guarantee freedom and equality. Moreover, it has to optimize the interdependence between these two principles by means of control. Control is understood as control *by* the government as well as control *of* the government” (Bühlmann et al., 2008, p. 15). On freedom, the (United States-based) Freedom House organization underscores in its mission statement: “Freedom is possible only in democratic political systems in which the governments are accountable to their own people; the rule of law prevails; and freedoms of expression, association, and belief, as well as respect for their rights of minorities and women, are guaranteed.”<sup>11</sup> In this context we may raise the question, whether North American scholars are more inclined to emphasize the criterion of freedom, and Western European scholars more the criterion of equality? Public opinion surveys for Western Europe indicate that individuals with a more-left political orientation prefer equality, and individuals with a more-right (conservative) political orientation have preferences for freedom (Harding et al., 1986, p. 87).

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<sup>9</sup>) “Tolerance, fairness, and compromise are among the most important of these values” (Sodaro, 2004, p. 164).

<sup>10</sup>) “It establishes various criteria of fairness or equality as social and economic components of democracy” (Sodaro, 2004, p. 164).

<sup>11</sup>) See: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=2>

## **2. The empirical spreading of democracy in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries: The need for distinguishing between different qualities of democracy**

Currently (as of 2008) only three governments in the world do not self-identify themselves in their official *de jure* understanding as democracies.<sup>12</sup> During the second half of the twentieth century there has been a substantial empirical spreading of democracies, i.e. of democratic forms of government (in country-based democracies). In empirical terms, this clearly is being reflected by the *Freedom in the World* country rating scores, beginning 1972, as they are released by Freedom House. In 1972, only a minority of countries was rated as free. However, since then the number of free countries rose steadily, and since the 1990s there are more free than either partly free or not free countries (Freedom House, 2008a). According to a Freedom House survey, in mid-1992 about 24.8% of the world population lived in “free” countries. Until mid-2007, this figure increased to 45.9%.<sup>13</sup> As is being revealed by the data set of the Polity IV organization, the number of democracies increased considerably during the later years of the 1980s, and after 1990 there are clearly more democracies than “anocracies” (semi-authoritarian regimes) and “autocracies” (authoritarian regimes).<sup>14</sup> The collapse of non-democratic communist regimes in Central Eastern and Eastern Europe critically marked a crucial watershed for the advancement of democracies. Thus the hypothesis can be set up for discussion that democracy, after 1990, represents the dominant global regime type. The famous *The End of History* notion of Francis Fukuyama claims that in the world of ideas there exist no more real alternatives or challenges to the concept of “liberal democracy”. In that understanding democracy (liberal democracy) finally prevailed ideationally. A key quote of Fukuyama (1989, p. 3) is: “The twentieth century saw the developed world descend into a paroxysm of ideological violence, as liberalism contended first with the remnants of absolutism, then bolshevism and fascism, and finally an updated Marxism that threatened to lead to the ultimate apocalypse of nuclear war. ...

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<sup>12)</sup> See: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Democracy\\_claims\\_2.PNG](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Democracy_claims_2.PNG)

<sup>13)</sup> See: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=130&year=2008>

<sup>14)</sup> See: <http://www.systemicpeace.org/polity/global2.htm>

The triumph of the West, of the Western idea, is evident first of all in the total exhaustion of viable systematic alternatives to Western liberalism.”<sup>15</sup>

With reference to the spreading of democracies, Samuel P. Huntington (1991; 1997) speaks of three historical long *waves of democracy*. The first wave started in the first half of the nineteenth century, for example with the passing of the right to vote to the male population (male franchise) in the United States. This wave peaked in the 1920s, saw then a certain retreat in the inter-war period (1918-1939), with the collapse of some of the newly born European democracies. The second wave was launched after World War II and lasted until the 1960s, respectively the early 1970s. In the mid-1970s, finally, the third wave of democracy rose, extending to the democratization of countries in Latin America and in post-Communist Europe.<sup>16</sup> In current academic literature also the term of the “fourth wave of democracy” already is being used, addressing, for example, transition problems to democracy in post-communist countries (McFaul, 2002).

This empirical spreading of democracies during the second half of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century implicates two consequences. On the one hand, it can be claimed that, in principle, democracy represents the dominant form of government and governance (the dominant regime type). On the other hand, now it becomes more important to seek possibilities for distinguishing between different *qualities of democracy*, for the purpose of mutually learning from democracies, innovating democracies, and developing democracies further. During the post-1945 period of the Cold War, where the global system was to a large extent polarized by the competition of western democracies versus the totalitarian/authoritarian communist regimes, it appeared somewhat sufficient to apply in a simple dichotomized fashion the code “democratic” and “non-democratic”. Nowadays, there is more preference for the understanding of a continuum between the two (ideal typical) poles of *democratic* and *non-democratic*: this implies that there can exist very different forms of semi-democratic and semi-

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<sup>15</sup>) See also Fukuyama (1992).

<sup>16</sup>) For further academic review and use of the concept of waves-of-democracy see Markoff (1996). On the concept of democratization see also Whitehead (1998).

authoritarian regimes (Campbell et al., 1996, p. 5<sup>17</sup>; Sodaro, 2004, pp. 32-33<sup>18</sup>). The spreading (expansion) of democracy feeds conceptually and empirically a certain need for differentiating between low-quality, medium-quality and high-quality democracy. What are the crucial elements and procedures that make and advance a high-quality democracy? With the further evolution and evolution of democracies: Into which directions will new concepts of and demands on the quality of democracy move? In that context Jorge Vargas Cullell (2004, p. 116) cites the metaphor that an observed quality of democracy most probably will lie below the threshold of a high quality democracy.

The *end of history* notion of Fukuyama (ruling out the existence of viable conceptual alternatives to a western-style liberal democracy) attracts a certain plausibility. However, when we expect (at least potentially) a further development and advancement of democracies, why should this not impose effects on our concepts of democracy?<sup>19</sup> In his well known article, Fukuyama (1989) speaks of equality and inequality, and on page 9 also of “moral qualities”, but does not use the concept of the “quality of democracy”, as is being quickly revealed by a word count. In addition, we should assume that democracies will permanently be confronted by new (and old) problems that require alterations and permanent adaptation processes of problem-solving policies, yearning for “democratic innovation” (Saward, 2000). Liberal democracy certainly shows strengths with regard to the fundamental principle of *freedom*. But (western-style) liberal democracy also shows (substantial) weaknesses concerning the fundamental principle of *equality*. Constraints of equality refer to issues such as: gender democracy (e.g., see Pantelidou-Malouta, 2006), economic and socio-economic sustainability, and environmental responsibility. Normally, democracy is being seen in context of countries or nation-states. This concept of a country-based democracy certainly is challenged by ideas about supranational or transnational, even *global*

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<sup>17</sup>) See, furthermore: Campbell and Schaller, 2002.

<sup>18</sup>) “Viewed in these terms, the relationship between democracy and authoritarianism should be seen as a continuum, with intermediate gradations between the extremes” (Sodaro, 2004, p. 32).

<sup>19</sup>) We should note that also Fukuyama placed a question mark to the *end of history* article title in *The National Interest* of 1989.

*democracy* in the sense of “democratizing globalization” (Campbell, 1994; Held et al., 1999, pp. 444-452). The European Union experiences forms of “multi-level governance” (Hooghe and Marks, 2001), and it appears rational to apply this framework to other political structures. Furthermore, future advances in knowledge, such as scientific breakthroughs and innovations based on next generation technologies, may crucially alter and transform society, the economy, and thus also democracy. Concepts of the knowledge-based society and economy clearly underscore the importance of knowledge and knowledge advances (Carayannis and Campbell, 2006a).

### **3. Initiatives for an empirical measurement of democracies in global context: Freedom House, Polity IV, Vanhanen’s Index of Democracy, and Democracy Index**

Several initiatives have been established that are interested in measuring democracies empirically around the world. In the following, four of these initiatives are being portrayed in more detail, highlighting their conceptual and methodic approaches:

1. **Freedom House:**<sup>20</sup> In 1941, Freedom House was established in the United States<sup>21</sup> as a “nonprofit, nonpartisan organization”, interested in “combining analysis, advocacy and action”. In its mission statement, Freedom House stresses: “Freedom House is an independent nongovernmental organization that supports the expansion of freedom in the world”.<sup>22</sup> Freedom House opposes “dictatorships of the far left and the far right”. Freedom House publishes every year a *Freedom in the World* report, for example the *Map of Freedom 2008*, which covers worldwide all independent countries and also the related and disputed

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<sup>20</sup>) The general website address of Freedom House is: <http://www.freedomhouse.org>

<sup>21</sup>) Two important founding members of Freedom House were Eleanor Roosevelt and Wendell Willkie.

<sup>22</sup>) See: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=2>

territories (Freedom House, 2008b).<sup>23</sup> In its methodology chapter (Freedom House, 2008c)<sup>24</sup>, Freedom House explains the conceptual basis and the methodic procedures for those annual global freedom surveys.<sup>25</sup> Conceptually, freedom is being based on the two dimensions (axes) of *political rights* and *civil liberties*, which Freedom House (2008c, p. 6) calls “political rights and civil liberties checklists”. The political rights checklist is made up of the following sub-categories: “Electoral Process”; “Political Pluralism and Participation”; “Functioning of Government”; “Additional Discretionary Political Rights Questions”. The civil liberties checklist consists of the sub-categories: “Freedom of Expression and Belief”; “Associational and Organizational Rights”; “Rule of Law”; “Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights”. Every sub-category again is clustered into different sub-questions. In context of a peer review process<sup>26</sup>, experts (analysts) assign for every covered country a certain number of raw points to each sub-category: “Raw points are awarded to each of these questions on a scale of 0 to 4, where 0 points represents the smallest degree and 4 the greatest degree of rights or liberties present” (Freedom House, 2008c, p. 5). The maximum possible score for raw points for a country for the political rights are 40, and for the civil liberties 60. The raw points are converted into a 1-7 point rating scale, and the combined average of these two ratings determines the final “country status”, which is in numerical terms (Freedom House, 2008c, pp. 23-24): 1.0 to 2.5 = *free*; 3.0 to 5.0 = *partly free*; 5.5 to 7.0 = *not free*. Since 1972, Freedom House (2008a) publishes the status (free, partly free, and not free) of all covered countries in a world-wide comparative format. As of 2003, Freedom House also releases the aggregate scores (based on the raw points); and as of 2006, Freedom House additionally publishes sub-category scores (Freedom House, 2008d).<sup>27</sup> Who are the

<sup>23)</sup> The 2008 survey “... covers developments from January 1, 2007, through December 31, 2007, in 193 countries and 15 territories” (Freedom House, 2008c, p. 3). See: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=363&year=2008>

<sup>24)</sup> See:

[http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=351&ana\\_page=341&year=2008](http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=351&ana_page=341&year=2008)

<sup>25)</sup> See also: Gastil (1993).

<sup>26)</sup> Concerning methodical strengths and weaknesses of peer review and/or indicators, see the debate in: Campbell, 2003, pp. 106-110.

<sup>27)</sup> See: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=276>

peers, who carry out the country rating for Freedom House? For example, Freedom House documents publicly on its website the members of the “survey team” that were responsible for the *Freedom in the World* report for 2008.<sup>28</sup> The team consisted of 35 contributing authors and 16 academic advisors (Freedom House, 2008e). In the methodology chapter, Freedom House (2008c, p. 3) states: “The research and rating process involved 33 analysts and 16 senior-level academic advisers... The country and territory ratings were proposed by the analysts responsible for each related report.” In addition to the *Freedom in the World* reports<sup>29</sup>, Freedom House publishes annually a *Freedom of the Press* survey (Freedom House, 2008f).<sup>30</sup>

2. **Polity IV:**<sup>31</sup> Polity IV follows the “Polity research tradition” (Polity IV, 2008a, p. 1) that was established by the founder Ted Robert Gurr from the University of Maryland. Polity IV is being managed by the Center for Systematic Peace<sup>32</sup>, together with the Center for Global Policy, and as current director of Polity IV acts Monty G. Marshall from George Mason University. The Polity IV project refers to “political regime characteristics and transitions” (Polity IV, 2008a). The database of Polity IV covers all “major, independent states in the global system (i.e., states with total population of 500,000 or more in the most recent year; currently 162 countries)” for the period 1800-2006. In conceptual terms, the key research question of the Polity IV project focuses on “concomitant qualities of democratic and autocratic authority in governing institutions”. Three major regime types or types of “governing authority” are being proposed: “fully institutionalized autocracies”; “mixed, or incoherent, authority regimes”, which are also called “anocracies”; and “fully institutionalized democracies”. To reflect these regime types a 21-point scale or “Polity Score” was designed that applies

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<sup>28)</sup> See:

[http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=351&ana\\_page=343&year=2008](http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=351&ana_page=343&year=2008)

<sup>29)</sup> See on Wikipedia also: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedom\\_in\\_the\\_World](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedom_in_the_World)

<sup>30)</sup> See: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=16>

<sup>31)</sup> The general website address of Polity IV is:

<http://www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm>

<sup>32)</sup> See: <http://www.systemicpeace.org>

a score range from -10 (“hereditary monarchy”) to +10 (“consolidated democracy”). The Polity Score can also be transformed into a three-fold regime type categorization: “autocracies” (-10 to -6), “anocracies” (-5 to +5) and “democracies” (+6 to +10).<sup>33</sup> The polity scheme consists of six “component measures” that refer to “key qualities” of “executive recruitment”, “constraints on executive authority” and “political competition” (Polity IV, 2008a, pp. 2-3). In the *Polity IV Country Reports 2006*, these three concepts are expressed as “executive recruitment”, “executive constraints” and “political participation” (Polity IV, 2008c). For example, the 2006 rating for the United States reveals “competitive elections”, “executive parity or subordination”, and “institutionalized open electoral competition”; for China the rating concludes “designation”, “slight to moderate limitations”, and “repressed competition”. The whole data base of Polity IV, covering all independent countries with a population of 500,000 or more during the period 1800-2006, can be downloaded for free (Polity IV, 2008d).<sup>34</sup>

3. **Vanharen’s Index of Democracy:**<sup>35</sup> The Vanhanen’s Index of Democracy was designed and developed by Tuomas Vanhanen, now professor emeritus at the University of Tampere and the University of Helsinki. The index base are the key “dimensions” of “competition” and “participation”, which Vanhanen (2000a, pp. 188, 191) also addresses as the “two basic indicators of democratization (Competition and Participation”. As *competition* Vanhanen (2000a, p. 186) defines “... the percentage share of the smaller parties and independents of the votes cast in parliamentary elections, or of the seats in parliament”, where the “... smaller parties’ share was calculated by subtracting the largest party’s share from 100 per cent”. *Participation* is for Vanhanen (2000a, p. 186) “... the percentage of the adult population that voted in elections”. To qualify as a democracy, Vanhanen (2000a, p. 193) argues for minimum

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<sup>33</sup>) For a global evolution of these regime types during the period 1946-2006, see Polity IV (2008b).

<sup>34</sup>) For a further reading on concepts and methods of Polity IV see Ted Robert Gurr et al. (1993).

<sup>35</sup>) The general website address of the Vanhanen’s Index of Democracy is: <http://www.prio.no/CSCW/Datasets/Governance/Vanhagens-index-of-democracy>

thresholds of at least 30% for competition and of at least 10% for participation. Vanhanen leverages on competition and participation for calculating an aggregated *Index of Democratization*: “Because both dimensions of democratization are necessary for democracy, I have weighted them equally in my Index of Democratization (ID)” (Vanharen, 2000a, p. 191; see also Pickel and Pickel, 2006a, pp. 194-199).<sup>36</sup> In cooperation with the International Peace Research Institute (PRIO) in Oslo, Norway, Vanhanen posted to the internet his “Polyarchy dataset” that covers 187 countries for the period 1810-2000 (Vanharen, 2008a; 2008b). Vanhanen stresses the similarity of his two dimensions of competition and participation with the two concepts of “public contestation” and “participation” that were introduced by Robert A. Dahl (1971, p. 7).

4. **Democracy Index:**<sup>37</sup> Recently the Economist (*Economist.com*) launched an initiative for designing and setting up a *democracy index* (The Economist Intelligence Unit’s Index of Democracy, 2008). The democracy index refers directly to Freedom House and Freedom House’s concepts of political rights and civil liberties. The democracy index claims that freedom should not be treated as a synonym for democracy: “Although the terms ‘freedom’ and ‘democracy’ are often used interchangeably, the two are not synonymous” (Kekic, 2007, p. 1). The democracy index is interested in applying a broader concept of democracy: “The Economist Intelligence Unit’s index is based on the view that measures of democracy that reflect the state of political freedoms and civil liberties are not thick enough. They do not encompass sufficiently or at all some features that determine how substantive democracy is or its quality. Freedom is an essential component of democracy, but not sufficient” (Kekic, 2007, p. 2). In conceptual terms, the democracy index applies the following five “categories”: “electoral

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<sup>36</sup>) For a further reading see: Vanhanen 2000b and Vanhanen 2003.

<sup>37</sup>) The general website address of the Democracy Index is:

[http://www.economist.com/markets/rankings/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=8908438](http://www.economist.com/markets/rankings/displaystory.cfm?story_id=8908438).

See also:

[http://www.economist.comtheworldin/international/displayStory.cfm?story\\_id=8166790&d=2007](http://www.economist.comtheworldin/international/displayStory.cfm?story_id=8166790&d=2007)

process and pluralism”; “civil liberties”; “the functioning of government”; “political participation”; and “political culture”. Every country is being rated for each of those categories, and finally also an overall score is calculated. The *Democracy Index 2006* compares 165 independent states and 2 territories. Based on the aggregated overall scores, the democracy index distinguishes between the following regime types: “full democracies” (overall scores from 8 to 10), “flawed democracies” (6 to 7.9), “hybrid regimes” (4 to 5.9), and “authoritarian regimes” (less than 4). In 2006, Sweden ranked first (scoring at 9.88), and North Korea ranked last (with a score of 1.03). Referring to the whole world population and the year 2006, 13% lived in full democracies<sup>38</sup>, and 38.2% in authoritarian regimes (Kekic, 2007).<sup>39</sup>

The relationship between freedom and democracy obviously is complex. We interpret freedom as a crucial and necessary dimension of democracy. Thus, without freedom, a democracy cannot exist. This, however, does not automatically determine in conceptual terms, whether or not there is a need for dimensions in addition to freedom for qualifying a country or a political system as democratic. In several theoretical and/or conceptual understandings of democracy, freedom alone would be insufficient. Often equality also is being regarded as a crucial additional dimension for democracy (see again Bühlmann et al., 2008, pp. 8-9). Based on the key word “list of indices of freedom”, Wikipedia<sup>40</sup> retrieves the following initiatives and organizations: Freedom in the World (Freedom House), Index of Economic Freedom (Wall Street Journal and Heritage Foundation)<sup>41</sup>, Worldwide Press Freedom Index (Reporters Without Borders)<sup>42</sup>, Economic Freedom of the World Index (Fraser Institute)<sup>43</sup>, and the Index of Democracy (The Economist Intelligence Unit). Concerning Freedom House and the Democracy Index, this list of freedom indices cross-cuts with the above discussed initiatives that focus on measuring

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<sup>38</sup>) Full democracies and flawed democracies combined amount to 51.3%.

<sup>39</sup>) See also on Wikipedia: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democracy\\_index](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democracy_index)

<sup>40</sup>) See: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_Indices\\_of\\_Freedom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Indices_of_Freedom)

<sup>41</sup>) See: <http://www.heritage.org/research/features/index>

<sup>42</sup>) See: <http://www.rsf.org>

<sup>43</sup>) See: <http://www.freetheworld.com/release.html>

democracies in a global context. Sodaro (2004, p. 33) offers a scheme, how the freedom ratings of Freedom House may be transferred on a “democracy-authoritarianism continuum” into the categories “democratic”, “semi-democratic”, “semi-authoritarian”, and “authoritarian”.

From the academic side already several attempts have been undertaken to evaluate comparatively the quality of different democracy measurement indices (Munck and Verkuilen, 2002; Müller and Pickel, 2007; see also Inkeles, 1993).<sup>44</sup> The Vanhanen Index of Democracy uses objective (or quasi-objective) data, however, could be criticized for applying “questionable indicators” (Munck and Verkuilen, 2002, p. 28). When the Vanhanen Index is being compared with Freedom House and Polity IV, it appears that Vanhanen’s Index is more permissive in allowing a country to be characterized as being democratic (Vanharen, 2000, p. 195). The annual freedom reports of Freedom House are based on peer review processes. This implies the problem that freedom ranking results may be determined by the membership composition of the peer panels, raising issues such as “subjective measures of liberal democracies” (see Bollen, 1993a; Bollen and Paxton, 2000). Furthermore, criticism has been articulated that the freedom reports of Freedom House correlate too closely with foreign policy positions of the United States and thus might be biased one-sidedly in favor of a U.S. perception of the world.<sup>45</sup> In methodic terms, also the 7-point rating scale of Freedom House could be questioned for not distinguishing sensitively enough. For example, since 1972, the United States received every year for the political rights as well as the civil liberties always (and only) the top rating score of “1” (Freedom House, 2008a).<sup>46</sup> Perhaps in (partial) reaction to this, Freedom House (2008d) recently decided to release the sub-category and aggregate scores of the last few years that deliver more differentiating ranking results. At the same time, however, also the strengths of the Freedom House freedom rankings should be underscored. So far, no other source exists that annually

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<sup>44</sup>) Furthermore see: Lauth et al., 2000; Lauth, 2004; Pickel and Pickel, 2006b.

<sup>45</sup>) See on Wikipedia: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedom\\_House](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedom_House)

<sup>46</sup>) As a conceptual consequence of the applied model design, the U.S. also always received (receives), since 1946, in the Polity IV project a top score (Polity IV, 2008c). This effect additionally refers to some of the other developed countries, covered by Polity IV.

and reliably publishes freedom rankings for more than three (now almost four) decades. Freedom House also is being frequently cited by other scholarly work.<sup>47</sup> The Economist Intelligence Unit's Index of Democracy engaged in democracy measurement, based on the claim of developing a democracy index that is broader ("thicker") than Freedom House. The Economist's democracy index is not fully publicly accessible, but tied to a subscription of the Economist, thus complicating an open review of this initiative.<sup>48</sup> One option to access the Economist's democracy index document of Kekic (2007) is to move through the Wikipedia website.<sup>49</sup> In their conclusion on different democracy measurement indices, Munck and Verkuilen (2002, p. 29) emphasize that "... there remains much room for improving the quality of data on democracy". Finally it should be mentioned that there exist also democracy initiatives in addition to Freedom House, Polity IV, Vanhanen, and the Economist. The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) focuses on providing "knowledge to democracy builders", "policy development and analysis" and support for a "democratic reform" (see also Beetham, 1993, and Beetham et al., 2002).<sup>50</sup> Bühlmann et al. (2008, p. 2) report on designing a Democracy Barometer for Established Democracies that "... tries to fill a gap in the measurement of democracy".

#### **4. Minimum or maximum definitions of democracy? Short review of concepts of the quality of democracy**

According to Freedom House (2008c, pp. 9-10), to qualify as an "electoral democracy", a country must meet "certain minimum standards". Freedom House lists the following four criteria: (1) "A competitive, multiparty political

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<sup>47</sup>) See on Google Scholar:

<http://scholar.google.com/scholar?q=%22freedom+in+the+world%22+%22freedom+house%22&hl=en&lr=&start=10&sa=N>

<sup>48</sup>) See again:

[http://www.economist.com/markets/rankings/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=8908438](http://www.economist.com/markets/rankings/displaystory.cfm?story_id=8908438)

<sup>49</sup>) The Wikipedia entry on the Democracy Index of the Economist states: "Most answers are 'experts' assessments'; the report does not indicate what kinds of experts, nor their number, nor whether the experts are employees of The Economist or e.g. independent scholars, nor the nationalities of the experts". See: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democracy\\_Index](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democracy_Index)

<sup>50</sup>) The general website address of IDEA is: <http://www.idea.int>

system”; (2) “Universal adult suffrage for all citizens”; (3) “Regularly contested elections conducted in conditions of ballot secrecy, reasonable ballot secrecy, and in the absence of massive voter fraud, and that yield results that are representative of the public will”; (4) and “Significant public access of major political parties to the electorate through the media and through generally open political campaigning”. Based on the conceptual and methodic framework of Freedom House, every *liberal democracy* also is an *electoral democracy*, but not every electoral democracy qualifies as a liberal democracy. This means that a liberal democracy demands sufficient democracy standards, and not only minimum standards. Liberal democracy goes beyond the minimum standards of an electoral democracy. In such an understanding a liberal democracy already represents a higher manifestation form of democracy. In the own words of Freedom House (2008c, p. 10): “Freedom House’s term ‘electoral democracy’ differs from ‘liberal democracy’ in that the latter also implies the presence of a substantial array of civil liberties. In the survey, all Free countries qualify as both electoral and liberal democracies. By contrast, some Partly Free countries qualify as electoral, but not liberal, democracies”. The *Freedom in the World* survey 2008 by Freedom House indicates all together 121 electoral democracies in 2007<sup>51</sup>; by contrast, in the same year 2007, there were only 90 free countries<sup>52</sup>, i.e. liberal democracies (Freedom House, 2008g). Freedom House’s *Map of Freedom 2008*<sup>53</sup> visualizes the global distribution of free, partly free and not free countries around mid-2007.<sup>54</sup> Several scholars paraphrase western democracies typically as manifestations of liberal democracy.<sup>55</sup> Here, again, Fukuyama (1989, p. 4)

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<sup>51</sup>) See: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/Chart120File165.pdf>

<sup>52</sup>) See: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/Chart116File163.pdf>

<sup>53</sup>) See: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=363&year=2008>

<sup>54</sup>) For a visual presentation of electoral democracies in mid-2007, according to Freedom House data, see on Wikipedia:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Freedom\\_House\\_electoral\\_democracies\\_2008.gif](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Freedom_House_electoral_democracies_2008.gif)

<sup>55</sup>) Wikipedia suggests the following definition for a liberal democracy: “A Liberal democracy is a representative democracy in which the ability of the elected representatives to exercise decision-making power is subject to the rule of law, and usually moderated by a constitution that emphasizes the protection of the rights and freedoms of individuals, and which places constraints on the leaders and on the extent to which the will of the majority can be exercised against the rights of minorities”. See: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democracy>

could be quoted prominently, when he claims: "... but the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government." Fukuyama's conceptual paradigm reinforces the conceptual framework of Freedom House. Other scholars are more inclined to distinguish between different types of western democracies, offering typologies for a patterning. Arend Lijphart (1984, pp. 1-36) focuses on comparing majoritarian (the so-called *Westminster Model of Democracy*) and consensus (*Consensus Model of Democracy*) types of governments. Michael Sodaro (2004, p. 48) clusters western democracies based on the degree of development of their social welfare systems: "The United States usually leans toward liberal democracy (though it also provides numerous social welfare benefits), whereas most West European countries typically lean toward social democracy (though they also provide basic political and economic liberties)". Laza Kekic from the Economist Intelligence Unit's Index of Democracy asserts that the criteria of Freedom House for a liberal democracy are not substantially different from the criteria for an electoral democracy: "The Freedom House definition of political freedom is somewhat (though not much) more demanding than its criteria for electoral democracy" (Kekic, 2008, p. 1).<sup>56</sup>

How narrowly or how broadly should a democracy be (theoretically) conceptualized? There exists a variety of minimum versus maximum definitions of democracy. Bühlmann et al. (2008, p. 5) introduce a three-fold typology: *minimalist* would be "elitist", focusing on a "government of the people" and an "effective governance"; *medium* would be "participatory", underscoring the "government of and by the people" and an "intense and qualitative participation and representation"; and *maximalist* stresses the "social", a "government of, by, and for the people" and the characteristics of "best representation/high participation, social justice".<sup>57</sup> Kekic uses in this context the terms of "thin" and "thick" concepts of democracy, but refers to Michael Coppedge as original author on that wording: "A key difference in the

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<sup>56</sup>) In Chapter 3, we already referred to the circumstance that the Economist Intelligence Unit's Index of Democracy cannot be accessed on the internet without subscribing the Economist.

<sup>57</sup>) Metaphorically, here, the "Gettysburg Address" of Abraham Lincoln is being iterated.

various measures of democracy is between ‘thin’ or minimalist ones and ‘thick’ or wider concepts (Coppedge, 2005)” (Kekic, 2007, p. 1).<sup>58</sup> Sodaro (2004, pp. 168, 180, 182) offers different *minimum* and *maximum* examples for democracy: “representative democracy” versus “direct democracy” on a “continuum of popular sovereignty”; “laissez-faire” versus “councils and participatory democracy” on a “continuum of economic decision-making regimes”; and “non-discrimination” versus “affirmative action” in context of “democratic values”. Minimum and/or maximum definitions of democracy also could be re-worded as *focused* (more narrow) and/or *comprehensive* (wider) concepts (theories) of democracy. In that understanding, a focused democracy concept defines democracy as a characteristic (property) of the political system; whereas a comprehensive democracy concept refers also to society (and the economy, perhaps even the environment) and is interested in contextualizing the political system within the context of society. This *focused/political* and/or *comprehensive/societal* continuum could be linked furthermore to a multi-level architecture (local, national, global) of political and non-political structures (see Figure 1 for a graphical visualization). An electoral democracy (minimum standards) is more narrowly set up than a liberal democracy (sufficient standards). Referring back to the four initiatives of empirical democracy measurement that we discussed in the previous chapter (Chapter 3), we could propose the following sequencing based on a “thinner” or broader conceptualization of democracy: (1) the Vanhanen Index of democracy represents a thin concept that looks at electoral competition and participation, where we may even question whether or not the minimum criteria for democracy are being fulfilled; (2) Polity IV already is broader, and Polity IV introduces a more comprehensive perspective of political institutions; (3) the freedom concept of Freedom House is broader than Polity IV, since it includes a functioning government and several civil liberties to its checklist of criteria; (4) and the Economist’s Democracy Index perhaps is broader than Freedom House, because the Democracy Index integrates also political culture as a benchmark.

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<sup>58</sup>) Kekic cites, of Michael Coppedge (2005), his working paper “Defining and Measuring Democracy” that was presented at the International Political Science Association.

The *Human Development Index* (HDI), on the contrary, which is being published for all countries in the world in the annually released Human Development Reports, combines and integrates a life expectancy index (life expectancy in years), an education index (adult literacy and “combined primary, secondary and tertiary gross enrolment”), and a GPD index (“adjusted GDP<sup>59</sup> per capita”, PPP<sup>60</sup> US\$) (see, for example, United Nations Development Programme, 2007, pp. 229-233, 355-361). Thus the Human Development Index qualifies as a broad concept that monitors developments of society and the economy. But looked at in isolation, it could be questioned, whether the HDI really measures democracy and therefore has the capability for representing a serious measure for democracy. However, as will be demonstrated later, contextualized in a broader theoretical framework of analysis also the HDI could be leveraged for assessing the qualities of democracies (see O'Donnell, 2004a; more particularly 2004b, pp. 11-12).<sup>61</sup>

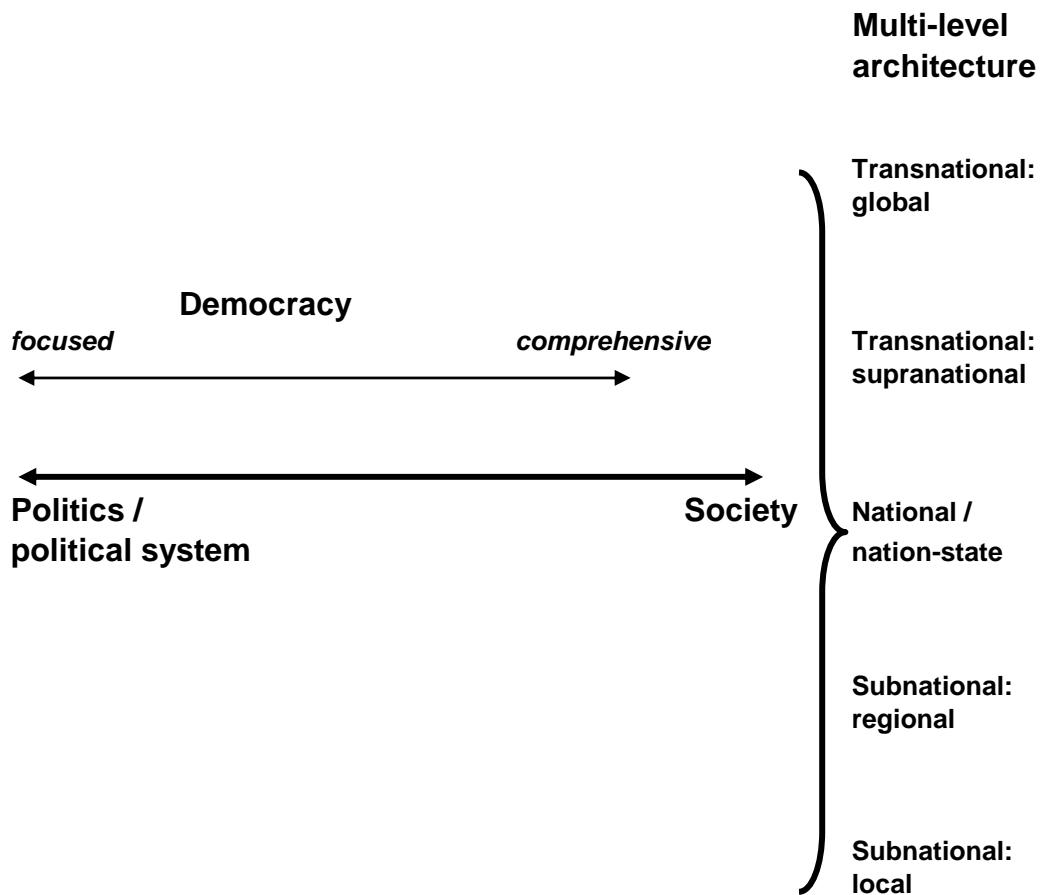
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<sup>59</sup>) GDP: gross domestic product.

<sup>60</sup>) PPP: purchasing power parity.

<sup>61</sup>) For the general website address of the Human Development Reports see:  
<http://hdr.undp.org/xmlsearch/reportSearch?y=&c=&t=&k=&orderby=year>

Figure 1: Minimum or maximum definitions of democracy?



Source: Author's own conceptualization.

In *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, Anthony Downs (1957<sup>62</sup>/1985, pp. 23-24) establishes eight criteria that define the “nature of democratic government”. Three of these are: (1) “The losing parties in an election never try by force or any illegal means to prevent the winning party (or parties) from taking office”; (2) “The party in power never attempts to restrict the political activities of any citizens or other parties as long as they make no attempt to overthrow the government by force”; and (3) “There are two or more parties competing for control of the governing apparatus in every election”. In his

<sup>62</sup>) This book was first published and released in 1957.

influential book *Polyarchy*, Robert A. Dahl (1971, pp. 2-9) suggests that democracy and democratization consist of two (theoretical) dimensions: (1) *contestation* (“public contestation”, “political competition”)<sup>63</sup> and (2) *participation* (“participation”, “inclusiveness”, “right to participate in elections and office”). These dimensions are contextualized by “eight institutional guarantees” (Dahl, 1971, p. 3). As a polyarchy, Dahl (1971, pp. 8) defines: “Polyarchies, then, may be thought of as relatively (but incompletely) democratized regimes, or, to put it in another way, polyarchies are regimes that have been substantially popularized and liberalized, that is, highly inclusive and extensively open to public contestation”.<sup>64</sup> Munck and Verkuilen (2002, p. 9) emphasize that “Dahl’s … influential insight that democracy consists of two attributes—contestation or competition and participation or inclusion—has done much to ensure that these measures of democracy are squarely focused on theoretically relevant attributes.”<sup>65</sup> It would be interesting to analyze, whether or not the presented concepts of Downs and Dahl lean more in favor of an electoral and/or liberal democracy. In case of the Downsian model the hypothesis could be set up that his conceptual framework focuses more on attributes that associate closer to an electoral democracy.<sup>66</sup> Dahl’s model is perhaps somewhat broader (when we look at the political dimensions). The Dahl model could be interpreted in both ways, because Dahl’s understanding of polyarchies bridges electoral as well as liberal democracies.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup>) “Throughout this book the terms liberalization, political competition, competitive politics, public contestation, and public opposition are used interchangeably to refer to this dimension, and regimes relatively high on this dimension are frequently referred to as competitive regimes” (Dahl, 1971, p. 4).

<sup>64</sup>) On Wikipedia, polyarchy is being defined as: “In modern political science, the term **Polyarchy** ([Greek](#): *poly* many, *arkhe* rule)<sup>[1]</sup> was introduced by [Robert A. Dahl](#), now emeritus professor at [Yale University](#), to describe a [form of government](#) in which power is vested in three or more persons.” See: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polyarchy>

<sup>65</sup>) See also Bollen (1993b, pp. 5-10).

<sup>66</sup>) Bollen (1993b, p. 7) concludes on Anthony Downs: “Downs … states that a democracy must have periodic elections decided by majority with a one-person one-vote standard.”

<sup>67</sup>) Interestingly, Dahl does not cite the earlier work of Downs, as is being documented by the index in Dahl’s book (1971, pp. 251-257). Downs (1957/1985, p. 302), on the contrary, refers to Dahl.

In a recent review of approaches on the quality of democracy and “good governance”, Larry Diamond and Leonardo Morlino (2004) emphasize that this would imply freedom, equality and control, and offer a three-fold quality structure: “quality of results”<sup>68</sup>, “quality of content”<sup>69</sup>, and “procedural quality”<sup>70</sup>. Diamond and Morlino (2004, p. 22) state: “The multidimensional nature of our framework, and of the growing number of democracy assessments that are being conducted, implies a pluralist notion of democratic quality.” Diamond and Morlino (2004, pp. 22-23) stress “eight dimensions of democratic quality”: (1) *rule of law* (O’Donnell, 2004a); (2) *participation*; (3) *competition*; (4) *vertical accountability* (Schmitter, 2004); (5) *horizontal accountability*; (6) *freedom* (Beetham, 2004); (7) *equality*; and (8) *responsiveness*. The first five dimensions (1-5), Diamond and Morlino (2004, p. 23) qualify as “procedural dimensions”.<sup>71</sup> It is obvious that this multidimensional framework goes beyond the minimum standards of an electoral democracy and matches easily the necessary demands for a liberal democracy. These dimensions identify high-quality standards for advanced democracies, pinpointing challenges for contemporary western liberal democracies and the whole further future evolution of democracies in global context. Does a high-quality democracy develop substantially beyond the thresholds of a liberal democracy? Robert Dahl indicated the two dimensions of participation and contestation (competition) as key for the dynamics of democracies (democratic polyarchies). Diamond and Morlino emphasize eight relevant dimensions. This means that the two-fold dimensional democracy structure of Dahl is being extended to an eight-fold dimensional structure. The extension illustrates the conceptual shift from (low-level quality) electoral democracy to (medium-level and high-level quality) liberal democracy, also supporting the notion that the quality of democracy is conceptually more

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<sup>68</sup>) Such “... a regime will satisfy citizen expectations regarding governance” (Diamond and Morlino, 2004, p. 22).

<sup>69</sup>) “... it will allow citizens, associations, and communities to enjoy extensive liberty and political equality” (Diamond and Morlino, 2004, p. 22).

<sup>70</sup>) “... and it will provide a context in which the whole citizenry can judge the government’s performance through mechanisms such as elections, while governmental institutions and officials hold one another legally and constitutionally accountable as well” (Diamond and Morlino, 2004, p. 22).

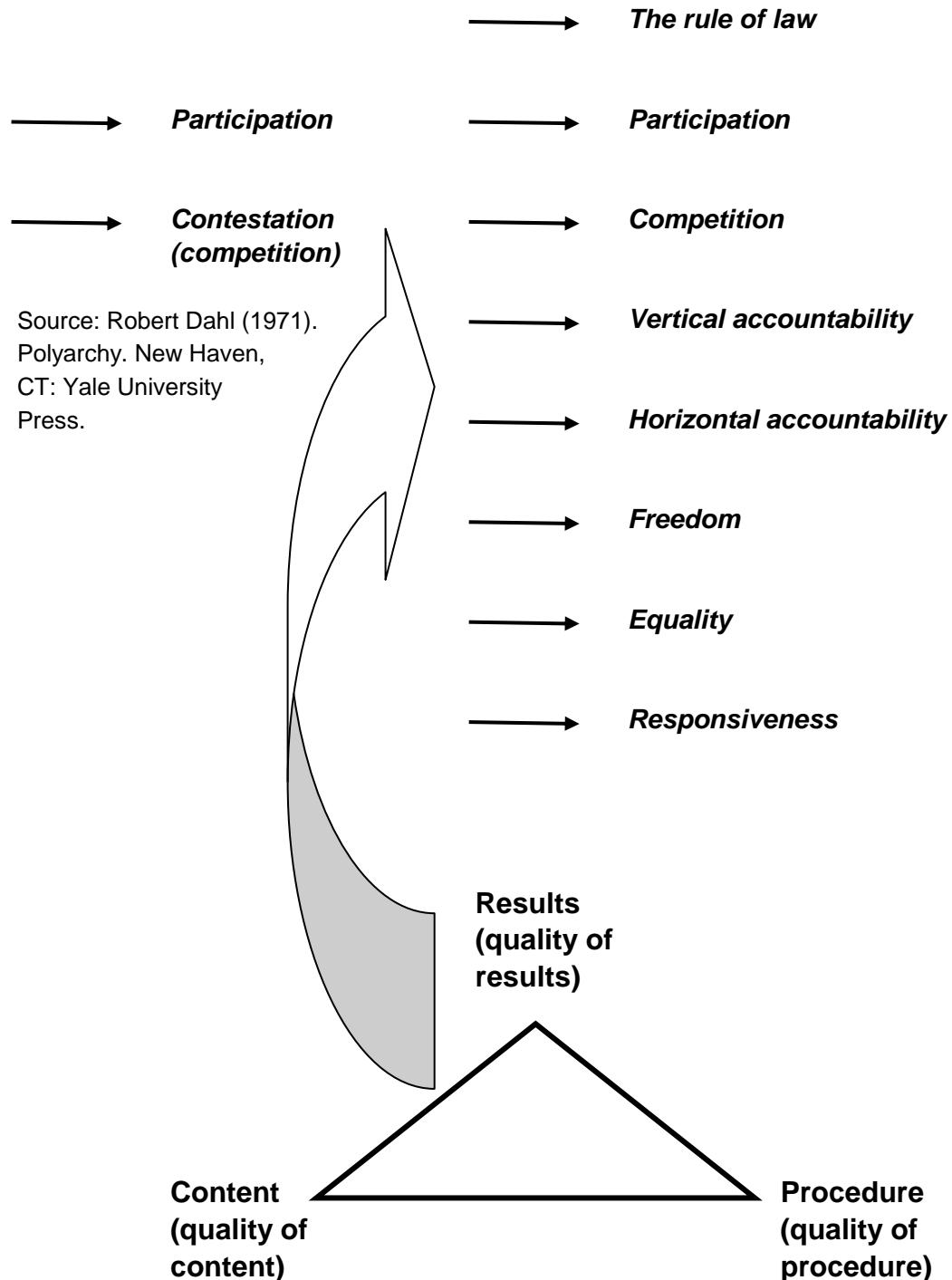
<sup>71</sup>) See also Diamond and Morlino (2005).

comprehensive (broader) than the (thinner) conceptual formulas for electoral or early-stage liberal democracies (see Figure 2).<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup>) Compare also the Figures 1 and 2.

Figure 2: Dimensions for the measurement and/or improvement of the quality of democracy.



Source: Diamond & Morlino (2004). The Quality of Democracy. An Overview.  
Journal of Democracy, 15 (4), 20-31.

Source for visual arrangement of Figure 2: Author's own conceptualization.

Guillermo O'Donnell (2004b, p. 13) conceptualizes the “human being as an agent”, endowed with three attributes: an autonomy for decisions-making; a cognitive ability for reasoning; and a responsibility for actions. According to O'Donnell, the concepts of democracy and of the quality of democracy are being based on the two principles of *human development* and *human rights*.<sup>73</sup> O'Donnell (2004b, pp. 12-13, 42, 47) offers the following conceptual specifications: (1) “human development”<sup>74</sup> focuses on the basic conditions or capabilities that enable individuals to act (behave) as agents. The human development clearly addresses the social and economic contexts. Concerning his understanding of human development, O'Donnell (2004b, pp. 11-12)<sup>75</sup> draws interestingly a direct line of reference to the Human Development Reports of the UNDP, and to their underlying concept of the applied Human Development Index (see again United Nations Development Programme, 2007). This gives reasoning why even a measure for social and economic development (such as the Human Development Index) could be of a crucial value for measuring the quality of a democracy and supplies, furthermore, justification for broader concepts of democracy. (2) Conventionally, “human rights” are being clustered in political rights, civil rights and social rights.<sup>76</sup> A legal system is crucial for balancing the state and for constraining possible state violence. The “social dimension” is being interpreted as “necessary

<sup>73</sup>) “The concepts of human development and human rights share an underlying, universalistic vision of the human being as an agent” (O'Donnell, 2004b, p. 13).

<sup>74</sup>) “... what may be, at least, a minimum set of conditions, or capabilities, that enable human beings to function in ways appropriate to their condition as such beings. ... This vision leads to the question of what may be the basic conditions that normally enable an individual to function as an agent” (O'Donnell, 2004b, pp. 12-13).

<sup>75</sup>) “The concept of human development that has been proposed and widely diffused by UNDP's *Reports* and the work of Amartya Sen was a reversal of prevailing views about development. Instead of focusing on aggregate measures of economic performance or utility, human development as conceived by UNDP and Sen begins and ends with human beings. The concept asks how every individual is doing in relation to the achievement of ‘the most elementary capabilities, such as living a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable, and enjoying a decent standard of living’ (UNDP 2000a: 20)” (O'Donnell, 2004b, pp. 11-12). See in our reference list: United Nations Development Programme, 2000.

<sup>76</sup>) As original source for this typology of rights, O'Donnell (2004b, pp. 47, 88) cites the text “Citizenship and Social Class” by T. H. Marshall (1964).

milieus” that allow a transformation of (formal) rights into real “freedoms”.<sup>77</sup> Consequently, without human development, the human rights are more rights and not so much freedoms. In this context, O’Donnell (2004b, p. 55) uses the metaphor of speaking of the three interacting currents of human rights, human development and democracy: “All the rights and capabilities associated with democracy, human rights, and human development directly pertain to, and enable, agency. This is the nexus of these three currents.” There operates also something like an “unbreakable vicious circle”: “basic human capabilities and human rights” clearly support the “effectuation of political rights”; at the same time, however, human rights have the potential of supporting the progress of human development (O’Donnell, 2004b, p. 61). Framed in a positively synergetic interaction loop, this should imply a “truly *democratic* rule of law”: “... a state that enacts a democratic rule of law, or an *estado democrático de derecho*” (O’Donnell, 2004a, pp. 32, 36). Furthermore, O’Donnell (2004b, pp. 37-43) elaborates which “social context” enhances the quality of a democracy. O’Donnell focuses on the following criteria: (1) free and pluralistic information;<sup>78</sup> (2) a social context, reinforced by a legal system, based on a diversity of values, life styles, and opinions;<sup>79</sup> (3) and a public sphere with a pluralism of debates and discourses.<sup>80</sup> Put in summary, it is evident that O’Donnell’s concept of democracy and the quality of democracy is clearly more demanding than the simple vision of an electoral democracy (see Figure 3).

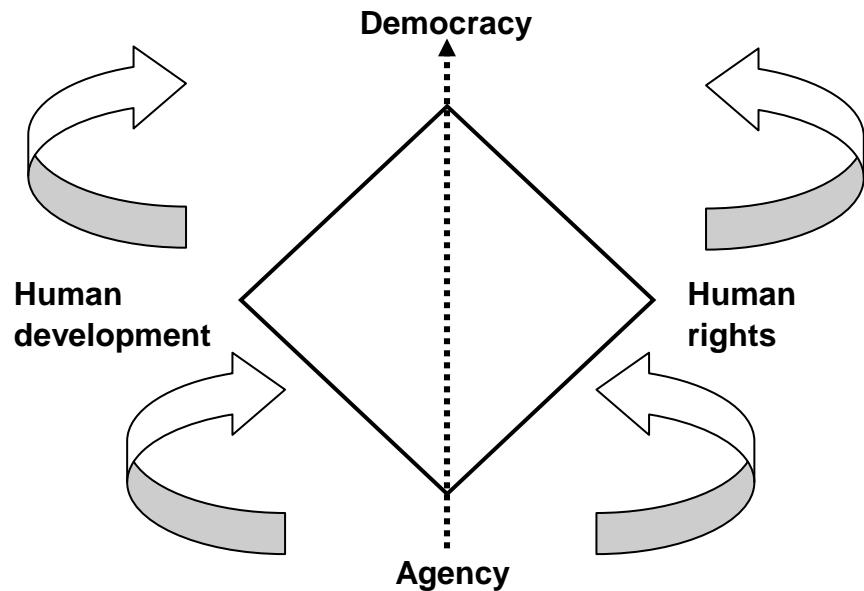
<sup>77</sup>) “These are necessary milieus for the existence of these rights, which in their social expression I have called freedoms” (O’Donnell, 2004b, p. 42).

<sup>78</sup>) “... the availability of free, pluralistic, and nonmonopolized or state-censored information is another necessary condition for the existence of a democratic regime” (O’Donnell, 2004b, p. 37).

<sup>79</sup>) “... a social context that is congenial to the existence of a diversity of values, beliefs, lifestyles, and opinions. The other condition is—once again—a legal system that backs this diversity” (O’Donnell, 2004b, p. 38).

<sup>80</sup>) “Furthermore, such a social context, populated by legally backed plural agents, offers the public good that authoritarian rulers most strive to suppress: the possible emergence of a public sphere of free and public discussions and deliberation about matters of general interest” (O’Donnell, 2004b, 39).

Figure 3: A conceptual visual summary of O'Donnell's analysis of the quality of democracy.



Source: Guillermo O'Donnell (2004). Human Development, Human Rights, and Democracy, 9-92, in: Guillermo O'Donnell / Jorge Vargas Culell / Osvaldo M. Iazzetta (eds.): The Quality of Democracy. Theory and Applications. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.

Source for visual arrangement of Figure 3: Author's own conceptualization.

## **5. The basic concept for the Democracy Ranking of the Quality of Democracy**

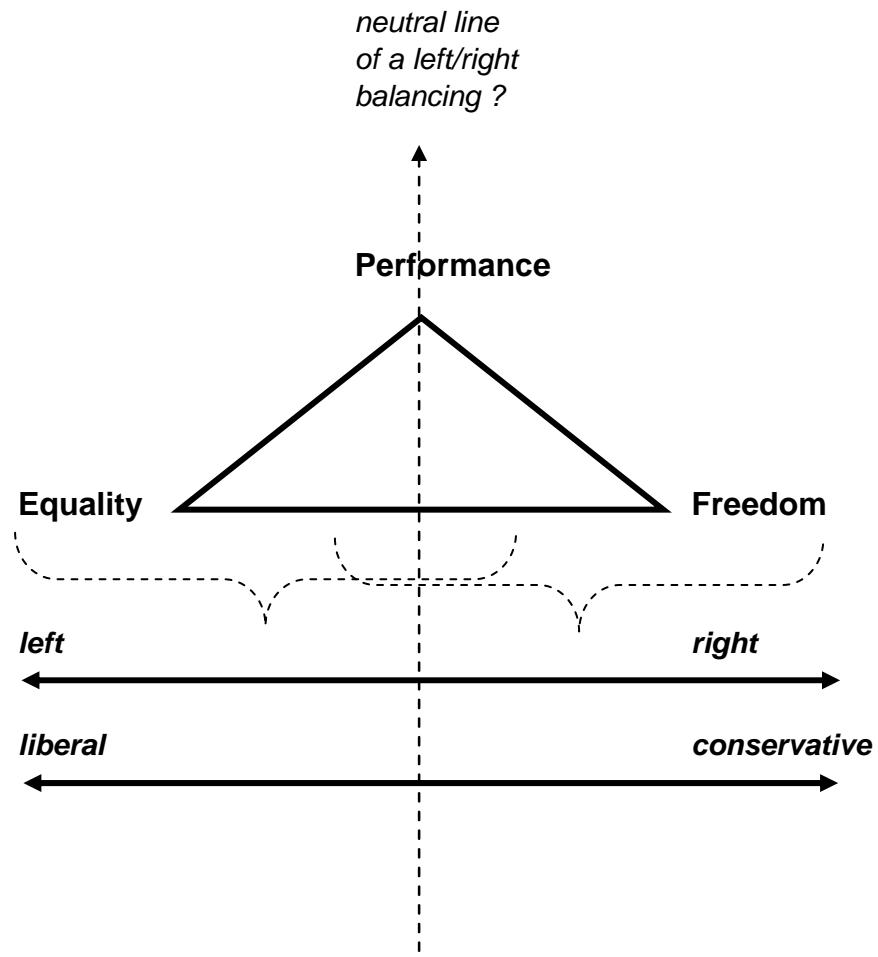
Two key dimensions of democracy are *freedom* and *equality*, sometimes also being complemented, thirdly, by *control* (Bühlmann et al., 2008, p. 15; Dahl, 1971, pp. 2-9; Diamond and Morlino, 2004, p. 22). In the political language of ideology, values, policy, and political competition, the concepts of freedom and equality, however, often are loaded connotatively. We experience a tendency that freedom is being more endorsed by representatives of the political right or conservatism, and equality more by representatives of the political left (see again Harding et al., 1986, p. 87). A conceptualization of democracy and the quality of democracy, based on freedom, might favor the political right (conservatism); and a conceptualization based on equality might play to the advantage of the political left. Out of an interest to emphasize a left/right “trans-ideological” approach that is not caught up between and paralyzed by polarizing left versus right debates and cleavages, the Democracy Ranking adds to the picture the alternative dimension of *performance*, without neglecting the pivotal importance of freedom and equality. In that understanding “good governance” is not being primarily determined by left and/or right policy and value positions, but should be measured by performance. Non-political performance (in the non-political sectors), for example, could refer to the economy, health, knowledge, and the gender equality. High performance (also low performance) may be achieved with left and/or right policies. The Democracy Ranking emphasizes *a responsibility of politics (democracy) for the society and also the environment*. This does not automatically imply an interventionist or non-interventionist policy (for example, a social democratically based welfare regime versus laissez-faire capitalism), or a policy mix (e.g., variations of a market economy); what really counts, is *performance*, which (at least in principle) may be achieved with very different policy programs and value sets.<sup>81</sup> Performance as a criterion has the advantage of offering a theoretically “neutral” and balanced position “above”

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<sup>81</sup>) Sodaro (2004, p. 305) claims that most developed countries currently apply the one or other type of a mixed economy: “The most widely adopted economic system in the world today is neither laissez-faire capitalism nor full-scale socialism but something in between: the *mixed economy*. A mixed economy combines both private enterprise and state involvement in the country’s economic affairs.”

the political left and right axis (or liberal and conservative axis in the United States), thus treating the whole spectrum of political ideologies, values and policies fairer, also allowing and respecting political diversity that again is necessary for the viability of democracies and high-quality democracies (Campbell and Sükösd, 2002, p. 5; Campbell, 2004, pp. 9-11) (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Key dimensions for the measurement of the quality of democracy.



Source: Author's own conceptualization.

The UNDP's Human Development Index measures reflect and mirror performance, and even so the concept of "human development" that represents, together with "human rights", a basis for democracy in the thinking of O'Donnell (2004b). This performance emphasis of the Democracy Ranking earns additional credibility by a spreading general understanding on how important good governance is. The World Bank, for example, releases a regular series on *Worldwide Governance Indicators* (see, for example,

Kaufmann et al., 2008).<sup>82</sup> Diamond and Morlino (2004, p. 22), furthermore, make the explicit case that governance relates directly to quality of democracy aspects, because in their conceptual framework about the quality of democracy the governance is linked to the “quality of results”. Factoring performance into the *Democracy Ranking of the Quality of Democracy* model obviously implies that then the status of socio-economic development clearly impacts a quality-of-democracy ranking of countries. Thus a fair comparison of democracies could mean to look for “country peers” with comparable socio-economic conditions (of course acknowledging that this represents a non-trivial exercise). Despite the conviction that the Democracy Ranking treats performance as being left/right neutral and therefore behaves “trans-ideologically”, critics may assert that a focus on performance has a potential for introducing a new “ideology of performance”.

In addition to this three-fold core structure of dimensions (freedom, equality and performance), the *Democracy Ranking of the Quality of Democracy* applies a further structure of dimensions, where the dimensions partially (but not always exactly) represent different “sectors” of society. These dimensions also could be interpreted as “sub-systems”, embedded by the encompassing general system of the whole society.<sup>83</sup> These dimensions (sectors/sub-sectors, sub-systems of society) are (see Campbell and Sükösd, 2002, pp. 5-6<sup>84</sup>; Campbell and Pölzlauer, 2008a, p. 6): (1) politics (political system); (2) gender (gender equality); (3) economy (economic system); (4) knowledge (knowledge-based information society, research and education); (5) health (health status and health system); (6) environment (environmental sustainability). The Democracy Ranking assigns specific indicators per dimension, and the dimensions then are being aggregated to an overall ranking. For this dimensional aggregation, concrete weight measures apply to the

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<sup>82)</sup> The general website address of the Worldwide Governance Indicators is: <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/index.asp>

<sup>83)</sup> Society, furthermore, could be contextualized within the multi-level architecture of local, national and global structures (see Figure 1).

<sup>84)</sup> In the *Feasibility Study* (Campbell and Sükösd, 2002), for the first time, this specific structure of dimensions was introduced for the purpose of a quality-of-democracy assessment and ranking.

different dimensions, which are (Campbell and Sükösd, 2002, p. 6; Campbell and Pölzlauer, 2008a, p. 6):

1. politics: 50%;
2. gender: 10%;
3. economy: 10%;
4. knowledge: 10%;
5. health: 10%;
6. and the environment: 10%.

This dimensional patterning and weighing underscores that the *Democracy Ranking of the Quality of Democracy* follows a broad (comprehensive) conceptual understanding of democracy. Referring to the two poles of “Quality of Democracy = Quality of Politics” and “Quality of Democracy = Quality of Society”, the Democracy Ranking focuses on a middle position in between: “Quality of Democracy = Quality of Politics + Quality of Society” (Campbell, 2004, pp. 12-15). Recalling again the four discussed democracy-measurement indices in Chapter 3, the Democracy Ranking is broader than the Vanhanen Index of democracy, Polity IV, Freedom House and even the Economist’s Democracy Index. The Democracy Ranking also is more comprehensive than the UNDP’s Human Development Index (HDI), because the Democracy Ranking covers the whole HDI spectrum (life expectancy, education and GDP), but the HDI, in contrast, does not fully include the political system. By weighting politics 50%, the Democracy Ranking emphasizes the prominent position of the political system for a democracy. Without acknowledging the political system, it does not appear appropriate to talk about democracy. However, the combined weight measures of the five non-political dimensions (of the Democracy Ranking) are equal to the political dimension, implying that in a broader democracy understanding the political system also carries a

responsibility for the other sectors of society (and for the environment). These weight measures are in line with the logic of *Quality of Democracy* = *Quality of Politics* + *Quality of Society*. Without reflecting on the quality of society, there cannot be a sufficient comprehension of the context for the quality of politics. And the quality of a society clearly colors the quality of the life of individuals and of communities within that society.

What are the pros and cons for applying a concept of democracy (quality of democracy) as comprehensively as is being done by the Democracy Ranking? Critics could claim that the democracy concept of the Democracy Ranking is too broad, confusing democracy with society and the economy. The Democracy Ranking, on the contrary, stresses that it would be (partially) “naïve”, wanting to talk about the qualities of politics and of democracies, but to ignore the qualities of societies and the economies. (Neglecting societies and their economies could result in creating electoral democracies, only with quality benefits for a wealthy upper class.) We already mentioned the theoretical links between “quality of results” of a democracy and “good governance”. One way of capturing good governance is to integrate conceptually performance (performance indicators) of the non-political dimensions into a quality-of-democracy model. Some academic scholars already analyzed specifically the performance of democracies. Arend Lijphart (1999) looks at performance in relation to different government types of democracies. Adam Przeworski et al. (2003) compare the economic development of democratic and non-democratic political regimes over the period 1950-1990. They emphasize a certain correlation between socio-economic development and democratization: “The most important lesson we have learned is that wealthy countries tend to be democratic not because democracies emerge as a consequence of economic development under dictatorships but because, however they emerge, democracies are more likely to survive in affluent societies” (Przeworski et al., 2003, p. 137).

The rationale for the five non-political dimensions of the Democracy Ranking is based on the following considerations:<sup>85</sup>

1. Gender: Gender reflects a dimension that indicates, to a large extent, the degree of fairness in a society, thus relating to equality and freedom. Without gender fairness, the quality of a democracy is substantially constrained.<sup>86</sup>
2. Economy: Economic indicators represent the degree of wealth that an economy and a society produce and that could be distributed (at least potentially) to enhance the wealth and quality-of-living of individuals and communities. Economic indicators supply information about economic and socio-economic potentials. Economic strength and performance sometimes also are being associated with freedom.<sup>87</sup>
3. Knowledge: In a modern understanding, knowledge (research, education, innovation) is key for the performance of advanced knowledge-based economies and societies (Carayannis and Campbell, 2006a). Several cross-connections are drawn between knowledge, innovation, and democracy (Saward, 2000; Von Hippel, 2005). The knowledge economy and knowledge society are complemented by a “knowledge-based

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<sup>85</sup>) See also Campbell and Sükösd, 2002, p. 6.

<sup>86</sup>) It also would be interesting and important to address ethnicity or ethnic diversity, but currently the data documentation does not appear to be sufficient for a global international comparison of such issues.

<sup>87</sup>) See on Wikipedia again the list of freedom indices:  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_Indices\\_of\\_Freedom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Indices_of_Freedom)

democracy” (Carayannis and Campbell, 2006b).<sup>88</sup> Knowledge expedites the potentials for a society, economy and democracy.<sup>89</sup>

4. Health: Health indicators, such as life expectancy, are sometimes more sensitive for distributional effects than economic indicators (for example, GDP per capita). Thus one could postulate that health indicators contain information about equality and potentially mirror also social welfare aspects.<sup>90</sup>
5. Environment: Societies (politics, the economy) certainly have a responsibility for the environment. The environment represents a crucial context, and should the environment collapse, then societies are being severely impacted. Therefore, societies cannot ignore features of environmental sustainability.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup>) “Noneconomic aspects of knowledge stress that knowledge is crucial for enhancing a dynamic and high-quality democracy. ... The knowledge-based economy, knowledge-based society, and knowledge-based democracy are concepts demonstrating how important knowledge is for understanding the dynamics of advanced societies” (Carayannis and Campbell, 2006b, pp. 4, 19).

<sup>89</sup>) Sodaro discusses “education and freedom of information” as a possible condition for democracy: “As a general rule, there is close correlation between democracy, on the one hand, and high educational levels and multiple sources of information on the other. This positive correlation is consistent with our hypothesis that education and free information can help promote democracy” (Sodaro, 2004, p. 219). We already cited O’Donnell (2004, p. 37), who considers “free, pluralistic, and nonmonopolized or state-censored information” as a necessary condition for the social context of a (high-quality) democracy.

<sup>90</sup>) In this context we again want to cite Przeworski et al. (2003) who claim that with regard to health indicators the democracies differ substantially from non-democratic regimes: “The overall picture of life and death under the two political regimes is startling. Even if we assume that regimes face the same conditions, democracies have lower birth rates and lower death rates. Women in democracies have fewer children. More children survive adulthood. As adults, they live longer, years longer” (Przeworski et al., 2003, p. 264).

<sup>91</sup>) To illustrate this point further, we want to mention that the *Human Development Report 2007/2008* discusses climate change and other environmental issues in greater detail (United Nations Development Programme, 2007).

The *Democracy Ranking of the Quality of Democracy* assigns specific quantitative indicators to the different dimensions.<sup>92</sup> The indicators for the five non-political dimensions reflect *performance*, by and large.<sup>93</sup> This focus on performance allows for a nonpartisan and unbiased approach vis-à-vis a political left and right (or liberal and conservative) scale, treating political ideologies, policies and values in a balanced format.<sup>94</sup> For the political dimension, two key indicators are the “political rights” and the “civil liberties”, as they are being defined and annually published by Freedom House (e.g., Freedom House, 2008a). Within context of the political dimension, the political rights and civil liberties each are weighted by 25%. This should acknowledge the crucial importance of Freedom House, which releases the *Map of Freedom* data on freedom world-wide every year. We already shortly summarized the criticism raised against Freedom House (see again the discussion in Chapter 3). At the same time, however, it should be underscored that Freedom House engages in permanent procedures of improving and advancing its methodology (see, for example, Freedom House, 2008d). Freedom House, furthermore, publishes its survey results regularly, reliably and publicly accessible free of charge.<sup>95</sup> It could be postulated that the Freedom House data on political rights and civil liberties reflect to a certain extent a conventional and established mainstream understanding about the distribution of freedom in the contemporary world. This prominent inclusion of Freedom House scores also implies that freedom is being crucially acknowledged by the *Democracy Ranking* as a key dimension of democracy and the quality of democracy. Other indicators for the political dimension are (*Democracy Ranking 2008*): the Gender Empowerment Measure, as being

<sup>92</sup>) For an exact documentation of the used indicators for the *Democracy Ranking 2008*, see Campbell and Pölzlauer (2008b, pp. 19-26).

<sup>93</sup>) The *Democracy Ranking* assigns gender indicators with a political orientation to the political dimension. The *gender dimension*, therefore, represents more a dimension of socio-economic gender equality. For the purpose of comparison and debate, the Democracy Ranking calculates also a “comprehensive gender dimension” (Campbell and Sükösd, 2002, p. 6; Campbell and Pölzlauer, 2008a, p. 7).

<sup>94</sup>) For the Democracy Ranking 2008 (Campbell and Pölzlauer, 2008a) the performance indicators for the non-political dimensions were taken from the *World Development Indicators* source (World Bank, 2007).

<sup>95</sup>) Here Freedom House follows a more open policy than The Economist Intelligence Unit’s Index of Democracy (2008).

defined by UNDP<sup>96</sup>; seats in parliament held by woman<sup>97</sup>; the “Press Freedom” index of Freedom House (e.g., Freedom House, 2008f)<sup>98</sup>; the “Corruption Perception Index” of Transparency International<sup>99</sup>; and changes and party changes of the “head of government”<sup>100</sup>.

The methodic use of quantitative indicators imposes several consequences for *Democracy Ranking of the Quality of Democracy*: (1) results for the ranking are “quantitative”, allowing the visualization of ranking scores across countries, time and different dimensions; (2) there is always a time-lag between the ranking results and the actually present reality, because release and publication of the primary indicators (by renowned institutions) always implies the passing of a certain amount of time;<sup>101</sup> (3) the socio-economic developmental status, as a consequence of the conceptual model, impacts the quality-of-democracy ranking results, fostering a discussion who the “appropriate” peers would be for a “fair country comparison”; (4) because of the conceptual nature of the underlying model, there is always a possibility that for some countries the ranking results are not plausible, calling, therefore, for a detailed follow-up discussion of the ranking scores.<sup>102</sup>

The coming work plan of the *Democracy Ranking of the Quality of Democracy* focuses on producing regularly and annually an indicator-based *Democracy Ranking* of all “free” and “partly free” countries in the world (according to the survey results of Freedom House), but circumventing the “not free” countries. In conceptual terms, this Democracy Ranking should display *a ranking of countries based on the quality of their democracies*, employing a broad

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<sup>96</sup>) For a definition, see: United Nations Development Programme, 2007, pp. 330-333, 355, 360.

<sup>97</sup>) For an application, see: United Nations Development Programme, 2007, pp. 330-333.

<sup>98</sup>) See: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/fop/historical/SSGlobal.xls>

<sup>99</sup>) See: [http://www.transparency.org/publications/annual\\_report](http://www.transparency.org/publications/annual_report)

<sup>100</sup>) An important source for this type of information are the successive volumes of the *Political Handbook of the World* (for example, Banks et al., 2006).

<sup>101</sup>) For example, the data time series of the *World Development Indicators 2007* (World Bank, 2007) end in 2005.

<sup>102</sup>) See Campbell and Pölzlauer (2008a, p. 4).

(comprehensive) conceptual (theoretical) framework for democracy: the basic concept for the Democracy Ranking follows the line of arguments as they are being illustrated in this chapter (Chapter 5).<sup>103</sup> In addition to the *Democracy Ranking*, also a *Democracy Improvement Ranking* will be released that focuses on shifts in ranking scores. While in context of the *Democracy Ranking* we should expect a tendency that the developed countries (OECD<sup>104</sup> countries) will rank highest, some developing or newly industrialized countries certainly have a potential in achieving top ranking scores (even outperforming the developed countries) for the *Democracy Improvement Ranking*. The *Democracy Ranking 2008* (Campbell and Pölzlauer, 2008a) documents method and ranking outcome for the years 2001-2002 and 2004-2005, while the *Democracy Improvement Ranking 2008* (Campbell and Pölzlauer, 2008b) monitors changes over these two two-year intervals.<sup>105</sup>

To depict the basic concept of the *Democracy Ranking of the Quality of Democracy* in a single core message, it appears useful to compare the Democracy Ranking directly to O'Donnell's understanding of democracy (see Figure 5). The conceptual formula for the quality-of-democracy approach of Guillermo O'Donnell<sup>106</sup> can be summarized as: **quality of democracy = (human rights) + (human development)**. The structure of the conceptual

<sup>103</sup>) The homepage of the *Democracy Ranking* also states the vision, mission statement and objectives of this initiative. "The objectives of the Democracy Ranking are: (1) supporting democracy awareness and the awareness of the need for improving the quality of democracy; (2) contributing to processes of a self-reflexive discussion and communication about democracy; (3) delivering empirical data for comparatively ranking democracies in a global format; (4) encouraging ongoing reforms, improvements and innovations of democracy for a further enhancement of the quality of democracy; (5) emphasizing the need for quality assurance and quality development of democracies and for systematic evaluations of democracy; (6) underscoring that for the development of the international community of countries the "dimension of democracy" is just as important as the other dimensions, such as the economy, knowledge, health and the environment; (7) adding to our theoretical and conceptual understanding of democracy also the quality of democracy and the advancement of democracies; (8) offering crucial input for a 'Global Democracy Award'." See: <http://www.democracyranking.org/en>

<sup>104</sup>) OECD: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.

<sup>105</sup>) For an earlier pilot ranking see Campbell and Sükösd (2003).

<sup>106</sup>) See again the résumé of O'Donnell's thinking in Chapter 4.

formula of the *Democracy Ranking* would be: **quality of democracy = (freedom + other characteristics of the political system) + (performance of the non-political dimensions)**. This could feed into a discourse, how related or how distinct these two concepts of the quality of democracy are. Both interpretations appear feasible.

Figure 5: Two different conceptual formuals for the quality of democracy.

*Approach of Guillermo O'Donnell:*

**Quality of Democracy = (human rights) & (human development)**

*Approach of the "Democracy Ranking of the Quality of Democracy":*

**Quality of Democracy = (freedom & other characteristics of the political system) & (performance of the non-political dimensions)**

Note: "Freedom" according to "Freedom House".

Source for O'Donnell:

Guillermo O'Donnell (2004). Human Development, Human Rights, and Democracy, 9-92, in: Guillermo O'Donnell / Jorge Vargas Culell / Osvaldo M. Iazzetta (eds.): The Quality of Democracy. Theory and Applications. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.

Source: Author's own conceptualization.

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[\[http://www.oegpw.at/sek\\_agora/publikationen.htm\]](http://www.oegpw.at/sek_agora/publikationen.htm)

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<sup>107</sup>) This reference is being cited according to by Kekic (2007).

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