Political Geography 83 (2020) 102276

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Political Geography

journal homepage: http://www.elsevier.com/locate/polgeo

The case for extending measures of democracy in the world “Beneath”, “Above”, and “Outside” the national level

Jean-Paul Gagnon[a,*], Dannica Fleuss[b]

[a] University of Canberra, 11C19, Allawoona Street, 2617, ACT, Australia
[b] Helmut-Schmidt-Universität, Fakultät für Wirtschafts- und Sozialwissenschaften, Postfach 70 08 22, 22008, Hamburg, Germany

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
Democracy
Horizontal separation
Measuring democracy
Social association
Spatial theory
Vertical stratification

ABSTRACT

This article applies spatial theory, or the view that phenomena are distributed in space, to democracy. This analysis demonstrates that plural (two or more) democratic practices are evident in three spatial categories: (1) vertical stratification (i.e. at different levels of governance), (2) horizontal separation (i.e. among different agents operating at each level of governance), and (3) social association (i.e. in workplaces, families, schools). This finding, that plural democratic practices are demonstrated by agents operating at *multiple levels* of governance and in various non- or quasi-governmental associations prompts us to argue that measures of democracy in the world should be extended to spaces “beneath”, “above”, and “outside” the national level – presently the dominant locus for regular batteries that test the quality and extent of democratic practices globally. However, global data on the quality and extent of democracy at these other levels needs to be built before such an extension can happen.

1. Introduction

Democracy is practiced in many forms – liberal (Woodberry, 2012), illiberal (Krasztev and Van Til, 2015) or post-liberal (Wolff, 2013), representative (Alonso, Keane and Merkel, 2011), unrepresentative (de la Torre, 2014), fast (Clark and Teachout, 2012, p. 5), slow (Saward, 2017), big (Lowndes, 2000, p. 537), small (Corbett and Veenendaal, 2018), white (Ward, 2011), black (Hine, 2003), feminine (Huysseune, 2000), masculine (Heinen, 1992), and thousands more (Gagnon, 2018). The long list of democracy with adjectives found in Gagnon (2018) begins, as his research note explains, with signal words, such as those mentioned above. It encourages readers to consider the literature that each of those words listed points to as this literature is where the descriptions of the words are found. It is by considering these plural descriptions of democracy that one can shed light on the plural enactments or “forms” of democracy in political reality. With “democracy”, we refer to forms of governance that realize self-rule by the people. This article starts out from the premise that all forms of democracy are ultimately founded in *democratic practices*, i.e. they are “enacted and reproduced through social actions” (see Warren, 2017, p. 43). Yet, the question of *where* such practices of self-governance happen is infrequently, if at all, posed. Why? It may be due to the prominence of the liberal, representative, parliamentary practices of democracy that overshadow its other practices (Hobson, 2009) or perhaps due to missing conceptual tools for thinking about democracy outside of conventional model-driven logics where its diversity of practice could be given more attention.[1]

There is, however, literature that exhibits where democracy manifests and differentiates in spatial terms. The three major categories applied in these strands of research are (1) vertical stratification (e.g. Clark 2014); (2) horizontal differentiation (e.g. Lindberg et al., 2014; Behrend and Whitehead 2016; Barbehön et al., 2016), and (3) social association (e.g. Hirst and Bader 2001; Ahlberg, Roman and Duncan 2008; Harnecker 2009; Apple and Beane 2007).[2] These are, for the purposes of this article, termed democracy’s spatial categories and our analysis of them generates evidence which we use to argue for an extended conceptual framework for measuring the quality and extent of

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* Corresponding author.
E-mail addresses: jean-paul.gagnon@canberra.edu.au (J.-P. Gagnon), dannica.fleuss@hsu-hh.de (D. Fleuss).

[1] Mark Warren (2017), for example, asks readers to consider the problem-based approach to democratic theory as this allows whichever practices of democracy that have relevance to solving the problem to be applied.

[2] It is worth noting that agents in each of these three spatial categories can also demonstrate plural democratic practices in their online engagements. For example, an agent can demonstrate radical democracy online (Dahlberg and Siapera 2007) but also deliberative (Dahlberg 2007) and representative democracy (Coleman and Shane 2012), among others, as well.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2020.102276
Received 25 March 2019; Received in revised form 21 July 2020; Accepted 14 August 2020
Available online 10 September 2020
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democracy in the world – one that includes spaces “beneath”, “above” and “outside” the national level which is presently the prime locus for gauges of the “state of democracy in the world” (e.g. Beetham 2002; Gastil 1985; Giannone 2010; Huntington 1984; Modelski and Perry 2002).

The literature involved in vertical stratification shows that plural (two or more) democratic practices occur at different levels of governance (i.e. local, subnational, national, supranational, global), which we substantiate using a German example. The literature involved in horizontal differentiation adds to the evidence found in the vertical stratification category as it demonstrates how agents, in each level of governance outside the German example, have engaged in different democratic practices. Finally, the literature on the democratic aspects of social associations like workplaces or families and schools shows that they too can be sites for plural democratic practices – a finding that we detail through three examples of democracy in the workplace (the Golden State Warriors’ supportive democracy, industrial democracy in the Chinese aerospace engineering sector and cooperative democracy in Cuba).

The evidence brought forward through our analysis, as presented in Fig. 2.0, offers a grounded indication of where different democratic practices can be expected to happen in the world. The vertical stratification and horizontal differentiation categories, for example, exhibit discursive, multinational, consensus, deliberative, participatory, liberal, collegial, electoral, representative, and direct democratic practices (there are, in fact, more forms of democracy in play than these as will be seen). What this means is that two or more democratic practices occur at different levels of governance *and* that they are performed by more than one agent at each level. The evidence from the social association category accentuates this claim as it demonstrates that plural democratic practices are also to be found in non- or quasi-governmental associations like workplaces which can be practitioners of supportive, industrial and cooperative democracy or still other forms.

This evidence leads us to argue that, if one’s aim is to understand the state of democracy in the world, this cannot be achieved by restricting the analysis to only one of these levels or spaces where democratic practices happen (see Bauböck 2010 for a multi-level approach to “citizenship constellations”; or Held 2010 for his account of multilayered democracy). Presently, national level (or country-based) measures of democratic quality dominate this field of inquiry. Even sophisticated measurement instruments, such as the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) project, the Democracy Barometer, Freedom House’s Index of Freedom in the World (IFW) and the Economist Intelligence Unit’s Democracy Index choose the nation state as their major unit of comparison. Therefore, what needs to be assessed, and included in measures of democracy, are the quality and extent of plural democratic practices performed by agents operating at other levels of governance and in those social associations that characterize the lifeworld outside of formal politics (Flinders and Wood 2018).[3]

Further to this, as deepening democracy or democratizing democracy remains a core aspect of the cosmopolitan qua global civilizing project (e.g. Saward 2001), there is a normative need to know not only where democratic practices occur, what characterizes the democratic nature of those practices (i.e. which forms or models of democracy are in play) and how the quality of democratic practices in those spaces compare, but also the *extent* of democracy adoption by the actors in each of these spaces. For example, how many agents at the local, subnational, national, supranational, and global levels are openly striving to deliver their responsibilities in a democratic fashion? The same question deserves to be posed of social associations: what number of workplaces or families, schools and other non- or quasi-governmental associations try to meet their functions through democratic practices? What number do not? And how do these statistics compare across the world from locality to locality, sub-nationality to sub-nationality, country to country, supranational entity to supranational entity, UN body to UN body, or all the above in a vertical stack from, for instance, local to global?

We are left with the impetus to complement the ongoing measurement of democracy at the national level by measuring the quality and extent of democracy in those spaces “below” (i.e. local, subnational), “above” (i.e. supranational, global) and “outside” of it (i.e. social associations). The comparative study of democracy could benefit significantly from a systematic conceptual framework which allows for the inclusion of plural democratic practices that occur in different spatial categories. The framework that we propose in this article casts a broader net than is presently used, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of democratic quality and, in consequence, for a more valid empirical assessment of democratic quality in comparative studies. Although developing a comprehensive measurement instrument is beyond the scope of this article, in the concluding section, we outline five steps that concern the methodological pragmatics of translating our proposal into a measurement approach.

2. Applying spatial theory to democracy

Spatial theory dictates that physical phenomena – in this case the behaviours that create plural democratic practices – happen or are otherwise constituted in space. As Ethington (2007: p. 466) writes, “[k]nowledge of the past”, of what has occurred in the material world, “is literally cartographic: a mapping of the places of history indexed to the coordinates of spacetime”. Applying spatial theory in this light to democracy, therefore, requires us to think about *where* democracy’s practices happen. Our approach to this challenge was first to map and then to provide a cartography of common sites of democratic practice both in institutional and non-institutional, formal and informal, terms. We hold that these spaces in which democratic practices occur can be organized in three dimensions:

(1) *Vertical stratification:* We understand that most people in the world are governed by at least one multilevel framework where, for example, a local governor comes under one or more subnational governors, which come under a national government, which itself is regulated by one or more supranational entities (like the EU or African Union) that are, ultimately themselves, governed by various Conventions and regulations legislated by one or more UN bodies such as the General Assembly. Each level presents a conceptual space (i.e. the local through to the global) and governance happens in each space, meaning that it is likely democratic practices will be evident therein. We term this spatial category “vertical stratification”.

(2) *Horizontal differentiation:* However, we also understand that there are multiple governing agents across the world at each level in the vertical stratification space (including the UN as it governs through numerous bodies). For example, there are tens of thousands of distinct local governments, thousands of subnational governments, hundreds of national governments, dozens of supranational entities and a handful of UN bodies, meaning that the spaces that democratic practices happen in stretch out horizontally in the world across each of these vertical levels. We term this spatial category “horizontal differentiation”.

(3) *Associational spaces of democracy:* Lastly, we acknowledge that democratic practices may happen in non-governmental or quasi-governmental spaces, such as workplaces or families and schools – the sites of what Flinders and Wood (2018: 57) term the “everyday” or “mundane” social actions that characterize the lifeworld outside of formal political institutions. It is probable that there are millions of these associations in the world and we expect that some number of them will demonstrate one or more

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[3] In methodological terms, we therefore choose “democratic practices” as a primary unit of analysis for measuring the state of democracy in the world.

practices of democracy. We term this spatial category "social association".

In what follows, we demonstrate that plural (two or more) democratic practices are evident in each spatial category. Democratic practices means when an agent demonstrates, by their behaviour, the enactment of a form of democracy. For example, colleague *a* is in conversation with colleague *b* in a large moderated forum. Colleague *a* is attempting to reach consensus with colleague *b* on a point of disagreement. This would constitute an act of consensus-seeking democracy and therefore a democratic practice. Each form of democracy has its own minimal and maximal criteria which differ in robustness. For vertical stratification we demonstrate plural democratic practices via a German example showing that multiple practices of democracy occur at the local, subnational, national, supranational and global level. For horizontal differentiation we demonstrate this by showing how specific governing agents use plural democratic practices at each of these levels. And for social association we do this by giving three distinct examples of democratic practices in the workplace – whilst associations operate at all spatial levels, we decided to include examples from the local level to more deeply demonstrate the validity of our claim.

3. Vertical stratification: democratic practices at different levels and in different spaces in the German system

The logic of vertical stratification invites ladder-like thinking. Layers of governance can climb from local to global from the bottom-up perspective or descend from global to local from the top-down perspective. And, depending on *where* the climbing happens from, or *where* the descending goes to, the number of layers of governance will differ. A brief outline of the layers of democratic governance in the Federal Republic of Germany is particularly well-suited to demonstrate the significance of considering these different, often interconnected, levels of democratic politics in assessments of democratic quality. The German political system is not only a "multi-level system", the different vertical levels also display pronounced interactive relationships throughout the process of democratic decision-making and historically derived inter-level differences.[4] We illustrate the significance of these vertically differentiated spaces by referring to the perspective of a hypothetical German citizen living in Baden-Baden who would be subject to arguably five levels of governance. In addition to participating in democratic practices at the international, supranational and national level, she would be integrated in democratic practices at two subnational levels: at the municipal level (in the Kommune/city of Baden-Baden); and, due to the way the German federal system is structured, in politics at the regional level (of the *Land*/state Baden-Württemberg).

These multiple opportunities to engage in decision-making procedures at different levels, especially at the local level, are often perceived as important for a "healthy", bottom-up democracy. The Baden-Württemberg (2018) state website declares: "Democracy grows from the bottom up. Local authorities form the bedrock of our community". In the same spirit, Germany's former Federal President, Joachim Gauck, described local politics as "spaces for innovation" and "workshops for democracy" (Frech 2018: chapter 1). One rationale for conceptualizing German municipalities as a "school of democracy" (Kersting 2008, p. 230; Rudzio 2006, p. 350) is that the decisions made and implemented at this level immediately affect each citizen's everyday life: they range from "running swimming pools and libraries to the upkeep of kindergartens and schools" but also to the issuing of "identity cards and the staging of elections" (Baden-Württemberg 2018).

Even though local constitutions in the German subnational states (the *Länder*) have undergone a series of changes since 1945, "[t]he municipal constitution system of Baden-Württemberg has remained basically unchanged for the last 50 years" and has served as a model for reforming other municipal constitutions since the 1990s (Wehling 2010, p. 21; Holtkamp & Bogumil 2016, p. 19; see, also, Dolowitz and Marsh 1996 to appreciate this phenomenon in a policy transfer context). Its most distinctive features are an elected mayor empowered with more leadership capacity than is typically seen in other German municipalities, the right of citizens to elect their local council (with the opportunity to split and cumulate votes) and the right for citizens to directly intervene at any time "through citizen requests and referendum" in the local decision-making process and in recalling mayors (Kern 2008, p. 17). These features have led scholars to the conclusion that Baden-Württemberg's constitution imbues the state's local politics with strong direct democracy elements which has led to the state obtaining the sobriquet of "the motherland of direct democracy" in Germany (e.g., Wehling 2005, p. 14).

While German citizens tend to have few opportunities to engage in direct democratic practices at the national level, these means to participate politically are in general more opportune at the local level. It should be noted, however, that the (successively homogenized) *rules in law*, but also the degree to which citizens actually engage in direct democratic practices (*rules in use*), differ significantly between different geographic areas in Germany (e.g., Eder et al., 2009; Holtkamp & Bogumil 2016). Our Baden-Baden citizen is likely to consider direct participation a legitimate means of decision-making, perhaps because it was first introduced in 1955 in Baden-Württemberg's municipalities' constitutions and is comparatively frequently employed. For example, a recent report written by the State Councillor for Civil Society and Citizen Participation in Baden-Württemberg and the Bertelsmann Foundation, a Washington based think-tank, claims that approximately 80% of citizens in Baden-Württemberg expect to participate politically through non-electoral methods (Baden-Württemberg Stiftung 2015). Citizens, the report claims, wish to influence *what* is on the agenda and to also take *part* in decision-making and the *implementation* of decision-outcomes. The state's response to this has been to push for a "new planning culture" (p. 7) where state administrators are asked to meet their responsibilities in a participatory-inclusive, and not technocratic-distant, manner. Ellermann (2006) suggests that this can be a bureaucrat's practice of "street-level democracy". Compared to the national level, the representative model of democracy as well as party politics play a less prominent role in local decision-making: due to the significant impact of local dignitaries in local parliamentary elections and the direct election of the "strong mayor", a consensual mode of democratic decision-making came to outweigh party competition (see Wehling 2010, pp. 31–32).

At the same time, the significance of these locally implemented participatory mechanisms for democratic quality needs to be cautiously evaluated for at least two reasons. Firstly, due to political reforms implemented in the course of the financial crisis (such as austerity measures), and financial burdens due to changes in federal law, local parliaments in Germany lost a large share of their impact on democratic decision-making from the 1990s onward. Kersting (2008), for example, questions whether these restrictions on local parliaments are sufficiently compensated by other non-conventional or non-electoral means of democratic participation. Secondly, with regards to many political subjects, local authorities are restricted to *implementing* federal or sub-national *Länder*-law and do not have the power to make autonomous democratic decisions (Rudzio 2006, p. 337) outside their legal remit. Local governments are also restricted by the financial means available to them as they in large part depend on decisions made at "higher" levels of governance (Rudzio 2006, p. 358).

One level up from the local is the subnational level constituted by the German *Länder*. Even though it is generally assumed that "[i]n practice, federations lean towards congruence, as far as the basic constitutional structure is concerned", German *Länder* display a significant amount of "inter-level differences, many being far from innocuous" (Massicotte 2003, p. 2). The subnational parliament (*Landtag*) of Baden-Württemberg is a parliamentary assembly which is elected for a legislative period of five years on the basis of mixed member proportional representation.[5] *Länder*-parliaments have exclusive legislative responsibilities around policy fields as diverse as social security, public safety, education, media broadcasting, civil liberties, health, forestry and agriculture (Art. 70, Basic Law) and further legislative responsibilities which are fulfilled in "cooperation" or "competition" with the federal state and concern, for instance, environmental or economic matters (Art. 72, 74, Basic Law) as well as university education (Art. 91, Basic Law; see Rudzio 2006, pp. 315–316). *Länder* parliaments are meant to provide political representation of the subnational unit which is in part done through specialist committees that investigate complex policy problems (such as integration) and through direct relations with other governments – including the European Union. Erler (2015: p. 12) writes that citizens in Baden-Württemberg express a high level of trust in their *Länder*-government and that they feel satisfied with the governance provided to them. Further, the state expresses its citizens' plural understanding of democracy: "lively" representation of aggregated interests via political parties and individual members in parliament is expected, but so too are avenues for citizens' discursive and deliberative participation and direct intervention (Eder et al., 2009). That the state is attempting to make these different democratic practices work together to avoid "splitting villages" through simple majority voting (not to mention angering villagers by not including them in making the decisions that will affect them) is what, according to Erler, has kept trust high.

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[4] These inter-level differences – e.g. differences between democratic decision-making (between different municipalities, different federal states [*Länder*], etc., each bring about their own field of comparative research (see e.g., Barbehön et al., 2016; Eder et al., 2009; Freitag & Vatter 2009; Holtkamp & Bogumil 2016; Kersting & Schneider 2016; Massicotte 2003).

Länder-politics has implications up and down the "ladder": the basic structure of Baden-Baden's local constitution and the financial means available for local politics are determined by the state of Baden-Württemberg; more specifically by the *Landtag* that holds important legislative, elective, control, and budgetary functions (see Abels 2013). At the same time, representatives elected to the *Landtag* play a major role at other, "higher" levels of governance (the complex structure of decision-making procedures and representative obligations was famously labelled *Politikverflechtung* [political integration] by Scharpf in 1999).[6]

This interconnectedness of different levels of democratic governance can be illustrated by looking to the next level up from the state or *Landtag*. The national, German, level is chiefly characterized by the *Bundestag* and *Bundesrat*; the German bicameral national parliament. The *Bundestag* (lower house) is popularly elected by citizens through personalized proportional representation (Kreuzer 2004) in which electors choose their preferred "direct" representative and their preferred political party after not more than four years since the previous general election. The *Bundesrat* (upper house) is not elected – rather, its members are delegated by subnational states – such as Baden-Württemberg – and are therefore meant to represent the interests of these states in the formation of national legislation. The *Bundestag* passes legislation through three debates and votes after the third debate (or reading) normally via simple majority. The *Bundesrat*, on the other hand, is dependent on consensus formation between state delegates (there are presently between 3 and 6 delegates for each state in this house) as they must vote as a bloc – if consensus cannot be reached within the bloc then that state must abstain from the vote (Art. 80, Basic Law). There are other governing agents at the national level as well, such as the *Ältestenrat* (Council of Elders), "whose very structure favours a deliberative and consensual, rather than an adversarial style" of governance (Helms 2004, p. 30). This Council is chaired by "the President of the *Bundestag,* his or her deputy and 23 ordinary members who are appointed by the different political representations in the *Bundestag*" (Coomans 1998, p. 265). The *Ältestenrat*'s "duty [is] to put forward proposals for the weekly agenda of the *Bundestag* by way of […] seeking consensus between" (ibid.) the factions in the lower house. National democratic decision-making in Germany accordingly requires integrating actors from several *levels* of sub-national governance, most importantly the *Länder* governments.

At the same time, democratic governance – for example, Baden-Württemberg's legislative and financial scope of action (Albers 2013) – is increasingly influenced by supranational regulations. The EU serves as the prime agent for governance at the supranational level in this German example. Composed of the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the Court of Justice, the EU tries to meet its obligations through a plethora of democratic practices. Take, for instance, the European Parliament: it is a transnational (Anderson 2002), multiparty (Peters 1994), parliamentary assembly with over 750 members who are meant to represent either, or both, the interests of their country and of the European region (Hausemer 2006). Decisions, depending on what is being decided, can either be reached through simple-majority, absolute-majority, or super-majority voting. Conversely, the College of Commissioners is meant to reach decisions collegially (Cini and Borragán 2005, p. 129) and not through the adversity of the vote – meaning that each of the 28 Commissioners must be consulted prior to any decision being reached. If a collegial decision cannot be reached matters are then decided by majority vote. 15 out of 28 votes are required to pass a decision, but the entire Commission is held accountable for the result – even those Commissioners who voted against the decision. For the Council of the European Union, Bond (2011) suggests that it is a negotiating body that co-decides (Cegiełka et al., 2010) policy with other EU bodies like the European Parliament.

The next, and final, level up is the global level – in this case the United Nations as it is the sole provider of governance for the world. The UN General Assembly is sometimes called "the closest thing to a world parliament" (McClure and Orlov 1999). Even though the UN is a large, multi-bodied, organization, for the purposes of this section of the article it suffices to focus on the functions of the General Assembly. It is a multinational assembly that follows parliamentary procedures, whose 193 members are meant to represent the interests of their countries, as it is the country that ultimately appoints its delegate to the UN. Kim and Russett (1996: p. 629) explain how the General Assembly has, in the post-Cold war context, been characterized by North-South political blocs "whose [decision preferences] are defined along developmental lines" – it has, therefore, expressed political divisions along multiple party or "bloc" orientations which strongly supports Dryzek's (1999: pp. 35–37) view that this assembly, like other sites of transnational democracy, is a discursive democracy too. Although the processes within the General Assembly, like other UN bodies, are driven by a consensus-seeking culture (Malone 2000, p. 5), it has reached decisions through either two-thirds majority or simple majority voting in the past. The Assembly's resolutions address issues such as human rights, peacekeeping or environmental issues.[7] At first sight, these decisions' relevance for our citizen from Baden-Baden might be rather diffuse. At a closer look, the individual resolutions have a significant impact on her individual rights which enable her to participate in democratic procedures and influence her ability to enact her democratic freedom in a peaceful environment (e.g., in terms of gender equality or peacekeeping measures) as Germany is a member of the UN and signatory to those Conventions and resolutions that relate to our example.

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[5] Baden-Württemberg does not distribute the parliamentary seats according to party lists but found its own "original arrangement" which incentivizes candidates to run for their respective constituency (*Regierungsbezirk*) (Massicotte 2003, p. 12).

[6] These "negative appraisals of the efficiency of German federalism" are, however, relativized by, for example, the findings of Freitag & Vatter (2009).

[7] All resolutions are available at: http://www.un.org/en/sections/documents/general-assembly-resolutions/.

This German example of vertical stratification, of how levels of governance stack from the local to the global, demonstrates that plural – mutually intertwined and interdependent – democratic practices occur at each level and have crucial impact on the democratic quality individual citizens can experience (see Fig. 1.0). A comprehensive assessment of Germany's democratic quality accordingly would need to respect the plurality of spaces in which democratic practices occur. In addition to this, restricted model-thinking will hardly do justice to this plurality. Our analysis of the literature in the German example demonstrates that democratic practices at the local level are characterized by a mixture of representative, direct and accountable democracy, at the subnational level by inclusive and street-level democracy, at the national level by representative and consensus democracy, at the supranational level by electoral and collegial democracy, and at the global level by multinational and multiparty democracy. This spatial category, however, begins to suggest, but ultimately overshadows, the deeper diversity of democratic practices that is better demonstrated by a comparative cross-level analysis. Such an analysis shows how governing agents operate at these different levels of governance and also by the democratic practices that occur in non- or quasi-governmental social associations which we, in turn, present below.

4. Horizontal differentiation: democratic practices across levels of governance worldwide

A comparison between governing agents can be done at the five different, but interconnected, levels we identified above: (1) local; (2) subnational; (3) national; (4) supranational; and (5) global. Our discussion of different levels of democratic governance in the German example already hinted that democratic practices relevant to assessing democratic quality and the extent of democracy are not only located at different vertically ordered "levels" of democratic governance. Rather, at each of these levels (1)–(5), there are multiple agents and institutions involved who, again, exemplify different democratic practices. In this section, we illustrate that this horizontal differentiation of democratic practices is not just a characteristic feature of the German case, but can be observed worldwide – and therefore should be integrated in a comprehensive assessment of the state of democracy in the world. Whilst comparisons around quality and extent of democracy in the world are, for instance, most apparent at the national level, this type of analysis can be applied to the other levels of governance "below" and "above" the nation state as well. Given that many of these levels of governance are usually empowered sites of public decision-making, it is reasonable to expect that they would try to meet their respective governing obligations through one or more democratic practices (Inglehart 2003).

Starting at the local level, there are numerous examples of councillors or local politicians using plural democratic practices. Participatory budgeting has, for instance, been used in Cuauhtémoc (Cabannes 2004) and indigenous customs have been invoked for decision-making in Oaxaca (Díaz-Cayeros, Magaloni and Ruiz-Euler 2014): instances of participatory and indigenous democracy that occur alongside the more common electoral and representative praxes observable at the local level in Mexico. In further examples, on January 29, 2019, it was reported that the city council of Madrid voted to formally institute a 49-person citizens' assembly that will be drawn by lot and whose seats will be rotated yearly (an instance of electoral, direct and aleatory democracy) – this assembly is empowered to put proposals to the council. The city of Whitby (Ontario, Canada) decided in 2015 to commission MASS LBP – a private Toronto-based firm specializing in deliberative democracy – to run a citizens' reference panel to review the city's existing refreshment vehicle (food truck) law over which several complaints had been made. This is an act of delegative and deliberative democracy and there are an abundance of such examples from the local level in the world which illustrate the "fluidity and variability" (Saward 2017, p. 13) of democratic practices.

The subnational level, like the local, is also rich in cases of governing agents using plural democratic practices – particularly as part of their usual work. The previous section of this article hinted at this by referring to the German case. Germany is, however, hardly an isolated example. Take the policy process in the legislature of Maine, USA, for example. Bills can be suggested to one or more members of the House or Senate by any organization or individual and it is up to the representative to either decide to sponsor the bill (because they believe in it) or to sponsor it as a courtesy to members of their electorate if they do not believe in it (sponsoring "by request"). The representative can seek others, perhaps like-minded colleagues in her party, to co-sponsor the bill which is thought to increase the bill's chances of passing. After handover to a clerk, who formats the bill, it is passed to a joint standing or special committee for review. As Hendriks and Kay (2019) note, it is here in these parliamentary committees that opportunities often arise for public participation in policy formation – typically via public hearings in the Maine case. Once these preliminary stages of review and consultation are complete the bill is scheduled for discussion and decision by the full legislature. If the bill passes into law "[a]dministrative rules are adopted by executive agencies to assist in implementing laws and to ensure uniform enforcement and compliance with those laws" (Legislator's Handbook 2000, p. 39). These administrative rules must, however, adhere to the Maine Administrative Procedure Act which itself has a law stating that a joint committee may review an administrative rule "upon petition by 100 or more people with a substantial interest in the subject of the rule or upon petition of an individual who is adversely affected by the rule" (Legislator's Handbook 2000, p. 40). In Maine's legislative process there are instances of representative, electoral, discursive, consultative, and participatory democracy with arguably weak instances of responsive democracy (i.e. a citizen can suggest a bill and a citizen can petition to have an administrative [public administration] rule reviewed by joint committee).

The analysis of democratic quality at the national level is characterized by country-to-country comparison. Much like the subnational level, members of national parliaments consistently exhibit a plurality of democratic practices which could be characterized as part of the "democratic toolkit" that must be used as part of "normal" parliamentary procedure (i.e. responsiveness to constituent concerns, discussing proposed legislation with colleagues, holding public hearings, citizens having the right to trigger the review of administrative rules). They may be used when one or more members of parliament decide to adopt democratic innovations such as outsourcing the review of an existing or proposed law to a firm that specializes in running deliberative citizens' panels (such as MASS LBP in Canada or Democracy Co and new Democracy in Australia). Outside of this, however, are countries like Switzerland that are culturally tied to practices of democracy that fall outside this "democratic toolkit" – in the Swiss instance it is, of course, that the nation prizes direct democracy. Although elections are held, and multiple political parties are in theory trying to represent the interests of their constituents which are translated into law via parliamentary and legislative procedures, Swiss citizens are also afforded the right to trigger a national referendum on constitutional reform (if 100,000 signatures or more are collected within 18 months of a petition – see Article 138.1, Federal Constitution of the Swiss Confederation 1999). Any amendment to the country's constitution by the national legislature must be voted on by popular referendum – only a double majority of citizens and cantons can pass an amendment to the constitution (Article 142.2). Further to this, 50,000 Swiss citizens or 8 cantons may contest an existing law – a simple majority of Swiss citizens is required for the law to be either upheld, revoked, or revised (Article 141).

The supranational level is characterized by a motley collection of different unions, organizations, associations and networks that are each premised on dealing with one or more "bigger-than-state" problems. Archibugi et al. (2012: pp. 1–21) and Gould (2012), for example, establish that supranational entities have been experimenting with democratic practices because "[t]he state is not able to control international capital flows or technological developments" as Eriksen and Fossum (2000: pp. 1–2) explain. The state cannot "stem the negative social and environmental effects of an increasingly global capitalism", nor solve "problems such as nuclear waste, carbon dioxide emissions, refugees, cross-border financial flows, criminal law problems, and technology transfer". The interest here is that a number of these supranational entities are attempting to deliver governance – what Bevir (2010: 1) terms a pattern of rule – at the supranational level through plural democratic practices. The European Union, for example, has a parliament whose members elect their own executive but also represent the interests of their constituents and countries. The Organization of American States fosters deliberative political dialogue between its members (Johnstone 2011) and also votes on matters. The African Union reaches decisions through consensus or – failing that – super-majoritarian decision-making (see the Constitutive Act of the African Union, Article 7, for more). In contrast, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) uses simple majority to reach decisions but also discursive praxes before voting on matters (see the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas 2002, Article 27; for more). Yet, despite, or *in spite of*, these efforts, certain supranational entities like the EU have for example been critiqued for practicing unequal democracy (Lefkofridi, Giger and Kissau 2012) due to the perception of uneven political representation of its member states.

Finally, comparisons can be drawn between the democratic imperatives of different United Nations' bodies beyond the General Assembly. According to their respective constitutions[8] the International Labour Organization's Governing Body is, for example, meant to be a 56-person, tripartite, body where 18 persons each represent the interests of governments, employers and workers (Article 7). This body must practice reaching decisions by two-thirds vote (Article 19) and members are, therefore, expected to be conciliatory with each other's interests. UNESCO, on the other hand, is meant to elect its executive committee (Article 4.B7) and otherwise reach decisions through either simple or two-thirds majority voting (Article 4.C8). In contrast, the World Health Organization's assembly has the right to determine its own rules of procedure (Article 17), but must, in certain situations such as the adoption of an agreement or convention, decide matters like UNESCO – through simple or two-thirds majority vote (Articles 6 and 60).

Our analysis of literature in this category deepens the finding made in the vertical stratification category. Rather than see the pluralism of democratic practices as only a phenomenon tied to multiple levels of governance (i.e. that plurality can only be detected in the vertical stack or ladder as in Fig. 1.0), a comprehensive assessment of democratic quality worldwide needs to take into account their horizontal differentiation. Plural democratic practices can be detected in *any* level of governance (i.e. if one were to separate a level of governance from the stack one could still expect to find multiple democratic practices upon analysis).

5. Social association

Our analysis of literature in the vertical stratification and horizontal differentiation categories demonstrates that plural democratic practices do occur at multiple levels of governance. It suggests that this is a common phenomenon in the world as multiple actors are using multiple forms of democracy across each level. Nevertheless, these analyses do not capture the democratic practices that occur in the associations which characterize the lifeworld outside formal politics like workplaces (e.g. Wolff 2012) or families (e.g. Miklikowska and Hurme 2011; Pateman and Smith 2019) and schools (e.g. Chamberlin 1989). The "lifeworld" is usually taken as the environment that 'embeds' institutionalized democratic practices and therefore constitutes a spatial category 'outside' of the national level (see Fig. 1).

Three examples of contemporary instances of workplace democracy will, for reasons of brevity, be used to make our point.

One popular, recent example, of democracy in the workplace comes from the Golden State Warriors – a National Basketball Association team based in Oakland, California. On 23 May 2017, the Entertainment and Sports Programming Network (ESPN) aired a commentary by Kobe Bryant on the Golden State Warrior's style of play: Bryant termed it "the golden democracy". As opposed to the more individualistic or monarchic (Bryant refers to the latter as the "king" system) style of play found in other commercial basketball teams, the Warriors trained and competed in the context of a supportive democracy (Audigier 2003, p. 21) – where members in the demos or team share a concrete need or goal and are, as the Golden State Warriors were, "looking to make a play for someone else" as opposed to making a play to serve themselves at the expense of others in the group or what Audigier (2003) refers to as a "Darwinian" democracy where inter-personal competition is valorised over inter-personal assistance. Players for the Golden State Warriors are, as Bryant observes, "constantly looking for each other, screening for each other, and passing to each other", in order to take "advantage of each defensive mistake" made by their opposition. This supportive democratic style of play led to the Warriors winning the 2017 NBA season. It also led to impressively high scores (performance statistics) for individual players – arguably the most important form of personal capital a professional athlete has. As the audio track to the opening of the ESPN programme repeated: "I look for you, you look for me; I screen for you, you screen for me; I pass to you, you pass to me; the game is easy as 1, 2, 3". What further makes this a supportive democracy is the agency that Golden State management provides to its players: the coach and team captain are but functionaries in a bounded, and recurrent, assembly of athletes who strategize, practice, prepare, play, and reflect together as equals – an act not dissimilar to how ancient Greek city-states once conspired against, and with, each other (Ober 2019, pp. 88–89).

The success of the Chinese aerospace sector offers a different example of democracy in the workplace: here of industrial democracy. Major conglomerates like "AVIC, CASC, CASIC and COMAC" (Tsang 2017) have adopted industrial democratic practices – which Tsang (2017: 35) terms a "human capital strategy". Such practices of self-governance are realized, for example, in quality control/assurance circles, shared ownership (i.e. workers are shareholders), employee satisfaction surveys, employee consultation, teamwork, and performance evaluation frameworks reached through bargaining with workers' unions. This change in workplace management, according to Tsang (2017), has led to rapid technological advances in the Chinese aerospace engineering sector. One of the main explanatory factors that Tsang offers for the sector's rise is that workers are specialized engineers, they are given comparatively high (in sectoral terms) research and development funding by their employer, and perhaps most importantly, they are afforded the *autonomy* to achieve the goals they share with their employer through the aforementioned teamwork, union-backing, stock-owning, and communicative strategies.

Harnecker (2016) offers the third, and final, example of workplace democracy: cooperative democracy in Cuban worker-owned enterprises. "One of the changes that emerged as part of the process of 'updating' or renovating Cuban socialism is the promotion of cooperatives", Harnecker (2016: p. 48) writes. From 2012, a legal program was put in place to support both agricultural and non-agricultural cooperatives where ownership from the business has been transferred from the Cuban state to the Cuban workers (now owners). The advantages of democratic management "over private enterprises" (Harnecker 2016, pp. 48–49)

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[8] Our basic line of argumentation as well as the core concepts used also apply to non-territorial associations that are, for example, 'located' in cyberspace (see Asenbaum 2018). In this proposal for extending the measures of democracy, we propose to keep territorial and non-territorial units apart as they would hugely complicate the aggregation of measurements of democracy across units. For a systematic review of the challenges and prospects for measuring democracy in digitalized societies see Fleuβ et al. (2019).

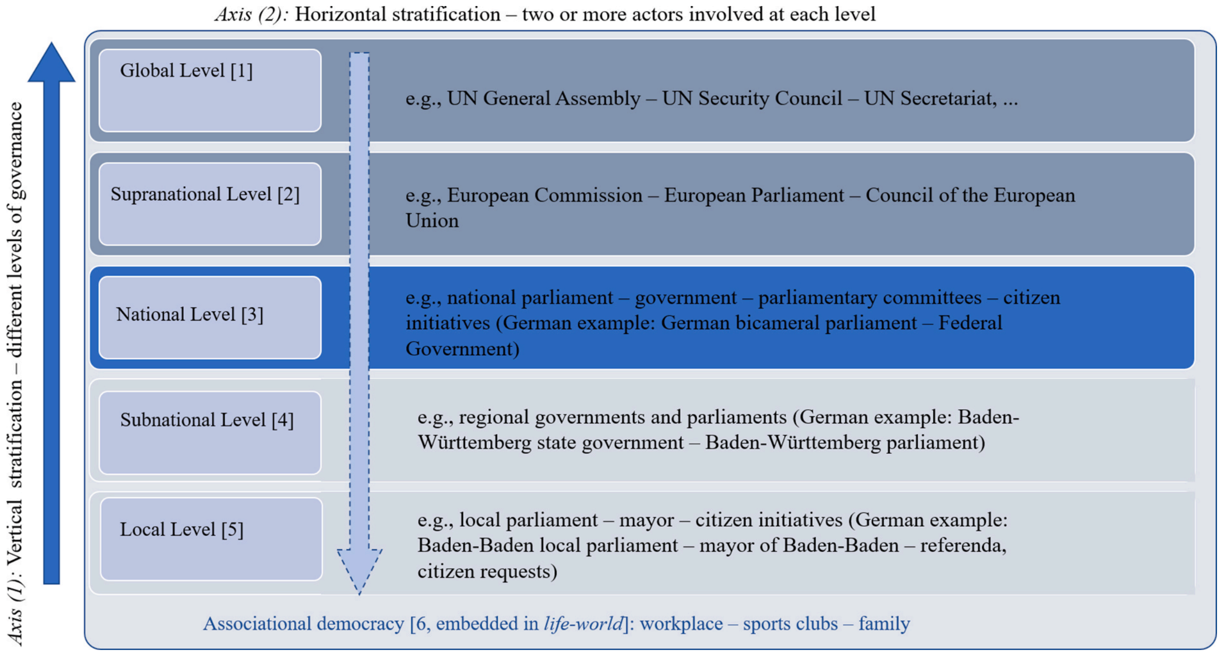
Axis (2): Horizontal stratification – two or more actors involved at each level
Axis (1): Vertical stratification – different levels of governance
Global Level [1]
e.g., UN General Assembly – UN Security Council – UN Secretariat, ...
Supranational Level [2]
e.g., European Commission – European Parliament – Council of the European Union
National Level [3]
e.g., national parliament – government – parliamentary committees – citizen initiatives (German example: German bicameral parliament – Federal Government)
Subnational Level [4]
e.g., regional governments and parliaments (German example: Baden-Württemberg state government – Baden-Württemberg parliament)
Local Level [5]
e.g., local parliament – mayor – citizen initiatives (German example: Baden-Baden local parliament – mayor of Baden-Baden – referenda, citizen requests)
Associational democracy [6, embedded in life-world]: workplace – sports clubs – family

Fig. 1. Framework spatial categories.

include workers having their "own sources of motivation to increase productivity, quality and innovation, based" on their own collectively-established incentives; "greater income and a more just distribution of wealth", it "provides for more stable and dignified employment", and it fulfils "members' material and spiritual needs, their full human development".

Although supportive, industrial and cooperative democracy are evident in workplaces in the United States, China and Cuba, it should be stressed that different democratic practices – such as deliberative democracy – are also evident in families (Oryan and Gastil 2013) and schools (Nishiyama 2019) – the prevalence, in other words, of democratic practices in other non-governmental or quasi-governmental spaces and even in non-territorial associations is greater than what we are able to demonstrate in this article.

6. Five steps for extending measures of democracy in the world

We have thus far developed a framework differentiating spatial categories and established that multiple practices of democracy occur at different levels of governance, that the same result can be found in non-governmental or quasi-governmental social associations, and that this phenomenon is common in the world. Fig. 1.0 summarizes these spatial categories and offers a minimalist, conservative, presentation of evidence for *where* democratic practices can happen in the world. One can see here that at each level of governance different practices of democracy have occurred at some point in the past and that the same claim can be made for social associations. Each level of governance has an approximate number of governing agents (e.g. from the few that constitute the United Nations, at the global level, to tens of thousands at the local level or millions for social associations) which suggests the number of sites where democratic practices can presently occur at each level of governance.

In spite of this evidence, the national level still is the dominant locus for repeated, comparative, research into the state of democracy in the world. For example, the V-Dem index measures 201 countries, the Democracy Barometer measures 70 countries (DB 2018), the Freedom House index measures 195 countries (FH 2018) and the Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index measures 167 countries (EIU 2017). This is perhaps due to the belief that democracy at the nation state-level is the only form of democracy worth measuring because nation states still are the most powerful agents in contemporary politics. This article starts out from the premise that this is a false assumption: the nation state cannot govern everywhere, its behaviour cannot dictate the overall democratic culture of the governance that happens within its territorial boundary, nor can it displace the importance of the governing that happens *above* it. Democratic practices below, above and beyond the nation state-level crucially determine the ways and the extent to which citizens can exercise self-rule. Although global, supra-national or associational agents are not vested with nation states' coercive force, they impact what quality democracy has *for* citizens. To put it in Morlino's (2009: 212 f.) terms: "a good democracy is first and foremost [characterized by the fact] that [it] satisfies citizens […]".

The V-Dem (2018a) index comes the closest to collecting data on democratic governance at multiple levels by asking if subnational elections at the regional and local level were for instance free and fair, whether the government's respect for civil liberties varies across political units in the country, if a single party controls all or specific legislative bodies in one district or another, what percentage of subnational districts must approve a referendum through majority voting for it to be binding, and so forth. But, even though V-Dem explicitly develops a "Local Government Index" and a "Regional Government Index" (Coppedge et al., 2018a), the dataset (see Coppedge et al., 2018a) does not collect the same information systematically across all levels of governance, nor about the democratic practices that happen within the associations which reside in the nation state. In addition, the V-Dem project explicitly starts out from the premise that there is no *one* model of democratic governance, but that the plurality of understandings of democracy needs to be acknowledged in measuring democratic quality (Coppedge et al., 2018b, p. 4). Nevertheless, the subnational levels are, not, for instance, queried about the existence, quality or extent of their deliberative democracy – deliberation indicators are reserved for the national level in the index (see Fleuβ & Helbig 2020). That democratic practices clearly do happen "below" (i.e. at local and subnational levels), "above" (i.e. at supranational and global levels) and "outside" (i.e. in social associations) the nation-level makes us, however, question why these spaces of democracy are not given the same degree of analytic attention. This leads us to argue that efforts should be made to measure the quality and extent of *plural* democratic practices at *all* levels of governance, inclusive of social associations. Any strategy to fill this gap in research, however, must assess heterogenous democratic practices that occur in different spaces (see Fig. 2) and is therefore confronted with methodological and pragmatic challenges. More specifically, measurement approaches based on our framework must meet two challenges: First, a measurement of democratic quality in all spatial categories demands the availability (and homogenization) of data on heterogeneous democratic practices worldwide. Second, we require aggregation procedures that ensure concept-measurement consistency.

To meet these challenges, we recommend five basic steps that concern the phases of conceptualization/operationalization (1-2), data collection (3–4) and aggregation (5):

(1) *Exploration and meta-study of in-depth analyses:* Gagnon (2018) has provided a long list of democracy's signal words in the guise of democracy with adjectives. The explanation that accompanies his list encourages readers to seek the literature associated with each of the listed words in order to assist the effort of describing the different kinds of observable democratic practices that exist in the world. So far there is, however, no corresponding empirical account that does justice to democracy's plurality of practices and the spaces they occur in. This article provided illustrative evidence for the plurality of democratic practices in different spatial categories. To systematically explore by what practices citizens enact self-government in different cultural, institutional or social contexts, we recommend to conduct a meta-study of in-depth interpretive or ethnographic analyses.
(2) *Systematization:* Based on the empirical insights generated in step (1), scholars will be able to classify different kinds of democratic practices to different spatial categories – i.e., they will be able to complement the framework we developed throughout this article (summarized in Fig. 2).
(3) *Quantitative surveys:* This exploration and systematization of democratic practices then may serve as a point of departure for quantitative surveys that are used to collect data on the spread and quality of these practices at a larger scale. These surveys could be either expert surveys or public surveys.
(4) *Data bank with disaggregated scores:* As a result of steps 1–3 we get values for the quantity and quality of different democratic practices that occur in different spatial categories. To arrive at evaluations of democratic quality for different objects of analysis (e.g. for a local, associational or global unit), these values must be aggregated. Depending on the precise research interests and research questions, there is, however, a potentially infinite number of such objects of study. As different research interests may require different aggregation procedures, we recommend providing a publicly accessible data bank with the disaggregated scores.
(5) *Aggregation rule ensuring concept-measurement consistency:* An aggregation rule's core components – i.e. weights and operations – must reflect the relative importance and potential interactive relationships between individual democratic practices (Møller & Skaaning 2012). Different units of analysis will require different levels of aggregation and may pose distinct conceptual requirements. Given these heterogeneous potential applications, we can only formulate rather general recommendations with regards to suitable aggregation procedures. As our approach generally does not consider one kind of democratic practice or a specific spatial category more important than others, in most cases it may be appropriate to ascribe equal *weights* to different democratic practices. Two questions are crucial to choose *operations* for an aggregation procedure that mirrors the conceptual presuppositions of a study: (a) Do researchers assume certain democratic practices to be *necessary* for the overall democratic quality of the unit studied (such that they may want to use, e.g., a multiplicative or minimum rule instead of an additive rule)? (b) Do they assume that the "quality or presence" of different democratic practices *interact* with each other, i.e. are "conditioned by (rather than insulated from) the score of another [practice]"? Aggregation procedures suitable for capturing such interactive relationships are, for example, multiplicative rules or a geometric mean (see Goertz 2006; Munck 2009; Møller & Skaaning 2012).

Our extended framework and these methodological suggestions are meant to provide a flexible "toolkit" that can be useful for answering a

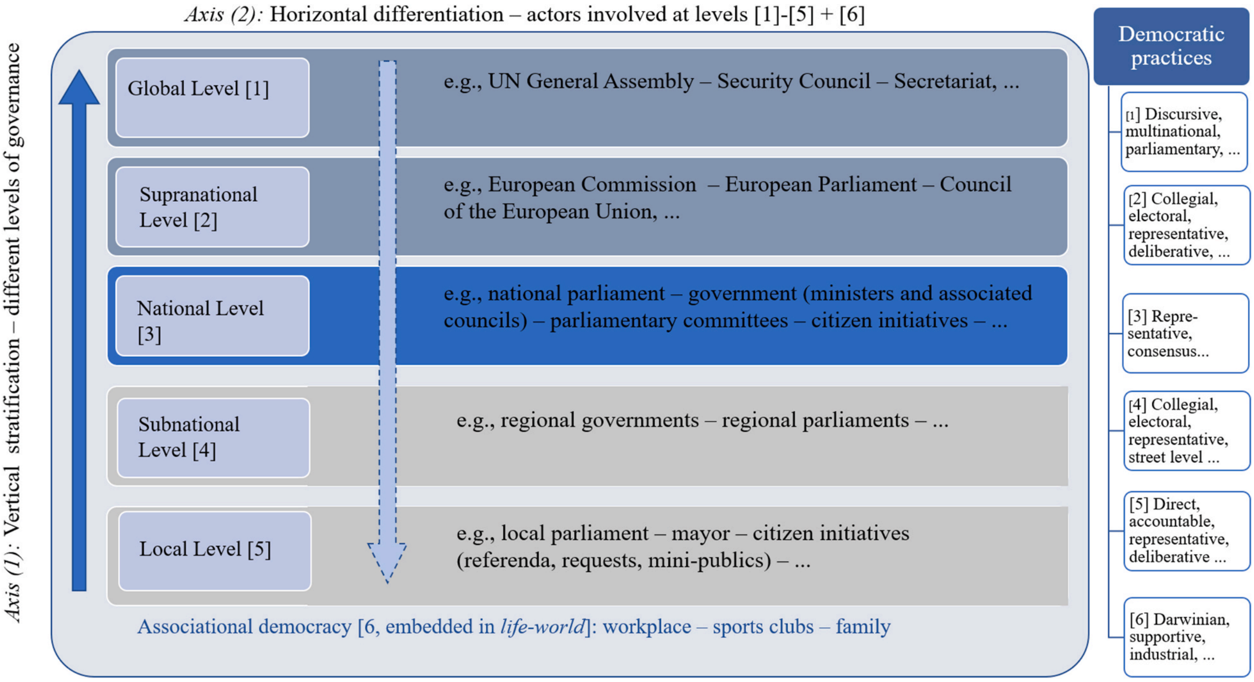
Axis (2): Horizontal differentiation – actors involved at levels [1]-[5] + [6]
Axis (1): Vertical stratification – different levels of governance
Global Level [1]
e.g., UN General Assembly – Security Council – Secretariat, ...
Supranational Level [2]
e.g., European Commission – European Parliament – Council of the European Union, ...
National Level [3]
e.g., national parliament – government (ministers and associated councils) – parliamentary committees – citizen initiatives – ...
Subnational Level [4]
e.g., regional governments – regional parliaments – ...
Local Level [5]
e.g., local parliament – mayor – citizen initiatives (referenda, requests, mini-publics) – ...
Associational democracy [6, embedded in life-world]: workplace – sports clubs – family
Democratic practices
[1] Discursive, multinational, parliamentary, ...
[2] Collegial, electoral, representative, deliberative, ...
[3] Representative, consensus...
[4] Collegial, electoral, representative, street level ...
[5] Direct, accountable, representative, deliberative ...
[6] Darwinian, supportive, industrial, ...

Fig. 2. Spatial categories & democratic practices assorted to,spaces".

variety of research questions. Researchers may, for example, map specific practices of democracy across time and space; gauge the quality, variety and extent of democratic practices at each level of governance; and approximate the overall nature of democracy from any particular vertical stack (such as the German example) or from *the* global vertical stack where aggregate scores are assigned for the quality and extent of democracy at each level of governance across the world. The information provided by the latter possibility could, for instance, be used by a citizen (from the bottom-up perspective) to see where the democratic strengths and deficits lay in her stack and act in her own capacity to democratize where needed. A politician at the subnational, national, or supranational levels could look either down, up, or across, to see where the strengths and weaknesses are in their stack and, like the citizen, act to address their democracy's soft spots wherever they are to be found. Finally, it could also be possible for international civil servants within, say, the United Nations' Democracy Fund to examine all available stacks (from the top-down perspective), or to examine the "state of local/subnational/supranational/associational democracy in the world" and create recommendations to its members for where and how ameliorative action should be taken.

7. Summary

Current democracy indices focus on measuring democratic quality at the nation state level. In this article, we applied spatial theory to democracy and demonstrated that plural (two or more) practices relevant to measuring democratic quality at multiple levels of governance as well as in social associations exist in the world. This article offers a conceptual framework that differentiates three spatial categories for where to find plural democratic practices: (1) vertical stratification (i.e. at different levels of governance), (2) horizontal differentiation (i.e. among different agents operating at each level of governance), and (3) social association (i.e. in workplaces, families, schools). We argue that measures of democracy in the world should be extended to spaces "beneath", "above", and "outside" the national level to give a more complete spatial coverage of the quality and extent of democracy than currently available indices can provide. The potential of having an extended framework for measuring democracy in the world is significant because it could make an empirical contribution to what Michael Saward (2001) terms the work of creating "democratic connections" between different practices of democracy. It is untenable to state, for example, that this or that city is strictly a representative democracy for the way it governs, and the ways in which its residents wish to be governed, will upon analysis almost certainly evoke a pluralism of democratic practices. If that hypothesis is true then our proposed extended framework could make a distinct contribution to these Sawardian acts of *democratizing* or *deepening* democracy – a vital part of the ongoing global, civilizing, project.

To translate this article's conceptual approach into feasible measurement approaches, empirical researchers must account for the plurality of democratic practices in different 'spaces'. The concluding section of this article outlines the crucial pragmatic and methodological challenges of this enterprise and suggests a route to addressing them in five steps.

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