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# Good and Bad Quality: The Multiple Worlds of Democracy within the OECD

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## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The number of indices measuring democracies – already high – is ever growing: Freedom House, Polity, Bertelsmann Transformation Index, and the index of Vanhanen (Coppedge and Reinicke 1991; Gastil 1991; Vanhanen 1997, 2000, 2003) are only the most prominent. However, we argue that these instruments are too unsubtle to measure the obviously existing differences in the *quality* of democracy between OECD-countries.<sup>2</sup>

We would, for example, intuitively distinguish the quality of Italian democracy under Silvio Berlusconi, or US democracy under George W. Bush, from Swedish or Finnish democracy.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, we lack an instrument that allows us to measure and to analyse these variances in the quality of democracies. Going beyond the hitherto wide-spread minimalist concepts of democracy,<sup>4</sup> and considering the impact of institutional designs, our democracy barometer attempts to create an instrument that will not only fill in a gap in empirical democracy measurement but should also help to:

- Analyse the quality of democracy of established democracies, and to develop a scheme of rating and ranking;
- Determine specific strengths or weaknesses of the single democracies;
- Discuss the possible trade offs and causal interferences between specific dimensions of actual democracies;
- Explain the interdependence between institutional designs and the quality of democracy;
- Describe and compare different developments of institutional design and the quality of democracy;
- Discuss best practices aiming at improving the quality of established democracies.

However, these are only some of the possibilities we will open for further research with the “Democracy Barometer”. In this paper the aim is more focussed. We want:

- to explain the construction of the democracy barometer from the basic 3 principles of democracy to the (ca. 77 indicators)
- to describe the logic and procedure of measurements
- to interpret rating and ranking of the 30 countries
- to check whether there has been a decline of democratic quality
- to test Lijphart hypothesis whether the more “kind and gentle” consensus democracies fare better in terms of democratic quality compared to majoritarian democracies.

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1 The “Democracy Barometer” is a project within the Swiss “National Center of Competence and Research” (NCCR), conducted by a team of political scientists from the University of Zürich (Bühlmann, Müller) and the Berlin Science Center of Social Sciences (Merkel, Weßels, Giebler).

2 Additionally, these established indices are criticised because of different methodological (Bollen/Paxton 2000), cultural relativist (Sowell 1994; Berg-Schlosser 2000), or measurement (Munck/Verkuilen 2002) shortcomings. Our democracy barometer shall help to overcome these problems.

3 However, all three countries rank highest and with the same values in the most widely used measures of democracy.

4 Most of the existing indices are explicitly or implicitly based on Dahl’s concept of polyarchy (1971), which, in turn, refers to Schumpeter’s (1962 [1944]) understanding of democratic competition.

Since there is perhaps no other notion in politics and political science that is so widely and differently defined, redefined, and disputed as “democracy,” we need to clarify our root concept of democracy beforehand.

***I. The Architecture of the Democracy Barometer***

**1. Minimalist and Maximalist Concepts of Democracy**

There is an abundant literature relating to democratic theory, with countless definitions of what democracy should be and what democracy is. All of them are contested and differ according to the preferences of their authors (Schumpeter 1962 [1944]; Dahl 1956, 1971; Sartori 1962; Bobbio 1987). However, drawing on recent overviews of democratic theory (Held 2006; Schmidt 2000),<sup>5</sup> we can observe a divide between three different basic concepts of democracy. They can be placed on a continuum ranging from minimalist to maximalist variants of democracy and can be described by the three parts of Lincoln’s Gettysburg definition of democracy: the elitist type based on a minimalist conception of democracy can be seen as *government of the people*; the participatory type relies on a mid-range concept of democracy and aims at *government of and by the people*; and the social type of democracy stands on a maximalist understanding and could be best described as *government of, by, and for the people* (see Table 1).

**Table 1: Three types of democracy**

Type	Elitist	Participatory	Social
Concept of democracy	Minimalist	Medium	Maximalist
Lincoln	Government of the people	Government of and by the people	Government of, by, and for the people
Main aim	Effective governance	Intense and qualitative participation and representation	Best representation / high participation Social justice

From the minimalist perspective, democracy is a means of protecting citizens against arbitrary rule. The main aim of the elitist type is to elect skilled representative elites capable of making public decisions and protecting individual liberty. The people are seen as the final instance that decides which representatives will govern for a predefined span of time. Elections serve to express and aggregate people’s interests. Beside electoral participation, the demos is perceived as passive and governed by representatives. Although the kind of democracy that aims at effective governance embraces (in chronological order) ideas of classical republicanism in its protective version (Held 2006: 32-55)<sup>6</sup>, the classical liberal

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5 In fact, we do not aim at enlarging the theoretical debate, but at measuring democracies on a theoretically sound conceptual base.  
 6 Classic representatives of these ideas were e.g. Machiavelli (2001 [1513]), Hobbes (1998 [1651]), Locke (1974 [1689]), and Montesquieu (1965 [1748]).

model of democracy (Fenske et al. 1994 ff.),<sup>7</sup> and its more modern developments in the form of the elitist (Held 2006: 125-157)<sup>8</sup> or the pluralist models of democracy (Schmidt 2000: 226-239)<sup>9</sup>; the most pronounced version is Schumpeter's elitist one. In terms of Lincoln, this type is best described by "government of the people".

For the concept of democracy, the representative-plus-participatory type of democracy holds a medium-ranking position. Political participation is valued for its own sake and is considered as the core of each democracy. Involvement in politics fosters political efficacy and democratic skills (Tocqueville 1997 [1835]) and generates concern with collective problems. Citizens need opportunities to deal more profoundly with political issues in deliberative ways. In the purest form of the participatory type, the people are seen as the final instance for all or, at least, the most important political decisions. The demos governs directly and actively. According to Lincoln, we would speak of "government by the people." The participatory type is rooted in the classical Athenian democracy (Held 2006: 11-28; Fenske et al. 1994: 37 ff.), the developmental form of classical republicanism (Held 2006: 43-55),<sup>10</sup> ideas of direct (Held 2006: 96-122; Schmidt 2000: 165-174)<sup>11</sup> as well as participatory democracy (Schmidt 2000: 251-267),<sup>12</sup> and the recent discussions on deliberative democracy.<sup>13</sup>

The third type is based on a maximalist understanding of democracy. It entails the characteristics of the representative and participatory types of democracy, but considers the social prerequisites of citizens also essential for fair and meaningful democratic participation. Social Democracy can be best described as a maximalist type of democracy since it comprises all three prepositions of Abraham Lincoln's "Gettysburg Formula": of, by, and for.<sup>14</sup> Here, the particular focus is the reduction of socio-economic inequalities. According to the "social democracy" type, the legal guarantee of civil and political rights does not suffice to make democracy work. A government has the duty to guarantee the resources that are necessary for the use of these rights. These resources have to be allocated equally. Equality in this sense implies the complementing of civil and political rights with social rights. Social democracy is therefore best described as "government for the people". The roots of the social type of democracy can be found in liberalist,<sup>15</sup> as well as in socialist and social democratic, thinking.<sup>16</sup> Important contributions to the development of the social type stem from Heller (1934, 1971), Miller et al. (1967), MacPherson and Brough (1973), Meyer (2005), and Held (2006). The discussion on "equality of what" must be considered an important part of the debate on the social type of democracy (Miller et al. 1967; Rawls 1971; Sen 1979,

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7 The most important representatives were Sieyès (1788), Malthus (1820), Tocqueville (1997 [1835, 1840]), Mill (1958 [1861]) as well as the authors of the Federalist Papers.

8 We have to think of Michels (1987 [1908]), Weber (1988 [1921]), and Schumpeter (1962 [1944]).

9 The important representatives are Bentley (1908), Truman (1951), Dahl (1956, 1971), and Fraenkel (1963).

10 Classic representatives of a developmental republicanism are Marsilius of Padua (Fenske et al. 1994: 222 ff.) and – most important – Rousseau (1977 [1762]).

11 Both Held (2006) and Schmidt (2006) highlight Marx as an important proponent of models of direct democracy.

12 Barber (1984) and Pateman (1970) – to cite just the two most important names.

13 E.g., Fishkin (1991), Offe/Preuss (1991), Habermas (1992, 1994), Warren (1996)(Warren 1996; Cohen 2004), Offe (2003a), Cohen (2004).

14 Though "benevolent dictators" may sometimes govern "for" the people, "benevolent autocracies" are neither government *of* nor *by*.

15 The most prominent liberalist who sought to clarify the relation between "sovereign state" and "sovereign people" was Mill (1958 [1861]).

16 For a neo-Marxist position, see e.g. Callinicos (1991).

1996, 1997; Daniels 1990; Ringen 2007). Democracy is linked to social justice and vice versa.

Even if this third type of democracy is to some extent important for the following discussion of the development of our root concept, we do not rely on it. There are at least two arguments for the conceptual neglect of the third type: First, the social type of democracy, aiming at establishing social equality, concentrates on political outcomes. Our measure of the quality of democracy explicitly does not include the outcome dimension,<sup>17</sup> since we regard democracy as the means by which outputs are decided. Whereas, for example, in the political realm there is no dissent about equality, it is very much disputed within society. Democratic procedures may be based on equality, but what kind of equality and for who is contested, and needs to be decided by democratic means. Whereas there is no conflict about the distribution of political rights, this is not so with regard to social rights and benefits. Democracy is the instrument for delivering approved decisions on such matters. Second, socioeconomic outcomes are by no means simply the result of democratic political decisions. Economic factors and individual decisions also play a major role in determining outcomes within the labour market or concerning the distribution of income and wealth. To judge democracy means to judge the democratic character of institutions and processes, not the contingent results of decisions. Thus, focusing on the outcome dimension neglects our matter of interest: the democratic regime.

However, the assertion that we rely on a concept that focuses on the input side and the procedures of democracy does not itself reveal the substantial characteristics of our root concept of democracy. It does not describe the basic norms, procedures and institutions of the democracies we intend to measure. We believe each measurement of democracy has to find its selection of indicators beyond contingent plausibility. In order to specify the adequate and relevant indicators for the measurement of democracy, we have developed a chain of stepwise deviations, which range from the most abstract democratic principles to the most concrete indicators. The five steps are: the fundamental principles of democracy; the democratic core functions of the root concept; the structural components of the functions; and, finally, the indicators of the components.

## **2. Three Fundamental Principles of Democracy**

Each measurement of democracy is dependent on the definition of democracy, which itself relies on the fundamental principles and basic ideas of democracy.<sup>18</sup> We argue that democracy relies on three fundamental principles: equality, freedom and control. The basic importance of these three democratic principles can be proven historically and theoretically: the development of modern nation-states is accompanied by the struggle for freedom, equality, and the control of those who govern.

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17 It is not clear which form of outcome should be considered. The discussion of “equality of what” shows that it is neither theoretically nor empirically well-defined which political output helps to establish more social equality (also see Plattner 2004 on this discussion).

18 A frequent criticism of contemporary empirical research on democracy is the lack of a theoretically founded definition of democracy (Berg-Schlosser 2000; Collier/Levitsky 1997; Munck/Verkuilen 2002).

## 2.1 Equality

Equality – particularly understood as political equality – is one of the most important themes in the development of democratic government (Dahl 1975). Historically, the meaning of equality can be shown by two important struggles.

On the one hand, the emergence of modern democracies goes hand in hand with the growing demand for equal treatment of all citizens by the government. The constitutional guarantee of equality before the law and of the protection of individual rights is the outcome of this development. On the other hand, the importance of political equality is illustrated by the development of universal suffrage: the struggle for equal rights to participate for all (wo-)men went along with the development of democratic states in the last century.

*Political* equality means that all citizens are treated as equals before the law and in the political process. This implies that all citizens have the same rights and equal legal chances to influence political decisions – i.e., citizens' preferences have the same weight in political decisions (Dahl 1976). All citizens must have equal access to political power (Böckenförde 1991; Vossenkuhl 1997; Saward 1998).<sup>19</sup>

The concept of political equality is far from being self-evident. It is not so clear from the outset why political rights should be distributed equally among citizens. Historically, the idea of the equal intrinsic value of all citizens was widely contested and even the relationship between equality and democracy is not as well-defined in political theory as one might think. Nevertheless, there are at least two reasons why equality is to be considered as a fundamental democratic principle (Dahl 2000; 2006):

First, equality as a core principle of democracy meets the requirements of morality, prudence, and acceptability. As a moral judgement, modern societies insist on the idea that one citizen's life, liberty and scheme of life is neither superior nor inferior to that of other citizens. The idea of equality expresses nothing else but the fundamental moral values of modern societies. Equality is anchored in the moral quality of an individual and in the moral confirmation that all human beings are of equal value. No individual human being is superior to the other. The weal and interests of each person must be regarded and pursued equally (Dahl 2006).

Furthermore, because the democratic process can be seen as a process of "organized uncertainty" (Przeworski 1986), sheer prudence suggests that equal concern for each and every citizen should be one core principle of democracy. Otherwise the outcome of the democratic process could damage permanently the interests and rights of a minority. Such a process, based on equal concern for every citizen, seems to be acceptable on reasonable grounds, too.

Second, political equality expresses the civic competence to govern ourselves. As long as there is no reason to believe that other persons are better qualified to govern, "complete and final authority over the government of the state" (Dahl 2000: 75) has to rest upon each and every citizen. Here the rather abstract principle of equality leads to a more concrete feature of democratic governance: full inclusion of all persons subject to the legislation of a democratic state. Therefore, equality means formally equal treatment of all citizens by the

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19 We focus on political equality; therefore we explicitly abstain from more maximalist perspectives that emphasise substantial equality, i.e. an equal distribution of resources (Callinicos 1993; Pateman 1970; MacPherson 1973; Meyer 2005).

state (legal egalitarianism), equal rights to participate in politics and having all preferences equally weighted.

## 2.2 Freedom

Freedom is the second morally and ethically important principle of the modern age. Freedom first refers to the absence of heteronomy, also discussed as negative freedom (Berlin 2006). Freedom rights above all are rights that protect an individual against infringements by the state. Historically, the most important aspects are the right to own property and the protection of the property against state power. Over time, the list of negative freedom rights has grown and the protection and guarantee of these rights have become one of the minimal conditions for democratic regimes (e.g., freedom of opinion, freedom of association, freedom of information; see Merkel et al. 2003). Democracy without freedom must be seen as a “contradiction in terms” (Beetham 2004: 62).

Second, individual freedom can also be defined in a positive sense: individuals have the right to self-determination (Beetham 2004; Böckenförde 1991; Dworkin 1998; Offe 2003b). From this point of view, political liberties are seen as preconditions for citizens to actively influence political decisions. This implies that the state must protect freedom rights (Beetham 2004; Lauth 2004).<sup>20</sup> Over time, the protection and the guarantee of negative freedom rights has become one of the minimal conditions for democracy.

We therefore distinguish with Berlin (2006) “positive” from “negative” freedom. While positive freedom refers to the right of self-determination or the right of a people to govern itself, negative freedom means being free from (legal) constraints and includes classical liberal rights like “free speech” or the “right to privacy.” Positive rights establish those participation rights necessary for democratic governance, negative rights provide the foundations on which participation can be exercised in a meaningful way.

One key feature of democratic governance is the interaction of positive and negative freedoms. If each and every person in a democracy must get the opportunity to influence collective decisions, then universal suffrage and effective elections (positive freedom) are as important for democratic processes as free speech or freedom of information (negative freedom) (Dworkin 1996). Democratic decision-making becomes meaningful only through the interplay of these two aspects of liberty.

Contrary to a widespread belief, there are no major trade-offs between positive and negative freedoms. The modern constitutional state protects negative as well as positive freedom in order to make democracy work. The fact that in a “liberal democracy” some negative freedoms cannot be compromised by exercising positive freedom protects in the end the political process itself. Without negative freedom the political process would become meaningless, and without positive freedom we would not be able to speak of democracy at all.

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20 Again, we do not stretch our concept to the maximalist perspective that freedom implies the right to public services (e.g., the right to good education, the right to well-being, etc.) (Meyer 2005; Ringen 2007).

## 2.3 Control

Freedom and equality can be seen as the most fundamental and driving principles in the development of modern representative territorial states. However, the two principles interact and can constrain each other – as Tocqueville (1997 [1835]) has already reminded us. According to Tocqueville, individual liberty is only possible with individual equality, but equality can also harm liberty (also see Talmon 1960). However, while there are tensions between equality and liberty, the two are not generally irreconcilable (Dahl 1985; Yturbe 1997). Both equality and freedom can constitute an unstable and dynamic equilibrium.

The political philosophy of the Modern Age proposes different combinations of the two principles. Looking in more detail at the propositions of the contractualists (e.g., Hobbes, Rousseau, Locke) we can exemplarily show how freedom and equality interact.

According to Hobbes (1998 [1651]),<sup>21</sup> the state of nature is a constant war because men are free but unequal. Only a powerful state can force its citizens to abstain from the violent use of unequal force. Hobbes clearly places much more weight on equality than on freedom. Equality hampers the degree of freedom, because it is no longer allowed to benefit from unequal forces. For Hobbes, however, less freedom is the price to pay for peace.

According to Rousseau (1977 [1762]), men in the state of nature are completely free and equal. However, in contemporary civil society, men are neither free nor equal. With his idea of radically direct democratic states, he aims at re-installing the high degree of freedom and equality as it were in the state of nature. The simultaneous maximalisation of both freedom and equality is possible because men are willing to pursue the welfare of all rather than their individual utility. By maximising equality, Rousseau expects that freedom will be the automatic consequence.

Locke (1974 [1689]) is more realistic than Rousseau. Unlike Rousseau, Locke accepts that the maximisation of both freedom and equality is not feasible. However, unlike Hobbes, Locke is against the idea of maximising one of the two principles at the cost of the other, looking for a balance between both principles. This aim, guaranteeing as well as optimising and balancing freedom and equality, lets a further fundamental principle of democratic rule emerge: control.

Control is essential for democracy and its institutional core. The people ought to control their representatives in the government in order to secure freedom and equality, which basically means the absence of tyranny and despotism, and their action on behalf of the citizens. This also implies that political institutions, first and foremost participants and governments, have such control over policies as is enabled by the people's will and jurisdiction. The limits of the executive must be no more than this public will and jurisdiction. Extra-democratic forces must not curb governmental control over policies. The control of the executive over policies, however, must be subject to democratic control and institutional checks and balances.

Giving different weights to freedom and equality, the three contractualists cited above also attach different importance to the two meanings of control. Hobbes designs a strong state: the Leviathan cannot be controlled anymore by those who are governed. Equality, in this sense, means that all citizens are powerless and dependent since the executive power is neither dispersed nor checked. In Rousseau's direct democracies, there is virtually no control

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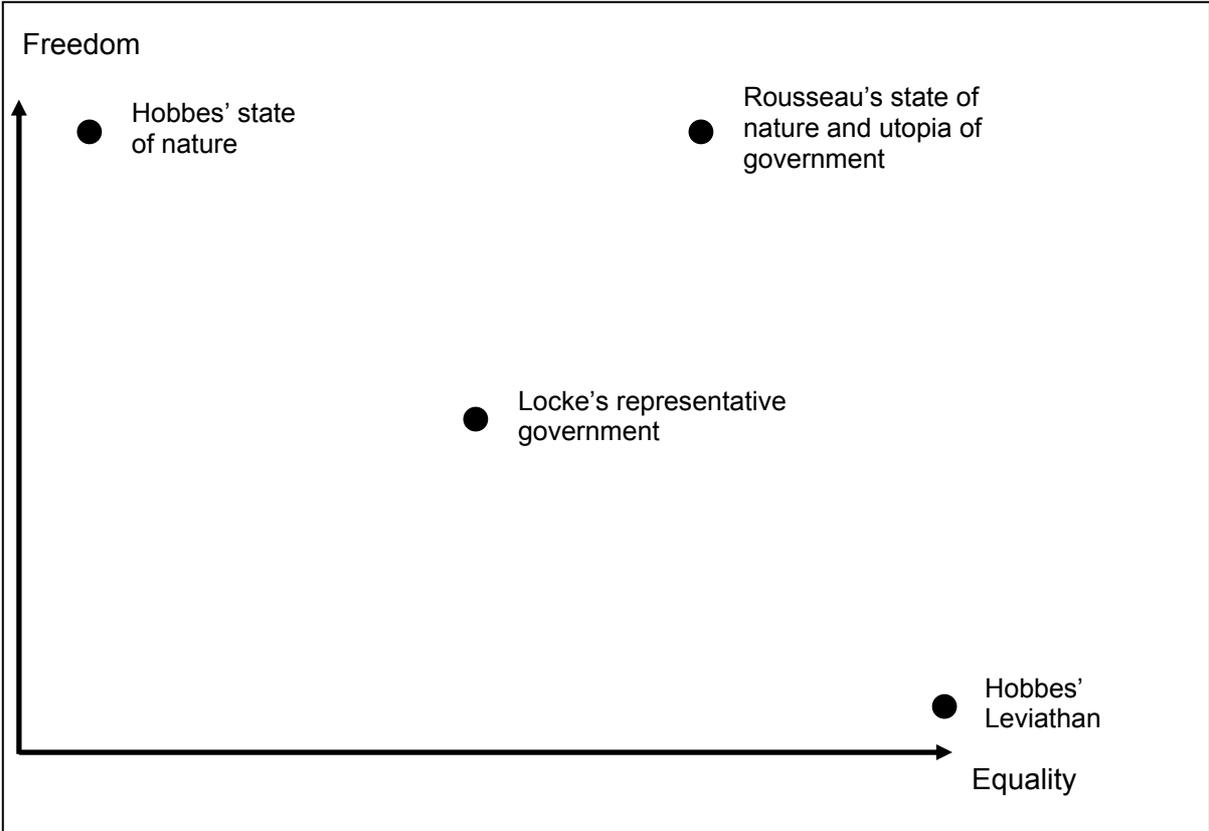
21 Of course, we do not mention Hobbes here as a theoretical source of democracy. However, for the discussion of the interdependence of freedom and equality, Hobbes serves as an extreme point of reference.

by a government. In Rousseau’s romantic fiction, the *volonté de tous* will be magically transformed into the *volonté generale*, which does not need and cannot tolerate any control by a government.<sup>22</sup> To control power, the direct participation of all citizens seemed sufficient in Rousseau’s concept of (direct) democracy. Relying on the “romantic concept” of the direct expression of the will of the people and disregarding institutional control of political power, Rousseau remains a pre-modern thinker of democracy (Schmidt 2006).

Locke takes an intermediary position again. While it is important that the government has enough power to control the balance between equality and freedom, the preservation of both principles is only possible with control of the governmental power by the people (Locke speaks of necessary mistrust). To avoid the predominance of equality over freedom (or vice versa), control of those who govern by checks and balances and the dispersion of political power is imperative. This idea is further developed by Montesquieu (1965 [1748]) and Tocqueville (1997 [1835]): power has to be dispersed, contested and controlled. Montesquieu in particular shows the necessity of institutionalised checks and balances. The core principle of democracy – the sovereignty of the people (Böckenförde 1991; Sartori 1987) – comprehends the control of political power *by the people*.

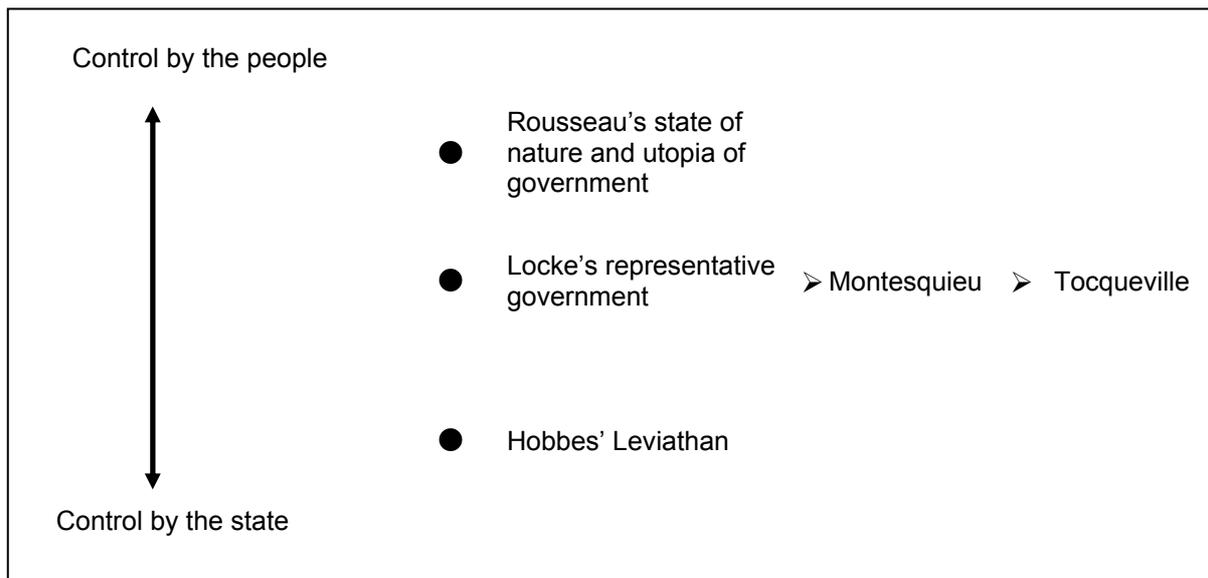
We can summarise the discussion on the three principles in Figures 1 and 2.

**Figure 1: The schematic interplay of freedom and equality**



22 As a result, Rousseau (as Hobbes) cannot contribute substantially to modern concepts of democracy. Of course, elements of direct democracy are important complements of modern democratic representative regimes. But the idea of direct democracy is much older than Rousseau’s philosophy. It can be traced back to Pericles and the ancient direct democracies of the Attic city-states.

**Figure 2: Two meanings of control**



Based on the thoughts of five important representatives of the political philosophy of the Modern Age, we assume that every political system in general consists of three distinctive elements: freedom and equality as normative principles, and control as the instrument to influence the balance of equality and freedom and to guarantee them (Lauth 2004; Merkel et al. 2003). A democratic system in particular aims at combining equality and freedom in an optimal way. This aim implies at the same time control by the state (in the sense of surveillance) and control of the state (in the sense of vertical checks by the people as well as horizontal balance by the constitutional power and its institutions).

Of course, one could question the derivation of these three principles from Modern-Age contractualists. It is questionable if freedom and equality exist in a determinate form in a prior state of nature. As Habermas (1992) reminds us, basic rights are something individuals mutually confer on one another when they want to regulate their common life via positive law, regarding one another as free and equal consociates under law. Beetham (2004: 63) even regards the idea of rule of law “as the foundation of any civilized existence”.

According to Habermas (1992, 1998), the concepts of equality and freedom are interrelated systematically. Habermas recognises an equiprimordiality (*Gleichursprünglichkeit*) between what he calls public or civic autonomy (which follows from the principle of equality as it is used here) and private autonomy (which substantiates the principle of (negative) freedom).

Since modern societies have to be ruled by law, law itself has to safeguard both civic and private autonomy. To gain legitimacy, law has to be created in a political process that fits both the requirements of civic and private autonomy. In an ideal sense, the citizens of a democratic society distribute political and civil rights to each other in democratic procedures. In this rather proceduralist and deliberative model of democracy, control has to be exercised in the first place by the political process itself. In the second place, if public and private autonomy cannot be guaranteed by relying on democratic procedures, a constitutional court has to take care of the functioning of the democratic procedures: “If one understands the constitution as an interpretation and elaboration of a system of rights in which private and public autonomy are internally related (and must be simultaneously enhanced), then a rather bold constitutional adjudication is even required in cases that concern the implementation of

democratic procedure and the deliberative form of political opinion- and will-formation” (Habermas 1998: 280).

However, law only becomes socially effective when there is a political power with the capacity to enforce collectively binding decisions. Laws are legitimate (a) if they are valid for every individual; (b) if they constitute individual autonomy; and (c) if they are amendable (Habermas 1996: 294). To completely fulfil these three conditions, legitimate law must originate from a legally binding democratic process. It is this concomitance of rule of law and democracy that shows how the rule of law (*Rechtsstaat*) and democracy are normatively and functionally interdependent. Democracy as we conceptualise it with reference to Habermas, cannot exist without rule of law; and only democracy provides the genesis of the norms of the *Rechtsstaat* with the necessary legitimacy (Habermas 1996: 294).

## 2.4 The Interdependence of Freedom, Equality, and Control

We define control, equality, and freedom as the three fundamental and necessary conditions of democracy. These three principles are mutually necessary and, at the same time, there are tensions and interdependencies among them (Lauth 2004: 96ff.). Neither freedom without equality nor equality without freedom is possible. Control can guarantee these two principles, but has to be shaped by the norms of freedom and equality. In other words: the three principles are complementary.

However, the relationship between the three principles can also be described by interdependent tensions. The tensions between freedom and equality are subject of long philosophical debates (e.g. Dworkin 1996; Habermas 1996; Luhmann 1974; Wiesendahl 1981). The demand for substantial equality (e.g., Callinicos 1993; MacPherson 1973; Meyer 2005; Pateman 1970) challenges freedom, because substantial equality depends on material transfers or the introduction of quotas, both of which hamper individual freedom rights. However, the maximisation of freedom at the expense of equality is not possible either: a certain degree of (even substantial) equality is necessary to enable real individual freedom (Zippelius 1991). Finally, the maximisation of equality in terms of equal participation in the decision-making process (e.g., the direct democracy of Rousseau) precludes efficient control and can lead to the tyranny of the majority.

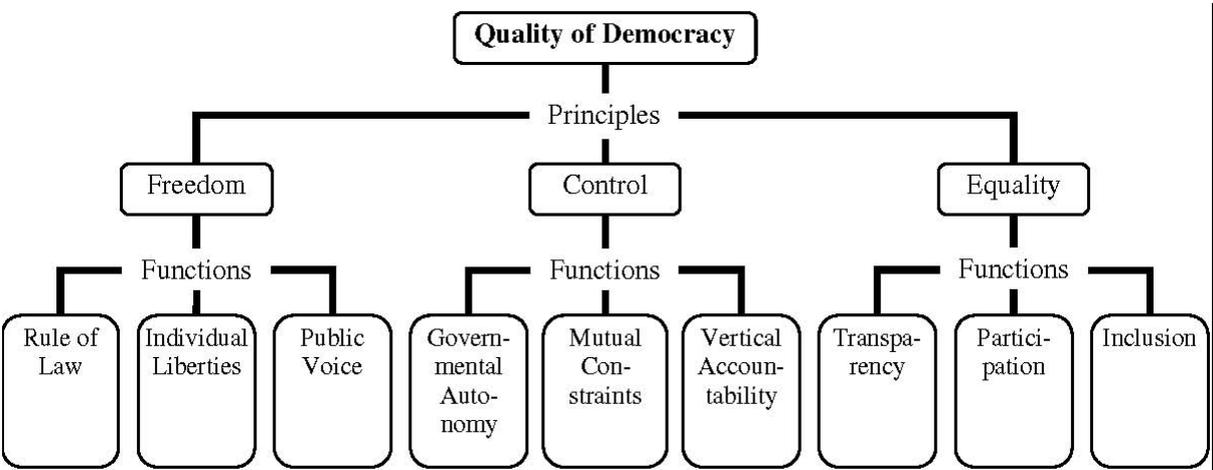
A simultaneous maximisation of all three principles is neither possible nor desirable. A high quality of democracy does not stem from increasing equality and increasing freedom and increasing control but from an optimal balance between the three principles. Finding this balance, however, is an ongoing political and civil process, or as Lauth (2004: 99) puts it: “The citizens – as players in a game – are in the paradoxical situation that they always have to deliberate on the rules without abandoning the game”.

To sum up: 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 optimise 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. The relative weight of the two principles freedom and equality, their proper balance, as well as the manner of control and the equation between control *by* and control *of* government is still contested and contributes to the variance in the quality of democracy.

### 3. The (Nine) Basic Functions of Democracy and its Transformation into Measurable Indicators

We derive from the three basic principles of democracy nine dimensions. Although it is irrelevant for the aggregated quality index of democracy of the several countries it is irrelevant which functions we derive from which principle, we believe that the subsumption of the functions under the principles is theoretically sound and transparent<sup>23</sup>. However, for further research the distinction between the nine functions gain importance, when we discuss specific strengths and weaknesses or trade offs between the different functions. We believe that we will find specific national patterns of these trade-offs which characterize the shape and particular properties of the single democracies.

**Figure 3: The concept tree of the Democracy Barometer**



The quality of a given democracy is high when these nine functions are fulfilled to a high degree. Of course, a simultaneous maximization of all nine functions is not possible. Democracies are systems whose development is perpetually negotiated by political as well as societal forces. Hence, democracies can and do weight and optimize the nine functions differently. However, the degree of fulfilment of each of these nine functions can be measured. This requires just another conceptual step: The different functions are based on constitutive components. In the stepwise deduction of the concept 'democracy', the third step comprises the derivation of these components.

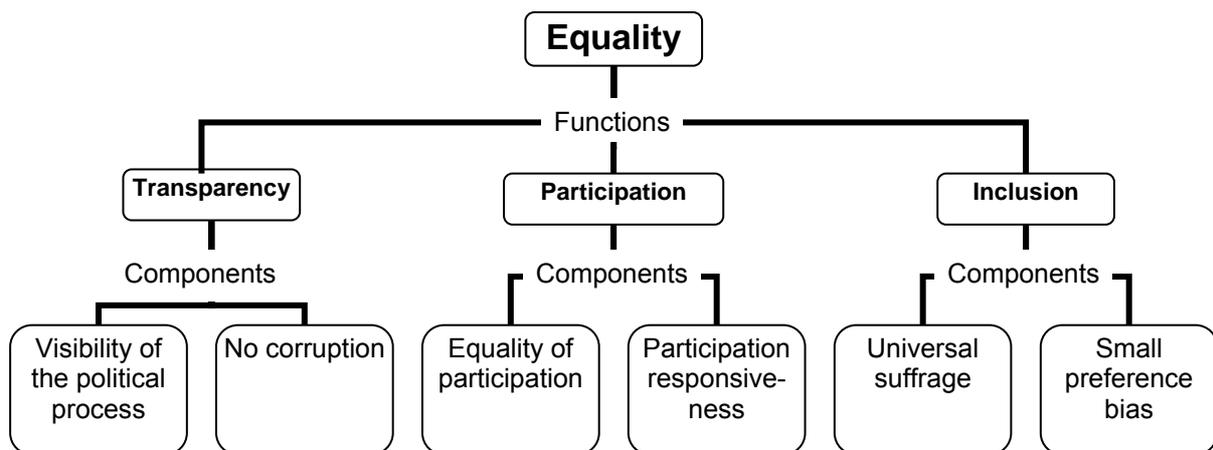
Figure 3 only shows the most abstract levels of our concept tree. Each function is further disaggregated into two components each, which finally, lead to several sub-components and indicators.<sup>24</sup> In the following sections, I give a very short description of the composition of the nine functions and the derived components.

#### **Equality**

The concept tree of equality, its functions and the derived components is displayed below. Thereafter, we will briefly describe the content of its functions and components.

<sup>23</sup> We also ran different statistical test to guarantee the distinctiveness of the single functions from each other. (see: chapter 4).

<sup>24</sup> An extensive description of all indicators (including sources), the explanation of the aggregation process as well as the concept trees for all functions can be found on the Democracy Barometer website ([www.democracybarometer.org](http://www.democracybarometer.org)).



### Participation

In a high-quality democracy, not only should citizens have equal rights to participate but these rights should also be used in an equal manner (Teorell 2006). Equal respect and consideration of all interests by the political representatives is only possible if participation is as widespread and as equal as possible (Lijphart 1997; Rueschemeyer 2004). Unequal turnout in terms of social characteristics or different resources "may mirror social divisions, which in turn can reduce the effectiveness of responsive democracy" (Teorell et al. 2007: 392). Furthermore, a broad access to political information via mass media is supposed to foster *equal participation* (component 1) (Norris 2003). Based on the idea that high turnout goes hand in hand with equal turnout (Lijphart 1997), I also consider the level of *effective use of participation* (component 2) rights for electoral as well as non-institutionalized participation.

### Inclusion

Finally, the function 'inclusion' embraces the components labelled '*universal suffrage*' and '*no distortion*'. According to Dahl (1976, 1998), equality stems from the idea that we have no reason to assume that one citizen is more qualified to govern than another. Political equality thus primarily depends on the notion of citizenship. Dahl argues that all persons that are affected by a political decision should have the right to participate in shaping this decision. An instrument aiming at measuring the quality of democracy and the degree of equality therefore has to take into account the amount of restrictions with regard to *active and passive suffrage* (Blais et al. 2001; Paxton et al. 2003) as well as the degree of political discrimination of minorities (Banducci et al. 2004). But inclusion has yet another meaning: as modern democracies are representative democracies, the inclusion of all interests into the parliamentary arena is of crucial importance too: On the one hand, the proportion of votes and seats should be as proportional as possible (Urbinati and Warren 2008). On the other hand, a high degree of congruence of the preferences of citizens and political representatives ensures substantial representation (Holden 2006), i.e., equal inclusion of interests.

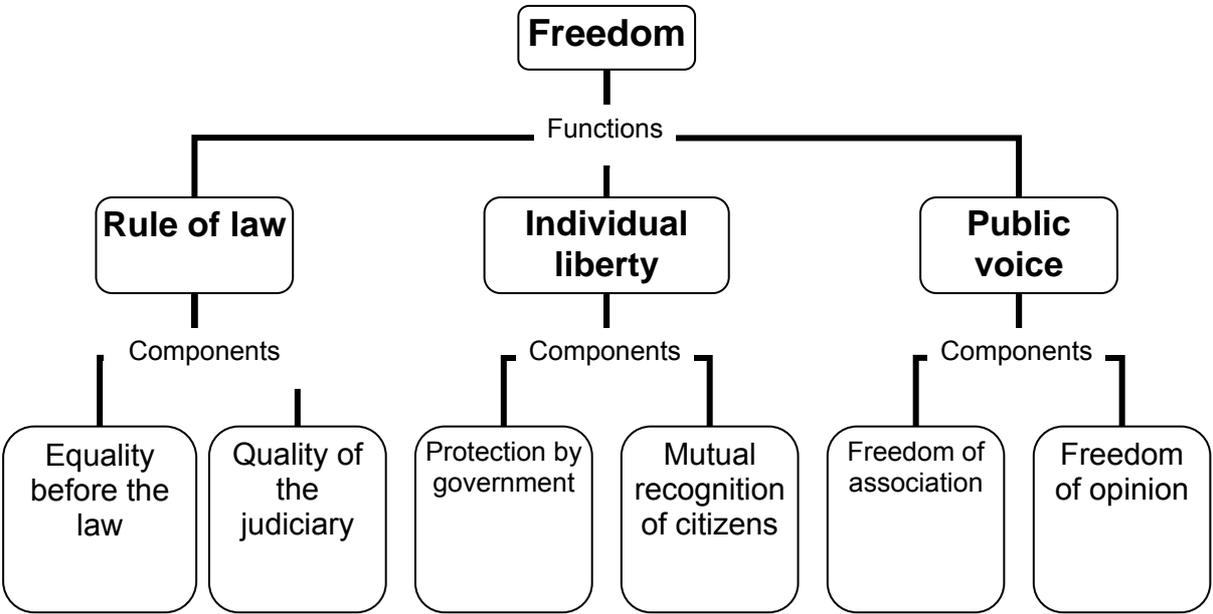
### Transparency

Secrecy has severe adverse effects on the quality of democracy: "Secrecy provides the fertile ground on which special interests work; secrecy serves to entrench incumbents,

discourage public participation in democratic processes, and undermine the ability of the press to provide an effective check against the abuses of government" (Stiglitz 1999: 14). Informational openness or the *public visibility of the political process* (component 1) is assumed to improve the quality of democracy (Islam 2006). Moreover, Stiglitz (1999: 11) notes that secrecy can take the form of *corruption* (component 2) and bribery. Corruption thus hinders empowered inclusion (Warren 2004) and is considered a sign of low transparency (Lindstedt and Naurin 2006; Rosendorff 2004).

**Freedom**

The concept tree of freedom comprises the three functions rule of law, individual liberty, and public voice. From those three functions we derived 6 components which can be seen below.



Rule of law

Rule of law designates the independence, the primacy, and the absolute warrant of and by the law. This requires the same prevalence of rights as well as formal and procedural justice for all individuals (Beetham 2004; Esquith 1999; Rawls 1971). *Equality before the law* (component 1) means that the impartiality of courts must be constitutionally provided and that judicial proceedings are not selectively or deliberately restricted by public policy, political pressures or prevailing social practices (O'Donnell 2004). The *quality of the judicial system* (component 2) depends on constitutionally guaranteed and effective independency of the courts from social or political influences (Camp Keith 2002; La Porta et al. 2004). Additionally, as the only political capital for courts is legitimacy, the quality of the judicial system also depends on diffuse support or institutional trust (Gibson 2006). In sum the function rule of law consists of two components, five subcomponents, to which we attribute 11 indicators. These 11 indicators finally measure the degree to which the democratic quality of the function rule of law is fulfilled in a given country.

## Individual liberty

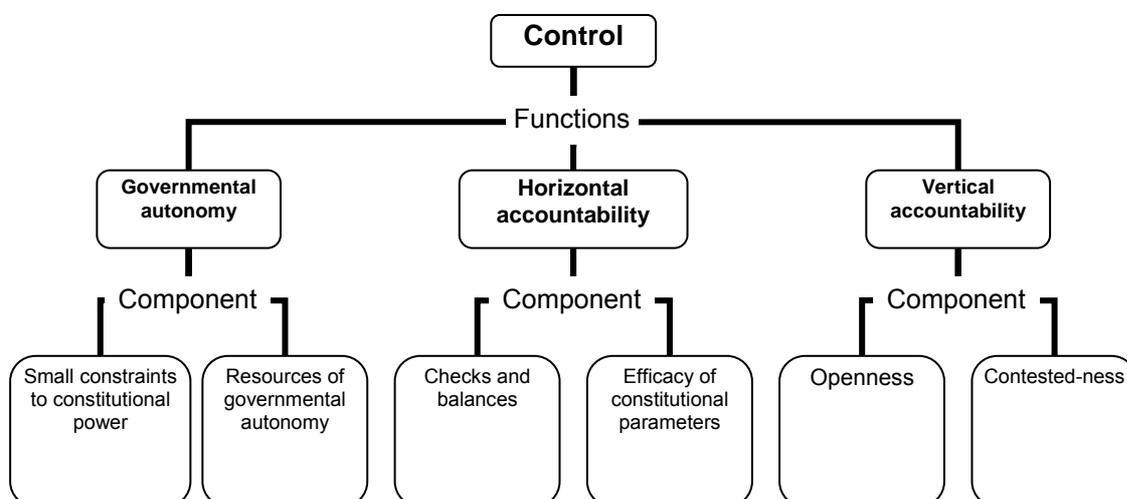
The function 'individual liberties' embraces the components 'effective respect' and 'acceptance of individual rights'. On the one hand, constitutional human rights provisions are seen as an indication for a culture that maintains *effective respect of individual rights* (component 1) (Camp Keith 2002). On the other hand, civil rights must not only on paper but also effectively protect individuals from potential abuses by others and the state power (O'Donnell 2004; Saward 1994). Transgressions by the state (e.g. torture and other cruel, inhumane, or degrading treatment or punishment) heavily restrict the degree of civil liberties (Cingranelli and Richards 1999). Additionally, "states are only effective in rights protection to the extent that citizens themselves are prepared to acknowledge the rights of others" (Beetham 2004: 72). Thus, the *mutual acceptance of individual rights* (component 2) by the citizens themselves as well as a low readiness for violent political participation or deviant, imperiling behaviour within a society enhances the degree of accomplishment.

## Public voice

The principle 'freedom' is completed by the function 'public voice', which is constituted by the components 'freedom to associate' and 'freedom of opinion. Here, individual rights have an essential collective purpose: "taking part with others in expressing opinions, seeking to persuade, mobilizing support" are seen as important substances of freedom (Beetham 2004: 62). In other words, a vital civil society and a vivid public sphere are signs of well-functioning *freedom of association* (component 1) and *of opinion* (component 2) (Teorell 2003; Tocqueville 1997 [1835]; Young 1999). In an established democracy, freedom of opinion – the second component of public voice – is foremost concerned with media and the media system because in public communication primarily takes place via mass media. Citizens need free news media that provide a forum for public discourse (Graber 2003).

## **Control**

The basic principle "control" has to be fulfilled by three democratic functions: governmental autonomy, horizontal accountability, and vertical accountability. From those three functions we have derived again three components.



### Governmental autonomy

To be able to implement democratic decisions and policies efficiently, a government needs independence from non-democratic forces as well as resources. I suggest that the effective power to govern firstly depends on the strength of *constraints* (component 1) exerted by illegitimate or democratically critical actors from inside a polity, such as the military, the church or citizens showing violent political behaviour, discontent or active resistance (Grant and Keohane 2005; Merkel 2004; Schiller 1999). Secondly, in order to act autonomously, the political elite needs *resources* (component 2) in form of a minimum of popular trust and support (Chanley et al. 2000; Rudolph and Evans 2005; Schiller 1999; Tsebelis 1995) as well as stability (Harmel and Robertson 1986). In countries where governments are frequently replaced before the end of the normal legislative term, effectiveness will be lower than in countries where the mean duration of governments in office is high and only interrupted by regular elections.

### Vertical accountability

Control in terms of control of the government, may be established vertically via the function 'competition'. Bartolini (1999, 2000) distinguishes four components of democratic competition, two of which *contestability* (component 1) and *vulnerability* (component 2) -best accord to our middle-range concept of democracy and our idea of vertical control (Bartolini 2000: 61). Contestability refers to the stipulations that electoral competitors have to meet in order to be allowed to enter the race and the possibility of being fairly represented in legislative bodies (Bartolini 1999: 457; Tavits 2006). The vulnerability corresponds to the uncertainty of the electoral outcome (Bartolini 2000: 52; also see Elkins 1974; Powell 1989) which is caused by the effective electoral competition as well as the effective parliamentary competition.

### Horizontal accountability

The horizontal and institutional dimension of control of the government is encompassed by mutual constraints of constitutional powers. These are ensured by the separation of political powers as well as by their enforcement of the rule of law (Beetham 2004; Bellamy 1996; Esquith 1999; Foweraker and Krznaric 2001; Rawls 1971). The power of *checks and balances* (component 1) depends on the number of important institutional vetoes (Andrews and Montinola 2006; Foweraker and Krznaric 2001), on the opportunities for institutionalized checks on the part of the citizens (Scarrow 2001) as well as on the strength of parliamentary opposition (Altman and Pérez-Liñán 2002; Fish 2006). To measure the effective impact of the *rule of law constraints* (component 2), I make use of an assessment of the power of the judiciary for effective judicial review (La Porta et al. 2004) and of the independence of public service from political pressure and interferences (Della Porta 2000).

## **4. The Measurement**

Based on the theoretical concept of democracy presented above, it is feasible to measure a country's quality of democracy for a given point in time. Nevertheless, the quality of the whole endeavor is not only the result of an adequate theoretical concept but equally depends on the quality of the measurement itself (Bollen 1991: 11). As Blalock (1982: 31) puts it: "If either process [conceptualization or measurement] lags too far behind the other, we shall find ourselves stymied."

Using the argumentation of Munck and Verkuilen (2002a, 2002b) as a starting point, there are three critical tasks to accomplish: (1) Appropriate indicators have to be collected. (2) The scaling of the indicators as well as (sub-)components, functions, and principles need to be chosen carefully, especially when it comes to the identification of the lowest and highest possible values. (3) The aggregation of indicators from each level of the concept tree to the next higher level should neither bias the results nor contradict the theoretical assumptions of the concept. Obviously, all those tasks are related to the concepts of validity and reliability. As other studies show (e.g., Bollen 1991; Bollen and Paxton 1998; Elkins 2000; Coppedge et al. 2008; Treier and Jackman 2008), both core concepts of measurement theory have seldom been assigned high importance in contemporary approaches to democracy measurement. The Democracy Barometer project aims at providing not only a sound and transparent theoretical concept but also a convincing measurement strategy.

#### **4.1 Selection of Indicators**

All in all, 300 indicators were collected from existing datasets, produced on the basis of various types of documents, or calculated by the project team. The selection of those indicators as well as their assignment to (sub-)components and functions was basically theory-driven to ensure content validity and to prevent concept over-stretching as described by Sartori (1970). The necessary reduction was structured by the following assumptions:

- Fulfilling the condition of content validity and avoiding heterogeneity, redundancy and arbitrariness (see Munck and Verkuilen 2002a) all indicators had to meet a number of criteria: (a) correlating significantly and positively with 'their' respective components and functions; (b) not correlating higher with any other of the functions; (c) correlating significantly and positively with the over-all index.
- If viable, data produced by expert judgments were not used. As Bollen and Paxton (1998, 2000) or Steenbergen and Marks (2006) have pointed out, the reliability of expert judgments is partly questionable. In lieu of expert judgments, the Democracy Barometer relies – whenever possible – on 'hard' data and aggregated survey data. That is a decisive difference to other democracy indices such as FH, Polity or BTI (Bertelsmann Transformation Index) which are all based on expert judgements.
- Measurement errors pose a serious problem, though to a certain degree they are inevitable (Zeller and Carmines 1980). However, some approaches may help to scale down their number. On the one hand, a wide variety of sources was used to collect the data. This should reduce the amount of systematic error. On the other hand, factor analysis is used to produce the scores for the subcomponents to minimize random error. Other studies on democracy measurement have shown that these are very effective strategies to increase the measurement quality (Bollen 1993; Munck and Verkuilen 2002a; Kaufmann and Kraay 2008).
- The dominant focus on the mere existence of democratic institutions is one of the major shortcomings of existing indices. This is even more the case if a project aims at measuring the quality of democracy. Therefore, each sub-component contains indicators in regard to the institutional setting (rules in law) as well as a measurement of those institutions in practice (rules in use).

Of this plethora of indicators, 77 indicators fulfilled the necessary criteria and are now used to calculate the sub-components.

## 4.2 Scaling

Scaling is crucial to the quality of a measurement instrument. It is not only important to choose between dichotomous, ordinal, or metric scales but also to identify appropriate minima and maxima. For example, as Elkins (2000) points out, the choice between a dichotomous or continuous scale for democracy has a substantive impact not only on the degree of measurement error but also on the test of causal relationships with other indicators. Freedom House provides another important example: The Civil Liberties Score and the Political Rights Score are both using a categorical scale from 1 to 7, regardless of the fact that they are originally based on quasi-continuous scales from 0-40 and 0-60 respectively.<sup>25</sup> The consequences of the widely used scales from 1 to 7 instead of the underlying quasi-continuous scales are very substantive. For example, the rescaling leads to an artificial reduction of variance. In 2008, altogether 57 countries were assigned with the highest possible value for Political Rights. This group includes countries like Sweden, but also Estonia, Ghana and Israel.

In general, three rules can be applied to produce a scale for a measurement instrument like the Democracy Barometer:

- (1) The scaling could be based on theory-driven decisions, that is, certain electoral turnouts are either defined as minimum or as maximum. As stated above, there is no universal theory of democracy and therefore, no such thresholds can be identified. Whereas the Schumpeterian democratic theory supports a very low turnout as acceptable, participatory democracy relies on a much higher threshold.
- (2) Another rule could be based on impartial standards. For the quality of democracy one might think of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a reference. Unfortunately, only a very small number of relevant indicators can be rescaled on such a base and this makes the whole rule inappropriate for the project.
- (3) The third possibility is based on the ideal of empirical minima and maxima. For each indicator, or whenever necessary on a higher stage of aggregation, the best and worst practice in established democracies can be identified. All other values are assigned in relation to those two references.

The Democracy Barometer project opted for the third rule to produce an adequate scaling. To accomplish this task, a set of 'blue-print' countries, i.e., established democracies, was identified.<sup>26</sup> The country selection is tremendously important because it must be ensured that every established democracy in the world is included to prevent any bias while determining the best and worst practices. All in all, 34 countries met all necessary criteria, although, four countries, namely Bahamas, Barbados, Cape Verde and Mauritius, had to be excluded due to the high proportion of missing data.<sup>27</sup> In consequence, all indicators were standardized in accordance to the following procedure: the lowest empirical value was rescaled to 0 and the highest empirical value was rescaled to 100. The empirical sample for each identification

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25 It must be annotated that Freedom House did not provide easy access to the data of those quasi-continuous scales until 2006.

26 A country was included if it had more than 250.000 inhabitants and if it could be described as highly democratic over a substantive time period. It had to have a value of 1.5 or below on the combined Freedom House Scores as well as a Polity IV Score of 8 or above between 1995 and 2005.

27 The blue-print sample includes Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Costa Rica, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the USA.

procedure was constituted by 330 country years (30 countries in the blue-print sample multiplied with the number of years under research).

The Democracy Barometer can and will be applied to a bigger sample. In fact, the period under research will be increased (at least 1990 to today) and meanwhile data on more than 45 countries have been collected. The values of those countries will also be standardized in relation to the best and to the worst practice of this blue-print sample. This will lead to values below 0 and maybe even above 100 which might seem problematic. To the contrary: values below 0 simply indicate a democratic quality below the lowest level of democratic quality in the blue-print sample and values above 100 indicate a higher quality. The relative scale without fixed minima and maxima makes the Democracy Barometer a very powerful tool for time-series and large-N samples.

### **4.3 Aggregation**

The conceptualization of the Democracy Barometer with its different levels of abstractions necessitates the definition of aggregation rules. How should indicators be aggregated to sub-components, components, functions, principles and, in the end, to an overall index of democratic quality? Moreover, do all elements have the same importance?

As already stated above, the first level of aggregation – from indicators to sub-components – is based on factor analysis. The factor analytic method is not only able to minimize the measurement error but is an appropriate technique to measure latent variables as well (Zeller and Carmines 1980; Brown 2006; Kaufmann and Kraay 2008). All other aggregations are simply based on calculations of arithmetic means.<sup>28</sup>

In accordance with the underlying theoretical concept, no weights are assigned. For example, each principle is equally important for the overall democratic quality. The aggregation from indicators to sub-components constitutes the only exception; here, each indicator is weighted by the respective factor loading.

Upon its release the Democracy Barometer will provide scholars with the opportunity to utilize various strategies of aggregation. It will then even be possible to measure a different concept of democracy with the data. Researches supporting a more minimalistic concept might consider the functions “Vertical Accountability”, “Individual Liberties” and “Participation” as more important than the other six functions. Others might work with functions as necessary conditions and therefore use multiplication to aggregate. The scientific community is explicitly encouraged to test different ways of aggregating and/or weighting.

## ***II. (First) Empirical Results***

In the following we will our first empirical findings and applications. Since at present the data from 1990-1995 and 2006-2009 are not fully tested and confirmed yet, we use for this paper only the data for the period from 1995 to 2005.

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<sup>28</sup> The scores of each function are again rescaled from 0 to 100. Substantially, this does not have an effect but it seems easier to get an impression of the democratic quality of countries in each function.

## 1. Ranking and Rating of the OECD

The final ranking of our country sample aggregate on the level of the three principles as the average of the democracy scores from 1995-2005 does not show surprising results at the top: The five Scandinavian countries are the top performers with Denmark at rank 1. This correlates highly with other indices of good governance (World Bank), corruption (Transparency International) or the sustainable governance indicators (SGI, Bertelsmann Foundation). Denmark (rank 1) has an extraordinary equal high performance at all three principles. Finland (rank 2) shows the highest scores of all countries at freedom, while equality and control are visibly lower. Sweden (rank 3) has its strength particularly in equality, but scores comparatively low at control. USA (rank 13) performs very well if it comes to freedom (third highest score of all countries), but its scores in equality and (surprisingly) control are slightly below the average.

**Table 2: Ranking and rating of established democracies (averages 1995-2005)**

		Quality of Democracy	Functions		
			Freedom	Equality	Control
1	Denmark	84.2	82.8	85.3	84.6
2	Finland	81.6	90.8	77.0	77.3
3	Sweden	81.4	86.5	88.8	68.8
4	Iceland	79.8	74.0	81.4	83.8
5	Norway	77.4	79.5	78.0	74.8
6	Netherlands	77.3	78.7	80.4	73.0
7	Luxembourg	74.4	79.8	62.9	80.4
8	Belgium	74.1	72.8	67.6	81.8
9	Switzerland	71.5	80.3	48.5	85.7
10	New Zealand	69.7	76.4	79.1	53.7
11	Australia	67.2	60.4	70.0	71.3
12	Canada	65.9	71.1	68.7	57.9
13	USA	64.7	81.4	55.2	57.4
14	Austria	64.6	66.0	65.2	62.8
15	Germany	61.9	60.9	62.1	62.6
16	Cyprus	60.8	68.5	42.2	71.8
17	Ireland	59.8	55.3	52.3	71.7
18	Slovenia	55.2	60.3	48.9	56.4
19	Spain	54.6	50.5	47.9	65.4
20	Malta	52.9	50.7	55.7	52.4
21	Portugal	51.6	51.6	48.8	54.4
22	Japan	50.8	49.0	39.5	64.0
23	Hungary	49.2	54.5	36.1	57.0
24	Czech Republic	48.2	47.9	43.6	53.3
25	United Kingdom	47.7	49.0	49.6	44.7
26	France	44.9	33.9	45.5	55.3
27	Costa Rica	44.4	45.9	37.0	50.1
28	Italy	42.9	37.5	41.1	50.1
29	South Africa	39.7	39.6	52.9	26.5
30	Poland	34.0	38.3	23.7	40.2

Costa Rica, Italy, South Africa, and Poland are somewhat expectedly at the bottom of the ranking. More surprising are the relative low scores and ranks for the United Kingdom (rank

25) and France (rank 26). On the level of principles this is due to France's low scoring in freedom, while UK performs quite weak with respect to control. On the level of functions UK performs visible below the average of the 30 countries concerning horizontal accountability, public voice, and inclusion. France shows particular low scores in rule of law, public voice, and inclusion. The further particular weaknesses (and strengths) can be shown for France, UK and all other countries, by looking at the scores for the components, subcomponents, and indicators<sup>29</sup>

(see selected country spider webs shaped along the nine functions of democracy. It shows how different the shapes (strengths and weaknesses) can be even among countries which differ not that much at the level of the total democracy index).

## **2. Decline of Democratic Quality**

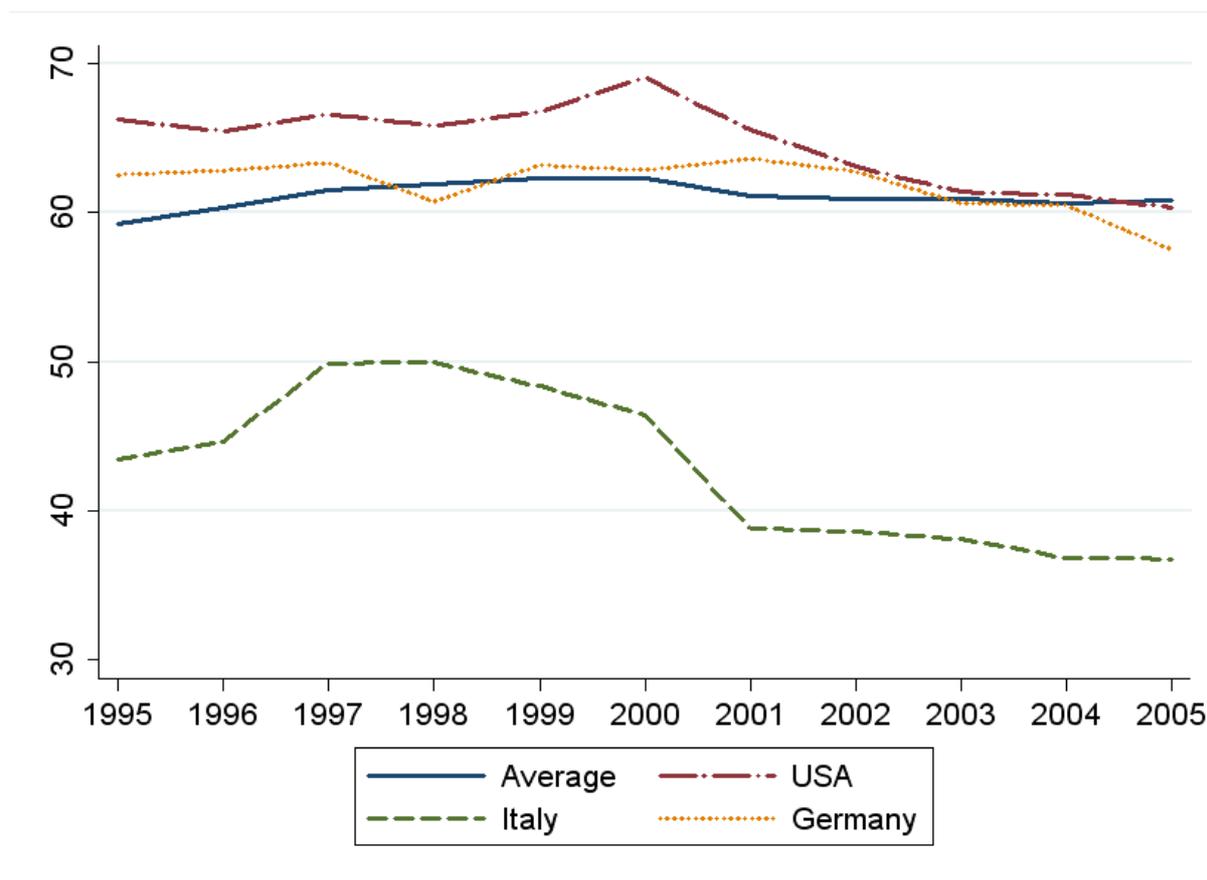
There is an abundant literature on the crisis of (representative) democracy (e.g., Crouch 2004; Keane 2009; ....). Assuming there was a golden age or a "democratic moment" (Crouch) in the 1950s to 1970s most of these theoretical writing diagnoses a progressing decline of democracy since then. Accelerated by globalisation, the decline of political parties, and the growing discontent of voters with parliaments, political parties, and the political elites the established democracies within the OECD-world are supposedly continuing to lose in quality. Most of these sweeping claims lack any solid empirical base. However, conventional democracy indices such as Freedom House or Polity can neither falsify (nor verify) these propositions since they do not show significant changes for the OECD-countries over the last 20 years. Democracy Barometer is sensitive towards those changes over time and can give a first empirical answer to the decline thesis. If one looks at the average score of all 30 countries of our sample the data of Democracy Barometer cannot verify any decline of democratic quality. In 2005 the aggregate score figures even slightly above that of 1995 ten years before.

However, significant changes can be seen for single countries as the Figure 4 reveals for the USA after 2000 and Italy since the end of 1990s. Italy already started from scores visibly below the average of all countries in 1995 and fell even more sharply after the year 2000 mostly to the bad scores of Berlusconi's government. The US on the other side departed in 1995 from a position above the average score and dropped sharply to the average in 2005. Our data (not exhibited here) reveal that the decline of democratic quality was even sharper from 2005 to 2008. These of course are only first preliminary results which deserve deeper analysis on the base of the detailed data. However, the popular general decline thesis of democracy cannot be confirmed at all.

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29 All single data will be published at the end of the year in the web ([www.democracybarometer.org](http://www.democracybarometer.org)).

**Figure 4: The quality of democracy (1995-2005)**



### 3. Lijphart's World of Democracies Revisited

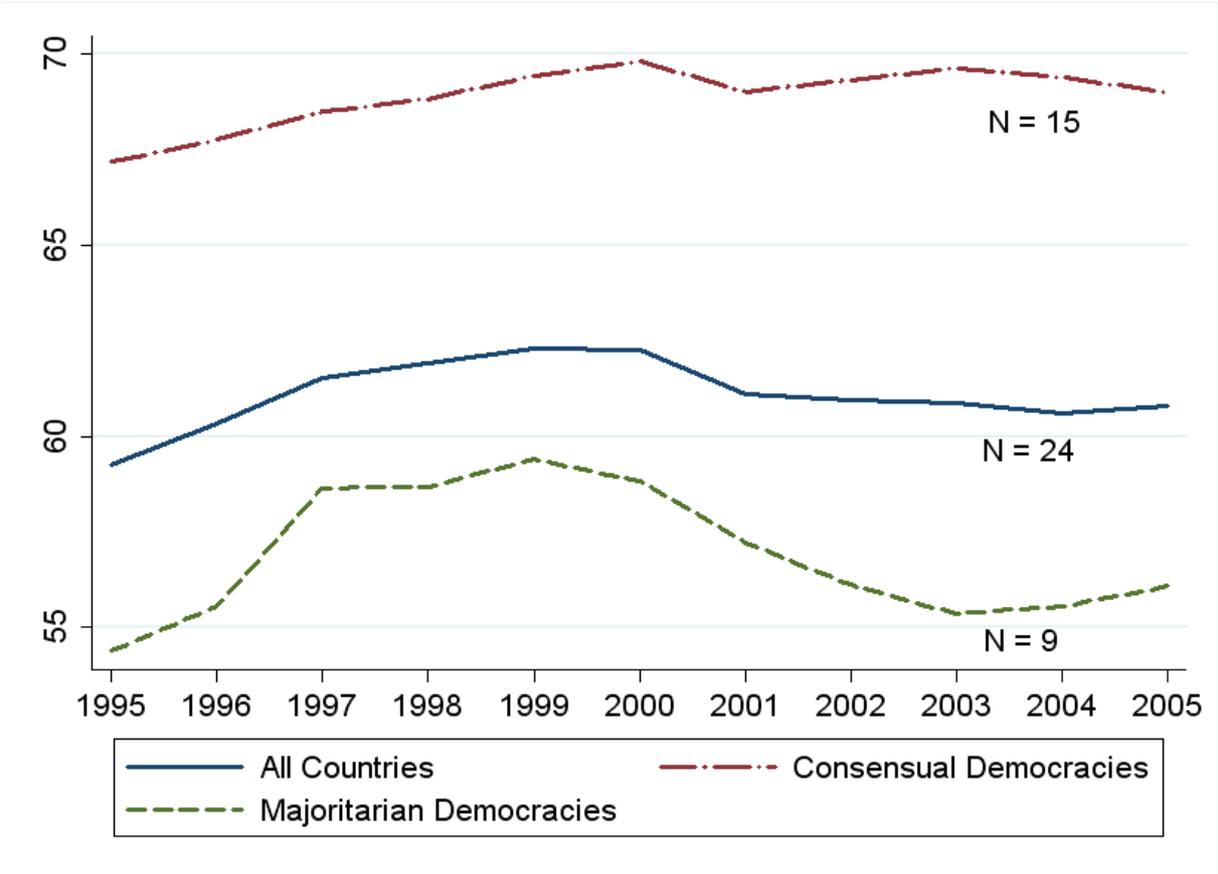
What can our data tell us about the debate on consensual and majoritarian democracies? In his second edition of his „Patterns of Democracies“ Arend Lijphart concludes unmistakably: “... consensus democracies clearly outperform the majoritarian democracies with regard to the quality of democracy and democratic representation as well as with regard to what I have called the kindness and gentleness of their public policy orientations” (Lijphart 1999: 300). Again, there is no way to confirm or disconfirm Lijphart's often quoted statement by Freedom house or Polity, since their indices of democracy are overwhelmingly insensitive towards differences concerning the democratic quality<sup>30</sup>. We tested Lijphart's proposition against our own democracy data. We took those 24 countries<sup>31</sup> which are both present in Lijphart's and our sample and distinguished them along the executive-parties dimension, the true dividing dimension between consensual and majoritarian democracies. The graph depicted below in

30 Only in rather extreme cases of democratic quality within the family of democracies such as under Berlusconi's government II and III Freedom house attributes not 1 but 2 to civil and political rights. The scores for the US remained unaltered at the optimal grade 1 during the two administrations of George W. Bush.

31 All in all, 24 countries are both present in Lijphart's sample as well as the Democracy Barometer's blue print sample. The country classification is only based on the Executives-Parties dimension. Countries with positive values are coded as consensual democracies; all countries with negative values are coded as majoritarian countries. By this threshold, 15 countries fall into the group of consensual democracies (Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, , Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, , the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, South Africa, Sweden and Switzerland) while the 9 countries are defined as majoritarian (Australia, Canada, Costa Rica, France, Malta, New Zealand, Spain, the United Kingdom and the USA).

figure 5 shows significant differences between both types of democracies: Throughout the period from 1995 to 2005 the consensual democracy performed much better in democratic quality than the majoritarian democracies. The democracy gap between both types of democracy even widened after 2000 due to a visible decline of democratic quality among the majoritarian democracies.

**Figure 5: The quality of democracy in consensual and majoritarian democracies**



How do consensual and majoritarian democracies perform with regard to the three single principles and nine functions of democracy? Table 3 below shows the means of functions, principles and the overall index for consensual and majoritarian democracies for the whole research period.<sup>32</sup> Somehow surprisingly, the quality of democracy in consensual democracies is not just higher in each and every aspect but the differences between the two means are often very substantive. For example, the deviation for the functions “Public Voice”, “Inclusion” and “Vertical Accountability” are close to 20 points. Both types of democracy perform more or less equal only in the context of participation and individual rights. There is also a big difference in the principle “Control”. Following the arguments of Lijphart, consensual democracy should of course have the clear advantage here. Neither the

32 All in all, 24 countries are both present in Lijphart’s sample as well as the Democracy Barometer’s blue print sample. The country classification is only based on the Executives-Parties dimension. Countries with positive values are coded as consensual democracies; all countries with negative values are coded as majoritarian countries. By this threshold, 15 countries fall into the group of consensual democracies (Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, , Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, , the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, South Africa, Sweden and Switzerland) while the 9 countries are defined as majoritarian (Australia, Canada, Costa Rica, France, Malta, New Zealand, Spain, the United Kingdom and the USA).

horizontal nor the vertical accountability of the majoritarian pattern of democracy score as high as those in consensual democracies. Even the United States of America are significantly weaker in vertical and horizontal accountability (checks and balances) as text books and common wisdom make us believe.

The country ranking presented above already suggested these results to a certain degree. The highest ranking majoritarian country is New Zealand being 10<sup>th</sup>. But New Zealand is no longer a “pure” majoritarian democracy after it has changed its electoral system.

**Table 3: Comparison of the group averages for consensual and majoritarian democracies**

	Consensual democracies	Majoritarian democracies
<i>Functions</i>		
Rule of law	65.3	52.4
Individual liberty	86.7	82.1
Public voice	57.1	38.6
Transparency	62.0	55.3
Participation	61.5	60.5
Inclusion	72.2	53.7
Governmental autonomy	75.3	65.3
Mutual constraints	71.0	56.7
Vertical accountability	68.8	47.4
<i>Principles</i>		
Freedom	69.7	57.7
Equality	65.2	56.5
Control	71.7	56.5
<i>Overall Index</i>		
Quality of democracy	68.9	56.9

Table 4 (below) presents Pearson correlation coefficients for the functions, principles and the overall index with the two dimensions of democracy. Positive relationships indicate that consensual democracy is linked with a higher democratic quality or vice versa.<sup>33</sup> In 5 out of 9 functions, a positive and significant relationship is identified for the first dimension. As the previous results above, this indicates a higher democratic quality in consensual democracies. Consequently, consensual democracy is also related to significantly higher values of freedom, control and the overall quality.

The correlations with the Federal-Unitary dimension draw a different picture. On the one hand, most of the relationships are negative; majoritarian democracies seem to have higher democratic quality. On the other hand, none of the correlations is significant on even the 10%-level. The quality of democracy is not related to aspects of unitarian or federal institutional settings. These findings, although provided on the basis of very simply statistical analysis, are quite contradictory to arguments calling for an increase in democratic quality by means of decentralisation and local democracy.

33 One might argue that there is even a causal relationship. Consensual democracy are kinder and gentler (Liphart 1999: 275pp.) and these are aspects of democratic quality. At this point of research it should be sufficient to talk about relationships and not causal relationships.

**Table 4: Correlations of democracy barometer and Lijphart's two dimensions of democracy**

	Executives-Parties Dimension	Federal-Unitary Dimension
<i>Functions</i>		
Rule of law	.29	.06
Individual liberty	.26	-.28
Public voice	.49 **	-.08
Transparency	.19	-.14
Participation	.01	-.12
Inclusion	.48 **	-.32
Governmental autonomy	.36 ***	-.03
Horizontal accountability	.45 **	.01
Vertical accountability	.76 ***	-.26
<i>Principles</i>		
Freedom	.46 **	-.06
Equality	.28	-.23
Control	.70 **	-.12
<i>Overall index</i>		
Quality of democracy	.52 ***	-.16

\* Below 10% probability error.

\*\* Below 5% probability error.

\*\*\* Below 1% probability error.

#### 4. Conclusion: Research Perspectives beyond Measurement

The aim of the paper was to explain the construction of a new tool to measure the quality of those advanced democracies, where FH or Polity are not able to show significant differences. The Democracy Barometer will evaluate the quality of democracy on an annual base from 1990 onwards. We just have concluded collecting and testing of the (77) indicators for 30 countries, i.e. most of the OECD-countries and some countries which have shown in the test period from 1995 – 2005 a constant evaluation of 1.5 and below at FH and minimum 8 or better at Polity. Since the data for the period of 1995 – 2005 stood all methodological testing, we used these data for a first insight into the empirical findings. Based on a best case methodology we found considerable differences with regard to the quality of democracy among our 30 countries sample. However, not only the aggregate quality index differ, but the countries also differ in the degree they fulfil the basic principals and functions of democracy. Although countries may have a similar overall score concerning the total democracy index, they have different strength and weaknesses as can be shown with our data on the level of principles, functions, components, and subcomponents.

A preliminary, still rather descriptive use of the data showed, that:

- There is no decline of the quality of democracy for the 30 most democratic countries since 1995.
- Lijphart's thesis of the kinder and gentler consensus democracies (executive-parties dimension) can be impressively confirmed with regard to the quality of democracy. Not only did they perform much better at the total index, they performed better in each of the nine functions of democracy.

- On the federal-unitary dimension we found no significant correlation between federalism/unitarism and the quality of democracy.

Of course there much more options for further research where the Democracy Barometer results can be used as independent and dependent variables. They cannot only be applied on the 4 different level of data aggregation, each researcher can compose its own menu of democracy, according to his or her theoretical assumptions.

Further research questions for the Democracy Barometer team will be i.a.:

*Is the quality of democracy a function of the institutional design of a political regime?*

We have made it clear that the quality of democracy is first and foremost a matter of fulfilling normative promises (i.e., functions). In other words, the quality of democracy is high if the institutional settings tap their potential (Altman and Pérez-Liñán 2002). However, we suggest cohesion between the institutional design and the quality of democracy within a political regime. We therefore analyse if the degree of quality of democracy can be explained by the institutional design. If question 2 can be answered in the affirmative, these analyses will give us the possibility to suggest institutional reforms (Lijphart 1999).

*Which changes in the quality of democracy within a political regime can be observed over time? Are these changes similar in all established democracies?*

This question seems to fit the overall goal of the NCCR Democracy best. One main target of the NCCR is to explain the challenges contemporary democracies face. Globalisation, internationalisation, and the role of the media are pointed out as the primary sources of these challenges. Additionally, one of the most important problems of democratic regimes is the supposed and growing crisis of their legitimacy. Applying the democracy barometer, we should be able to show the influence of the growing globalisation and internationalisation and the changing role of the media on the quality of democracy over time, as well as the impact of these processes on the partial regimes, its functions and components. We assume that globalisation and internationalisation first of all strain the power to govern regime and the political rights regime while the changing role of the media should mostly influence the electoral and voting regime and again the political rights regime.

Especially the discussion on the crisis of democracy (Crozier et al. 1975; Dalton 2005; Dalton et al. 1984; Köchler 1987; Maier 1994; Norris 1999; Offe 2003a, 2003b; Pharr and Putnam 2000) identifies an increasing loss of legitimacy in terms of declining political trust and support. We will analyse if this decline is reflected in the changing quality of democracy over time.

*Can the longitudinal changes in the quality of democracy of a political regime be explained by its changes in institutional design?*

According to the second question, our last research question tries to analyse the interrelation between the institutional design of a regime and its quality of democracy. The analyses within question 4 are harder tests of this assumption than those within question 2. If the ideas of institutional engineering hold, an institutional reform affects and alters not only the quality of democracy but also the balancing between the functions.

Within this question we can test one of the most prominent assumptions of the crisis literature: can institutional designing (and consequently the changing quality of democracy) serve as a remedy against the crisis? Are there countries where trust and support are higher and do these countries show different institutional settings and different degrees of quality of

democracy than countries with rather low trust and support (Bühlmann 2007; Freitag and Bühlmann 2005)?

First of all, we try to address these four questions. Of course, our democracy barometer can be adapted to further research. We could use the quality of democracy measures as a dependent as well as an independent variable. Research questions could include, for instance: does the specific socio-economic and socio-demographic context of a country have an influence on the quality of democracy of a political regime? Do different degrees of quality of democracy have a different impact on political output and outcomes? Is there an interaction between the quality of democracy and the size of the welfare state?

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Annex

