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CHAPTER 3 – “DEMOCRACY”

Since an anthropological approach towards “democracy” entails the idea that conceptualizations of “democracy” may vary across humanity, and are possibly subject to cultural correlation, it was necessary to study in the previous chapter what could be understood by “culture”. Since it is not immediately obvious what “democracy” is or could be, it is also necessary to investigate what could be understood by “democracy”, which is the topic of the present chapter. Borrowing from analytical philosophy, I distinguish between *intensional* (not: « intentional ») and *extensional* meanings of “democracy”. Intensional meanings involve the identification of a concept of “democracy” described using other concepts, such as when it is stated that “‘democracy’ means ‘government that involves participation by the people’”. Extensional meanings involve referents, in our case social objects encompassing groups of human beings and the material and immaterial manifestations of those groups, such as when it is stated that “India is a democracy”, where a specific country is asserted to be an empirical instance of the *word* « democracy » interpreted through some *conception* of “democracy”. I will start first with a discussion of intensional meanings, thereafter deal briefly with extensional ones, and then discuss the overlaps and tensions between the two approaches.

Intensional aspects of “democracy”

Etymology

The word « democracy » and its derivatives⁶ know a great many definitions, and below some definitions will be studied so as to indicate their variety. First some etymology. The English « democracy » and the Portuguese « *democracia* », as we know, derive from the ancient Greek « *demokratia* » (Graubard 1973: 652), which can be analysed as a combination of « *demos* » and « *kratos* » (Muller, Thiel and den Boer 1961: 178, 418). « *Demos* » indicated “common land, divided into hereditary long lease and commonly cleared”; from this it came to mean also “the people inhabiting the land” (1961: 178; cf. Liddell 1975: 183). Keane (2009: 56) indicates Mycenaean origins of the word. « *Kratos* » may indicate “force”, “violence”, “power”, “authority”, and “mastery” (Muller, Thiel and den Boer 1961: 418), and

⁶ Such as the adjective « democratic » and verb « democratize ». I will treat this linguistic grammatical variety as inessential for the semantic study of the words and associated concepts.

perhaps the word had a pejorative origin; cf. Zanetti (2007: 208). Summarizing, « *demokratia* » is an etymologically hybrid word that may be associated with “people’s power”, “people’s authority”, or “government by the people” (Graubard 1973: 652).⁷ The invention of this compound word « *demokratia* » is therefore well ascribed to the classical Greeks. This, however, does not imply that the classical Greeks were the only ones to invent any *concept* of “democracy”. The word « *demokratia* » does not in itself explain how “government” and “the people” should be understood. It is on this point in the analysis of “democracy” that the numerous definitions in the literature diverge (Dahl 2001: 3406). I shall now turn to such matters of definition.

Definitions

As an indication of the wide variability of the application of the words « democracy » and « democratic », it may be observed that it not only can apply to “people” or “peoples” but for instance also to families. I mention two examples:

Democratic family: “a type of family in which the adults share in making decisions, and in which the adult members treat each other as equals” (Zadrozny 1959: 86).

Democratic family: “A type of family in which the members of the family are regarded as equals. The husband, in particular, is not regarded as having more authority or privileges than the wife” (Koschnick 1992: 179).

The hypothesis has been put forward that family structure would be coupled one-to-one to political ideology (Todd 1985: 17). This idea sounds attractive but ancient China provides a straightforward counterexample in the early struggle between Legalism and Confucianism (Ames 1986: 10; Ch’ü 1961: 245-245; Confucius 1999: 147; 13.18; Fu 1996: 120; Li 1977). Generally, political ideas and practices will have to be studied concerning their own peculiarities, not or not only as mirror images of other phenomena within a culture.

Instead of stipulating one single definition of the word « democracy », this thesis uses an approach that leaves the contested nature of the concept(s) of “democracy” untouched. This approach accepts that there is no single “perfect” overall definition of « democracy ». Rather, it treats « democracy » as referring to a *cluster* of related concepts that, in the words of Wittgenstein (2001: §67) show *family resemblances*, i.e. form “a complicated network of

⁷ « People’s » not specifically as in Communist parlance.

similarities overlapping and criss-crossing” (2001: §66). This will enable the discussion of what from now on is treated as the *concept-cluster* “democracy” in two ways: (a) through the application of the word « democracy » *across diverse empirical instances* that may be extensional exemplars of it; and (b) through the study of the *variation in the interpretation* of “democracy”, specifically with *cross-cultural* but also *intra-cultural* variation. This dual discussion format makes “democracy” an anthropological study-object *par excellence*. As Paley (2002: 471) puts it:

Noting the constitutive nature of those struggles [about how to define democracy], rather than establishing an *a priori* definition of democracy, is one of the central contributions of an anthropological approach.

Below several definitions of “democracy” are given, numbered for later convenience, without pretence to exhaust the possibilities or be definitive on the given classification (especially longer definitions might be classified under more than one header). One purpose of the list is to show the existence of diversity amongst definitions; therefore only a limited number is necessary, as additional definitions are either equivalent to those given, or add even more to the diversity. The list is not meant to suggest historical linkages between different conceptions of “democracy”. Recommendable studies that focus on such conceptual (and practical) history are Held (1987), Akkerman (2010) and, with more attention for Asian history, Keane (2009). In fact, the present thesis is hesitant to view “democracy” predominantly as something that “develops” over time as the mentioned studies imply, although certain occurrences of political thought may be conceived of as historically *contingent*. The approach taken by the mentioned studies is heavily dependent on what we happen to know from historical written sources; but one of the tasks that this thesis faces is how any understanding of “democracy” could be associated with societies that have no written traditions.

Now the list of selected definitions follows. First there may be definitions focusing on *specific procedures, possibly including elections*:

- (1) “Democracy”: “The rule of the people by the people based on free and equal participation by all enfranchised adults: the election of public officers by a majority of the citizens voting, with (1) freedom to nominate alternative candidates; (2) the right of citizens to form political parties and present their candidates; (3) freedom to conduct campaigns; and (4) the right of defeated minorities to continue their propaganda; (5) the

free competition and balancing of interest groups so that opposing groups may achieve consensus and compromise with minimal conflict” (Koschnick 1992: 179).

- (2) “Thin democracy”: the occurrence of “electoral competition and uncertainty”, where « uncertainty » refers to the genuine *ex ante* possibility for more than one party to “win” c.q. “lose” an election (Diamond 2001: 149-150).
- (3) “Democracy” (with negatively formulated procedural requirements): “rule of the many [not the few or the one]. The people govern themselves [...] without resorting to deception or threats of violence” (King 2003: 387).

Definitions focusing on *optimal results*:

- (4) “Democracy”: “form of political organization which has as primary goal the public good and which [...] subordinates to this end all particular interests, be it of individuals or of groups. A democracy is in principle egalitarian, [...] it admits no other differences than those ‘of virtue and merit’”.
“Démocratie”: “forme d’organisation politique qui a pour fin primordiale le bien public et qui [...] subordonne à ce dernier tous les intérêts particuliers, soit des individus, soit des groupes. Une démocratie est en principe égalitaire, [...] n’admet d’autres différences que celles ‘de la vertu et du mérite’” (Birou 1969: 94).
- (5) “Democracy”: “a form of government, which balances societal values and people’s rights in the best possible manner”⁸ (Hinz 1998: 1).
- (6) “Local democracy”: “a viable political and development process that allows for cross-fertilization of ideas, resources and decisions for good governance” (Kinuthia-Njenga 2002: 8).

Definitions focusing on *correspondence between a collective outcome and individuals’ inputs*:

⁸ I interpret the word « people’s » here as without « the », i.e. as « individuals’ ».

- (7) “Democracy”: “the representation and aggregation of individual preferences”, a definition widely taken “as obvious” (Hurrell 2007: 82). The classic formulation is by Arrow (1963), whose approach will be of special consideration in this thesis.
- (8) “Democracy”: “best understood as a model for organizing the collective and public exercise of power in the major institutions of a society on the basis of the principle that decisions affecting the well-being of a collectivity can be viewed as the outcome of a procedure of free and reasoned deliberation among individuals considered as moral and political equals” (Benhabib 2002: 105); cf. Habermas’s (1996: ch. 7) “deliberative politics”. Note the differences with definition (7), where “deliberation” and “the well-being” of a collectivity are not requirements. See also Eagan (2007).

Definitions focusing on *participation of persons*:

- (9) “Democracy”: “a type of government in which members of the public take part in the governing process. This inclusion [...] may be direct or [...] indirect”, where the principle holds that “if the majority are in agreement then the opinions of the minority are overruled” (Morley 2005: 123). Habermas (ibid.) also stresses participation of the public in debates, with an institutional framework for implementing the results of such debates (a method of working he calls “procedural”, to be distinguished from formal procedures such as those of Arrow). Habermas discusses majority rule as an “interim result of a discursive opinion-forming process” (1996: 179).

Definitions focusing on *safeguarding individuals’ freedom and rights*:

- (10) “Democracy”: “government that is bound by a social contract (often manifested in a constitution) that protects the citizens’ individual autonomy by granting them civil rights and gives citizens a say in politics by granting political rights” (Inglehart and Welzel 2005: 35n5).
- (11) “Liberal democracy”: “a combination of two values which do not necessarily go together logically. [A] form of representative democracy [and] thus a rather indirect form of majority rule. The liberal aspect refers to [...] civil rights and natural rights”

(Robertson 2002: 281; cf. Powell 2004: 205).

Definitions focusing on *approval or consent*:

(12) “Democracy”: “government by consent [...] by legitimate means” (Wiredu 1998: 244; 2001b: 175).

(13) “Democracy”: “[a regime in which] leaders depend on the voluntary consent of citizens” (Bratton, Mattes, Gyimah-Boadi 2005: 30).

Finally a definition focusing on *checks and balances*:

(14) “Democracy”: “a comprehensive system of institutions for dividing and balancing power and for ensuring accountability” (Bratton, Mattes, Gyimah-Boadi 2005: 76).

The above definitions do not necessary imply each other as if one could be a transformation of another. Some definitions, such as (6), (10) and (12) are rather broad and may cover different practical arrangements, while (1) enumerates rather detailed conditions and (14) puts constraints on institutions. Definition (5) states that societal values on the one hand and people’s rights on the other should be *balanced*, but (8), and (7) more implicitly, state that collective well-being is to be a resultant of individuals’ ideas (where definition (8) includes “deliberation” in the way to reach that resultant and (7) does not). Definition (9) requires participation of people, but does not seem to demand that the result should be equality. In definition (3), the people are mentioned as governing themselves; while in (11) there are representatives doing the act of governing for them. Definitions (13) and (14) do not seem to demand a choice in this matter.

Some definitions can even be interpreted as being mutually contradictory. Definition (4) states that *all* particular group interests should be subordinated to the public good. This is incompatible with the stipulation in (9) that “the majority” can overrule “the minority”, which allows for a straightforward confirmation of “the majority’s” particular group interests against those of “the minority” (a similar reasoning informs the terminology of contestants being “winners” or “losers” of elections respectively in (2)). Definition (1) may be interpreted as internally inconsistent: in its point (4) “minorities” may be “defeated”, but its point (5) calls for consensus and compromise. Of the listed definitions, only (11) recognizes that

“democracy” may comprise a logically inconsistent concept, although Arrow (1963) endeavours to show that his conception (7) of “democracy” can eventually be shown to be inconsistent.

There are of course also overlaps between the definitions, as is already indicated by their grouping. But there also exist overlaps across groupings. “Participation”, understood as active involvement in the “democratic” event or structure at hand, is an element in definitions (1), (9), and (10) and more indirectly also in (3), (6), (8), (12) and (13). “Equality” or “egalitarianism” is invoked in definitions (1), (4), and (8). “Collectively resolving plurality” plays a rôle in definitions (4), (6), (7) and (8) and also, though in idioms of group competition, in definitions (1), (2), (9), and (11). “Representation” is present in definition (11), and (1), (2) and (9) are likely to be interpreted in that way too. A presupposed “public good” (or similar collective aspect) is included in definitions (4), (5) and (8). “Rights of persons” are invoked in definitions (1), (5), (10) and (11). Ideas of politically functional “balancing” are contained in definitions (1) and (14).

Some aspects have a rather limited distribution across the listed definitions. One is “conflict” in definition (1), or more strongly, “violence” in (3), which is to be minimized or avoided. Note that this contradicts one of the meanings of « *kratos* »: “violence” (Graeber 2004: 91). Definition (8), (12) and (13) seem to imply the absence of violence e.g. when referring to “reasoned” deliberation. Other definitions do not recognizably hint at this. It is difficult to say whether the use of violence contradicts a definition such as (9) when a majority would try to assert its hegemony against a dictator in a conflictual or violent way. Another rare aspect across the definitions is “power”, which only occurs in definitions (8) and (14). This is remarkable because one would expect that a “democratic” political entity would have one or more *specific* mechanisms to *enforce* the results and aims of competition, participation, deliberation or cross-fertilization, safeguarding equality, subordination or balancing of interests, aggregation, rule of the many or the majority, and the granting of rights. Moreover, one could argue that power, or the relative potentiality to bring about or prevent things in socially defined situations (cf. Weber 1956: 28), is a ubiquitous phenomenon among societies, with which any conception of “democracy” would have to deal (say, by stipulating to minimize social variation in such potentialities). The rarity of references to power or more specifically the execution thereof indicates that minimalized power differentials are not generally considered essential for the definition of “democracy”. This implies that “democracy” is not to be limited to “acephalous” societies or communities, and may be associated with political systems that know internal hierarchies.

The listed definitions also give little indication that an institution like the judiciary would play a role in “democracy”. However, should it be considered that judiciary institutions can be vital for safeguarding the rights of individuals, vis-à-vis each other and as a check on the government, definitions (11) and also (10) and (14) can be understood as implying the occurrence of such judiciary institutions in “democracy”. Judiciary institutions were not a specific target of the present research project. Two splendid volumes on the judiciary “landscape” and courts in Mozambique have been published by Santos and Trindade ([eds.] 2003). Recommendable is also Open Society Foundation (2006). The issue of legal pluralism in Mozambique will be discussed below.

More abstractly, “justice” and “democracy” do not seem to necessarily imply each other. “Justice” is not a component in the definitions given above, while “democratic” decisions may not always be “just”. A classic example of the latter is the rash conviction to death by execution of six generals by the “democratic” Assembly in ancient Athens in ± 406 BC on the charge of having let sailors drown, a charge later regretted when it was too late (Held 1987: 24-27). Van Walraven and Thiriot (2002: 49) consider justice a precondition for “democracy”, relating it to a discussion about impunity concerning severe crimes. It is opportune here to mention that Mozambique adopted a law in 1992, after the civil war, which granted amnesty for crimes committed between 1979 and 1992, preparing “peace without truth” (Igreja 2008: 544), and thus eliminating the precondition for “democracy” which Van Walraven and Thiriot identify.

On a more technical note (and a somewhat different approach to “justice”), a theory about justice may not be identical with certain operationalizations of taking collective decisions with which we shall be concerned in the sequel. A well-known approach to justice is Rawls’s “maximin” principle, the maximization of the condition of the worst-off individual(s) in a situation to be selected from several options (see Rawls 1971: 302). As Sen (1970: 136-137, 190) points out, this approach differs from procedures that only take individual preference orderings as input, and it is the latter approach which is empirically relevant in the sequel (see Sen 1970: 156-158 for a formalization of Rawls’s “maximin” principle).

To summarize: there is conceptual overlap in the listed definitions, even if more for some aspects than for other ones. This indicates that understandings of “democracy” are not entirely arbitrary. Lumping all definitions together to obtain one big overarching definition does not seem to give a satisfactory solution to the observed diversity, however. First, contradictions may arise, such as between definitions (4) and (9) as mentioned above, and

also between different approaches of “collectively resolving plurality”, i.e. in a competitive way or not, as also indicated earlier. These contradictions revolve around the idea that there can exist “majorities” within a community, and that they are justified in “overruling” or “defeating” “minorities”, while this contradicts the ideas that any professed interest, numerically more distributed or not within a community, should not trump any other within that same community. This is, essentially, the contrast between *majority rule* and *consensus achievement* that will play a profound rôle in this thesis. Second, definitions may have different emphases that give the motivation for authors’ formulations in the first place. If the contradictory items were to be disregarded, the search for a common denominator among the definitions would be rather uninformative or leave out what some authors may seem as essential for “democracy” (Collier and Levitsky 1997: 433).

Before turning to the discussion of extensional aspects of “democracy”, it is appropriate to close this section with a few more definitions for future convenience. For this thesis the following definitions are also relevant as they deal with particularly Frelimo leader and national President Machel’s interpretation of “democracy” during the first years after Mozambique’s independence:

(15) “Bourgeois democracy”: “political system in which “power structures are secured and protected in the hands of the bourgeoisie no matter how votes are cast” (Seymour-Smith 1986: 27; cf. p. 72),

to be contrasted with:

(16) “People’s democracy”: political system in which “the government, whether or not elected by free votes, is held to represent the interests of the working class” (Seymour-Smith 1986: 72).

One specification of the latter has been:

(17) “Democratic centralism”: the theory usually attributed to Lenin (but see Lih 2013) “that there could be wide-ranging discussion at every level of the party and resolutions be passed upwards to higher levels; but once the Central Committee’s Politbureau had decided on party policy it must be strictly adhered to by every member at every level” (Bealey 1999: 99). This was to embody “[p]erfect individual autonomy with perfect

unity of will!” (Lih 2013).

Machel explained in 1977:

It is not a matter of having elections to see which class is going to win. That choice has already been made [...] during the [...] struggle against the colonial bourgeoisie... // It is a matter of carrying out an electoral process [...] for the reinforcement of the power of the working class allied to the peasantry (Egerö 1987: 120).

Definition (15) resembles definitions (1) and (2) in that it focuses on procedures such as voting, but its contents, in this case invoking the notion of “power”, alleges that certain benefits remain restricted to a certain section of the population. Definition (15) therefore has a pejorative character. Definition (16) resembles (11) in mentioning the idea of “representation”; it shares with definition (1), point (5), the use of the word « interest(s) », but it contrast with definitions (1), (4), and (5) in that there is no consensus-seeking, subordination or balancing of the “interests” *in relation* to others or to something like a collective good. It is not clear from (16) whether the “interests” are, or are not, to be identified with “preferences” such as mentioned in (7); however, definition (17) does point to upward-going syntheses of opinions of individuals, resembling definition (8). The tiered structure of democratic centralism was applied (though only partly) in independent Mozambique through the existence of popular assemblies at different geographical levels (locality, district etc.) where only the lowest-level assemblies were elected directly by the local population and higher levels indirectly, while members of the National Assembly were selected by the Frelimo Central Committee, in contrast with the principle of upward decision making (Egerö 1987: 121-123).

To be sure, the list of definitions could be expanded, e.g. by adding “direct democracy”, a form of “democracy” stressing decision making by the mass of the people in contrast with representative democracy (Bealey 1999: 105), and “consociational democracy”, representative government with institutionalized power-sharing by “the leaders of the major subcultures” within a polity with “subcultural cleavages” (Lijphart 1968: 20; see also Von Dehsen et al. [eds.]: 121-122). (Lijphart made the term « consociational » famous, but he got it [1968: 20-21, 42n69] from David Apter who coined it for application in a Ugandan context.) However, instead of trying to exhaust all possibilities for offering definitions, it is perhaps more useful to give a benchmark characterization of “democracy” that somewhat simplifies the cacophony of definitions as encountered above. For such a benchmark characterization I

propose that “democracy” at least entails that a population is not entirely at the receiving end of political decision making but can have some influence, however partial or limited, on that decision making. About what exactly such influence should be is a contentious issue, as is visible from the list of definitions above.

There may exist an aspect of divergent (sub-)disciplinary interests in the study of “democracy”; in my experience specifically the theory of Arrow (1963) has much wider currency amongst certain circles of political scientists and economists than amongst anthropologists. However, since the “choice set” idea, a corner stone of Arrow’s theory and its elaborations, is actually applied in many election procedures around the world that stress some form of majority rule (including Mozambique), I maintain that a critical evaluation of Arrow’s approach is both of direct practical relevance and of interest for the anthropological discipline.

Extensional aspects of “democracy”

As alluded to above, the extensional meaning of a concept involves objects that might be subsumed under that concept. Ideally there exists a neat correspondence between the intension of “democracy” (how it is defined with other concepts) and its extension (the range of objects to which it is applied). In practice, however, this is often not the case. Considering countries, for example, the simplest way to let intensionality and extensionality correspond would seem to give first a definition of “democracy” and then score dichotomously whether a country fulfils the definition or not (at a certain point in history – see e.g. Doorenspleet 2005). Evidently, if the definition of “democracy” would vary, the accompanying extension of the concept should vary likewise. At least two problems emerge from the literature: (a) definitions may be inconsistently applied to specific cases; and (b) some previously existing extensional usage of the word « democracy » may force itself into the analysis, influencing definitions. Below literature examples of these problems will be analysed.

Inconsistent historical application to specific cases

It is illustrative to start with ancient Greece, especially classical Athens, which is often taken as prototypical and moreover as the very beginning of “democracy”. Akkerman (2010: 2) for example straightforwardly states:

Democracy [...] was invented by the Greeks in the fifth century BC. In this period the first democratic form of government developed in Athens.

Democratie [...] is in de vijfde eeuw v.Chr. uitgevonden door de Grieken. In deze periode ontwikkelde zich in Athene de eerste democratische regeringsvorm.

For our present discussion the ancient Greeks⁹ are important because many others have found them important and, as indicated earlier, the word «democracy» derives from the Greek. The problem is that the “democratic” status of this prototypical example is not certain for theorists today. Certainly, several of the definitions listed above are applicable to ancient Athens: (2), (6), (7), (8), (9), and (10) may be considered relevant one way or the other. However, we can also ask whether “we can legitimately refer to Athens as a democracy at all” (Held 1987: 23). Only free adult males were regarded citizens and women, children, foreigners and slaves had no opportunity for political influence (Held 1987: 15, 23; Keane 2009: 19-22, 24-27). It violates the stipulation made in definition (5) on rights of “people” (in contrast with “citizens”).

The judgement “Athens was democratic” depends on whether the definition of “democracy” can legitimately be restricted to a particular subsection of the inhabitants of a certain polity. Many authors effectively say it can, since ancient Athens keeps on appearing in the historical overviews about “democracy”. This is problematic when “democracy” is studied in more recent times. For instance, apartheid South Africa is not normally seen as “democratic”, precisely because it only allowed political participation for a small section of the population, while exploiting the labour of others. It is difficult not to draw the conclusion that there exists an analytical leniency towards ancient Athens that apartheid South Africa must lack. Whatever “democracy” the Athenian citizens practiced, they did so *for themselves*.

The paradoxical analytical appeal that ancient Athens exercises (“democracy” amidst slavery) can be accommodated if a relativist approach is invoked. In a critical realist epistemology, it is fairly unproblematic to distinguish between the relationships between citizens and slaves on the one hand and amongst the citizens themselves on the other. To describe Athens as a “democracy” or not may then be dependent on judgements that are external to the descriptions of those relationships that we isolate when studying ancient Athens (cf. chapter 2 above). The application of certain definitions of “democratic”, for instance those stressing equality (e.g. definition (8)), can then be *relative* to the emphasis one places on inclusiveness of the category of people called “citizens”. An outlook that studies political procedures rather than inclusiveness may then call Athens “democratic” while an

⁹ Held (1987: 14-15) states that Chios rather than Athens was “the first ‘democratic’ polity”.

outlook that problematizes the limited extent of the category “citizens” may reject such a judgement. (This constitutes relativism in definitions rather than cultural relativism, because in the latter we would only be allowed to judge from outlooks that the ancient Athenians would themselves have entertained, and these would not necessarily have been the same as the outlooks just mentioned.)

A pre-existing application forces a certain definition

Inclusion of a country in the extension of “democracy” can exert influence on the definition of “democracy”. Doorenspleet (2005: 15) includes “competition” and “inclusiveness” in the definition of democracy. This seems to be used to maintain a description of the USA as “democratic” before 1965. She maintains (2005: 175) that the USA had a competitive and an inclusive regime in the period 1920-1965, even if before 1965 “Blacks” in the South had virtually no possibility to vote and consequently the USA had a less than perfect “inclusiveness”. She solves this contradiction by introducing four classes of inclusiveness (p. 28): (near-)universal suffrage; less than 20% of the population excluded; more than 20% excluded; no suffrage. She then (p. 30) concludes that the USA and Chile fell in the second category during the concerned period as “exceptional” cases, and then defines countries that fall in the second category as “sufficiently inclusive” (and thus “democratic” if they also have competitive regimes). The arbitrary cut-off point of 20% is motivated nowhere in the book except for this invocation of these cases’ being “exceptional”. This problem is further compounded by the fact that Doorenspleet includes “Oppositional activity is not restricted or suppressed” when specifying “competitive system” (2005: 25). This does not square with King (1996: 532). Though this is not an item that falls under the above category of “inconsistently applied definitions”, it does point to the difficulty of fine-tuning the definition of “inclusiveness” in such a way that the USA before 1965 scores positive on the latter.¹⁰ Bruce and Yearly (2006: 66) are more straightforward when they call the USA “arguably not a democracy” until the 1960s.

A negative variant of the effect of previously existing applications on a definition is provided by Diamond, who mentions the perspective that “democracy” implies some equality

¹⁰ Such analytical leniency seems to be explicitly approved by Lijphart (1999: 52) when he writes: “I am [...] somewhat lenient with regard to [some] long-term democracies” accepting countries as “democracies” that had limitations on suffrage, e.g. Switzerland (women), Australia (Aborigines), and the USA (before the Voting Rights Act).

in the access to and distribution of wealth and limitations on the power of large owners of capital. He writes that “[t]his view has fallen out of favour with the collapse of socialism in the late twentieth century” (2001: 149). It is remarkable that a historical event should affect the popularity of a theoretical definition. In any case, defenders of intertwining of “democracy” and economic equality may still be found; e.g. Gumbel, who talks about “a crisis of political representation in an economically lopsided world” (2005: 324), and Fitoussi, who states: “The impoverishment of the middle class [...] mean[s] that democracy has not accomplished its task of preventing market based exclusion” (2011: 4).

Summary

The word « democracy » was discussed by explaining its etymology. Any single concept “democracy” could not be identified, but rather “democracy” was viewed as a concept-cluster of family resemblances (Wittgenstein) of involved ideas, where different authors may stress different aspects of “democracy”. Already with a limited enumeration of definitions of “democracy”, it was shown that conceptualizations of “democracy” can overlap but may not be identical, and when taken together yield an internally contradictory conceptual cluster. Considerations about defining “democracy” in relation to Mozambique’s history under Frelimo were given. The variety in definitions was matched by problems in consistency when applying the word « democracy » to concrete societies. Using any concept of “democracy” is essentially a *relativist* affair; judgements as to whether a particular society or institution is “democratic” depend not only on such social objects themselves but also on what interpretation one has of “democracy”. Of specific interest is the contrast between majority and consensus interpretations, where the approach of Arrow, to be critically reviewed in this thesis, is associated with the first rather than with the latter.