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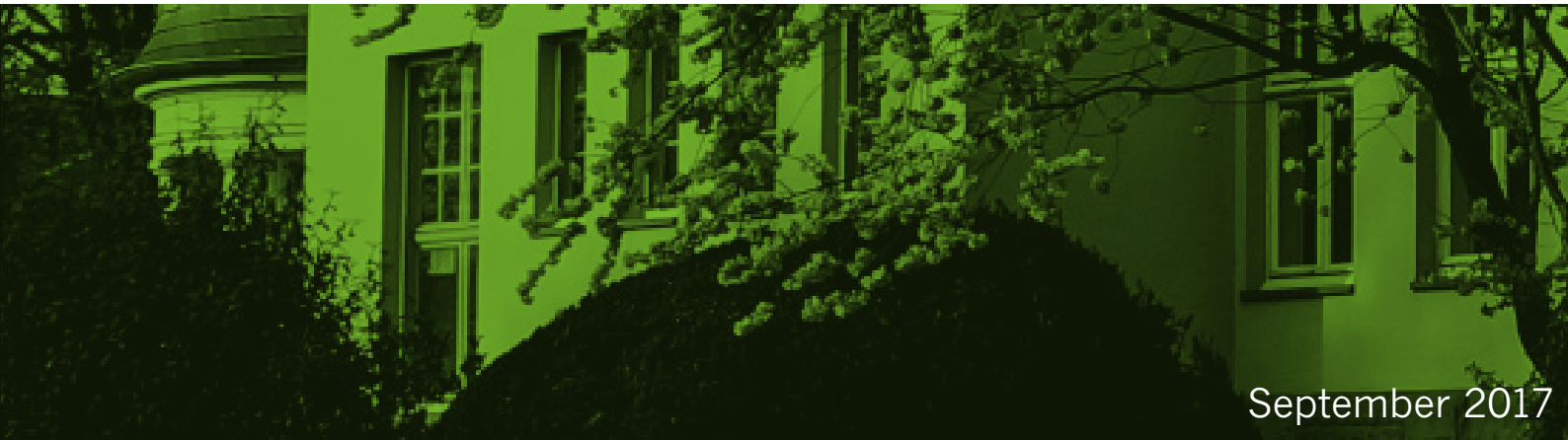
THE BIPOLARITY OF DEMOCRACY AND AUTHORITARIANISM:

VALUE PATTERNS, INCLUSION ROLES AND FORMS OF INTERNAL DIFFERENTIATION OF POLITICAL SYSTEMS



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THE BIPOLARITY OF DEMOCRACY AND AUTHORITARIANISM

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ABSTRACT

After World War II the political world was shaped by the ideological bipolarity of capitalism and socialism/communism for nearly 50 years. And there was a second bipolarity formulated by the distinction of democracy and totalitarianism. Both distinctions lost their relevance between 1970 and 1990. There was first the 'discovery' that some dictatorial regimes (e.g. Spain, Latin American populist dictators) could not meaningfully be called totalitarian but had to be understood as authoritarian. And then there was the breakdown of communism and socialism as political regimes after 1990. It was only on the basis of these two conjunctures that the disjunction of democracy and authoritarianism became the decisive bipolarity in modern political systems. This is the starting point of the argument of this paper.

We agree and start with the observation that today's world society exhibits a political regime bipolarity and we suggest a new approach towards defining and analyzing it, employing the sociological theory of inclusion formulated in sociological systems theory. We first of all distinguish democratic and authoritarian political regimes on the basis of identifying the different value patterns underlying collectively binding decision making and by analyzing the contingency and non-contingency of these respective value patterns. Democracy is understood as the political regime which is based on the 'autopoiesis' of its constitutive values, in authoritarian regimes we observe a 'heterogenesis' of values. To this argument about the production and stability of values we secondly add the idea that modern states are characterized by the imperative of individual political inclusion: under conditions of modernity and globalization, today all states, including the non-democratic ones, increasingly face the pressure to include individuals politically and they have to accommodate to this demand. However, there is still wide variation among regimes in how this is done, and there are new patterns for the inclusion of collectivities, related to the primacy of individual inclusion. Finally, and this is the third part of our argument, we believe that this approach allows the study of ongoing transformations of differentiation in both types of regimes. In this third part, we present a brief overview of the hierarchy of levels of modern polities and the horizontal differentiation of subsystems and organizations and we argue for the relevance of these two configurations for the comparative study of democracy and authoritarianism, which can also include an exploration of authoritarian traits in an otherwise democratic state, or of democratic elements built into an autocracy.

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INTRODUCTION

A Democratic Recession?

There are some quite conflicting signals as to the global political landscape in the 21st century. While looking at the vehement political protests seen worldwide since 2000 and especially in the early 2010s, most importantly the 'color revolutions' in the successor states of the former Soviet Union, the Arab Spring revolts, mass rallies in Brazil and Chile, clashes in Turkey, umbrella protests in Hong Kong – not a few observers came to diagnose a 'fourth wave of democratization' (see e.g. discussions in Diamond 2011, Markoff 2015, Lehoucq 2012). Only a few years later, however, at the time of finishing this manuscript in the first half of 2017, it is found that the latest rounds of political protest have not resulted in a notable increase of democratic political regimes worldwide. Quite to the contrary, international media as well as the social science research community are instead diagnosing a new 'wave of authoritarianism'. It seems to be symbolized by the return to a highly personalized and uncompromising type of autocracy, in countries such as Venezuela, Russia, Turkey and China, the recurrence and astonishing success of nationalist populist governments in Europe and lately the US, the authoritarian-leaning reemergence of one party dominance in Japan, and the full transformation back to authoritarianism after a relatively short democratic period of countries of the so-called 'third wave', such as Egypt, Kenya, Thailand, or most recently perhaps the Philippines. Some major international political barometers even come to note a 'recession of democracy'. **[1]**

> "During the 1970s and 1980s, more than 30 countries shifted from authoritarian to democratic political systems. In recent years, the post-1970s wave of democratisation has slowed or been reversed. (...) We expect that political upheavals will affect other authoritarian regimes in future. These may not all be successful and not all will necessarily take the form of mass popular uprisings. The outlook for democratic transition is, however, uncertain. As in recent years, there are historical examples of major reversals of democratisation. (...) Democracy's proponents have become increasingly circumspect about the prospects of a further wave of democratisation" (Economist Intelligence Unit 2014: 15-16).

Bipolarity: Why a Classification of Political Regimes?

Besides the ups and downs of democracies (and authoritarian regimes), another regime discontinuity can be observed. There are no longer totalitarianisms (North Korea may be the exception), and socialism and communism do no longer really matter as genuine terms for political regimes, as the discussion about their applicability to the largest one remaining, the one-party rule of the Chinese Communist Party in China, impressively illustrates. **[2]** It is this discontinuity which gives a new prominence to the bipolar structure of democracy and authoritarianism on which the argument of this paper focusses. Interestingly enough, regime differences alone seem not to constitute a life and death issue anymore and have mostly been replaced by other cleavages and con-

[1] See further Diamond 2015. There is, however, a discussion about the validity of this observation, as based on different indicators and numbers; see, for instance, Levitsky and Way 2015. For a review of latest, more philosophical literature on the "trap, tragedy or crisis" of democracy, see Hobson 2016.

[2] Here we find extreme differences between the regime's continuing self-description, by CCP ideologues, as "socialism with Chinese characteristics", and the various different labels employed by external observers. Differing from the few other remaining socialist party regimes, such as in Cuba or Vietnam, the Chinese case may attain special relevance, because of its sheer dimension and as being the only one of them which is really still seen (by itself or in descriptions by others) as representing a 'model'; see also below.

flicts. Especially after the end of the cold war and its strict ideological bifurcations from which cooperation or conflict followed quasi 'deductively', bi- and multinational cooperation across regime types has become more common over the last decades. In particular, issue based international cooperation and global governance, most prominently in the field of non-proliferation and climate change mitigation, seem possible without much ado about the regime tags of the systems involved. Classification becomes, however, very relevant, when governments of liberal democratic countries seek reliability and predictability in cooperation as well as legitimation for it from their publics. This could recently be inspected quite vividly in Europe's 'refugee crisis', when affected publics discussed whether it is opportune to collaborate with or even become dependent on non-democratic, 'despotic' regimes or 'failing states' in the Bosporus and North-African regions in trying to alleviate the influx of migrants to their countries.

At the same time, scholarly interest in the description and analysis of political regimes seems to have reemerged. Beyond arguing for viable classification schemes and the most correct tracing of transformation(s), intellectual discussions especially center on regime qualities, i.e. the effects, even efficiency, of certain modes of rule.

Notwithstanding all doubts about human rights records, the performance sheets of some among the resilient modern autocracies, most notably China, Singapore and perhaps Saudi-Arabia, lead some analysts to detect 'models' of authoritarian effectiveness. Diagnoses such as 'developmental autocracy' or 'authoritarian capitalism' (see, e.g., Pei Minxin 2006; Gat 2007; see, also, Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2005; Shen 2007; Wintrobe 1998), the 'Beijing Consensus' (Ramo 2004) **[3]**, or rentier states' successful 'segmented clientelism' (Hertog 2011) represent the observation that some goals may be (better) achieved by authoritarianism. Especially when it comes to issue based analyses, the performance 'advantages' of different regime types, including some very specific structures and procedures of their political system are held against each other, as is the case in the 'democratic environmentalism' versus 'authoritarian environmentalism' debate (see e.g. Beeson 2010). This means that, after the end of the capitalism/socialism divide, there is a certain inescapability of the democracy/autocracy bifurcation - as long as no other distinction arises. It emerges as the most important distinction in observing structures of political decision making. And it is used by both academic observers as well as by political actors themselves, acquiring a significant semantic complexity which is an interesting object of study in its own.

Paradoxes of Regime Bipolarity Internal to and Beyond the Nation State

This said, general categorizations of regime bipolarity help us to draw maps of the diverse landscape of regimes in today's world society and there are enough reasons for labeling and ordering. The large and meticulous data sets of transformation studies are a treasure trove and have, among other things, helped to put into question the almost teleological undertone or 'democracy bias' of some earlier political science research. **[4]** But is this country-to-country counting really the ultimate diagnostic instrument to understand political macro developments? Do regime characteristics accumulated and identified at the nation state level help us to understand all the traits of political evolution **[5]** in world society? Focusing on national-level regime features, some dynamics and apparent paradoxes may go rather unnoticed. How to capture, for instance, phenomena that should clearly be analyzed against the background of the democratic-authoritarian regime bipolarity, but which are observable more or less

[3] See further, for example, the uncountable publications on the "China Model", for example, in a critical account in the special issue "Debating the China Model of Modernization" of the *Journal of Contemporary China*, 19 (65) 2010. Or the recent reemergence of the "Singapore model" debate at the occasion of Lee Kuan-Yew's death in March 2015, see, for example, Caryl 2015.

[4] See, for example, the comprehensive review of the state of the field in Albrecht and Frankenberger 2010.

[5] The notion of *evolution* as used here implies no teleology and no set trajectory, but constant adaptation. See also the long tradition in political science of discussing and applying evolution "seriously or metaphorically" reviewed in Ma 2014.

independent from the level of entire nation states? Or, to push it even further: democratic/authoritarian phenomena which may occur within the boundaries of a country that carries a regime label which implies its belonging to actually the opposite side of the democracy/autocracy distinction?

For example, what about the often lamented 'democracy deficit' in European Union politics at the supra state level **[6]**, the dominion of the so-called Islamic state whose public infrastructure and rule temporarily stretched across the territories of several contiguous states (see e.g. Birke 2015), the authoritarian enclaves which have been identified by political scientists in the 'deep South' of the otherwise democratic United States (see e.g. Mickey 2015), the outsourcing of decision making about core policies in many democracies to non-majoritarian institutions such as central banks or courts **[7]**, the retreat of parliaments in exemplary Scandinavian democracies ceding to decision making informed by technocratic committees of experts (see e.g. Sejersted 2011), the global Occupy movement and its non-legitimated claims to act (sometimes violently) on behalf of the majority of the world population and the many localized or national protest movements in the OECD (post-Brexit, post-Trump) world which act on the basis of the same claims and obviously see no means and sometimes may have no interest to push for their demands via formal democratic institutions (see e.g. Roberts 2012), the recent admittance of women to participate in elections and to run for office in Saudi-Arabian municipal elections (see e.g. Al Jazeera 2015) and finally the village-level democratic elections in present-day China (see e.g. Schubert and Ahlers 2012), to name just a few? All this points to the dynamics built into the distinction of democracy and authoritarianism which seems to instruct oscillations between these two poles of a political space, oscillations which may be read as an indicator of the force of the democracy/autocracy distinction as the major political distinction of our time.

A Novel Analytical Approach to the Bipolarity of Democracy and Authoritarianism

These are very disparate examples, as yet unanalyzed, which require thorough understanding. We won't offer such an understanding at this moment but only make use of these examples to point to two insights important for the distinction of democracy and authoritarianism. First, there may exist significant differences between plural levels of state-building. A democratic national state may include authoritarian enclaves (subsystems) and furthermore the same national democratic state can be a part of transnational forms of government, which lack democratic legitimation and democratic forms of participation. Secondly, the distinction of democracy and authoritarianism need not always refer to regionally delimited political systems (national states, regional states). It is probably useful to look at democratic and authoritarian institutions as components of political systems which in relevant respects are always a mix of democratic and authoritarian components. A good example for an inherently authoritarian institution is the military which is a case in which a democratic participation in its chain of command probably cannot be institutionalized. On the other side one might look at parliaments which an authoritarian monarch may dissolve or never convene (as was the case for nearly two hundred years in pre-revolutionary France before 1789), but which are deliberative bodies and may therefore be seen as an institution with a democratic potential inherent to it, independent from the regime type.

[6] See e.g. contributions in the *Journal of European Integration* (2013): Special Issue – Representation and Democracy in the EU: Does One Come at the Expense of the Other?, 35(5).

[7] See e.g. the collection of articles in *West European Politics* (2002): Special Issue – The Politics of Delegation: Non-Majoritarian Institutions in Europe, 25 (1).

In this article we therefore argue for an approach to the bipolarity of political regimes that rests on a sociological theory of functional differentiation and political inclusion and that does not only look at the nation state as the unquestionable analytical unit but tries to formulate an adequate understanding of the multi-level structure of political systems. In the form of an empirically inspired theoretical argument, we will in the following present three major observations and provide suggestions for their further examination: **First**, while corroborating the postulated democracy-autocracy bifurcation we suggest a rather simplified explanatory approach to it. Our aim is not to brush over the amazing degrees of variation in political regimes in world society, but to allow a kind of genetic understanding. Our suggested analysis of the bipolarity of democratic and authoritarian regimes is based on the *hypothesis of a divergent stance towards societal values and value formation* present in a political system and is furthermore aiming to capture the coexistence of both regime types in the same political system. **Second**, we note that independent of the recurrent "waves of democratization and authoritarianism", there is an underlying theme and tendency that binds together the different phenomena just mentioned: the *relevance of individual inclusion into forms of collectively binding decision making*. Putting it even more pointedly, we state that there is an *inclusion imperative* increasingly observable in self-descriptions and institutional configurations of almost all political regimes. Whereas democracy may be regarded as the ideal type of universal political inclusion, we argue that under conditions of modernity, global complexity and mutual comparison, even non-democratic political systems increasingly face the pressure to realize a political inclusion of individuals. It is a major question for modern social theory where this strong imperative of individual inclusion in modern society comes from. Since these developments are not sufficiently visible when merely looking at the macro rag rug of country units on a global map, we conclude by, **thirdly**, suggesting an approach towards embedding and deepening both aforementioned observations. Based on an interpretation of political systems informed by sociological systems theory, we propose and test explorations of the ways in which the challenges of the *inclusion imperative* are dealt with at varying vertical levels of the polity as a function system **[8]** and in different horizontal subsystems of a polity. We argue that such an approach, fully taking into account the internal differentiation of contemporary political systems, will provide more accurate understandings regarding components of democracy and autocracy in political systems than can be achieved by an analysis that only looks at the nation state level.

[8] Function systems are global communication systems built around specific types of social problems which are not dealt with in other systems, Stichweh 2013.

1. VALUE PATTERNS OF DEMOCRATIC AND AUTHORITARIAN REGIMES

Among the manifold attempts at categorizing political regimes, the most common catalogues are based on a scale oriented to an ideal type, with the most 'desirable' regimes, the democracies, located at the one end of the continuum, and the latecomers, failing, defective and yet-to-be transformed non-democracies at the other. There is then only a 'negative' understanding of authoritarianism defined by properties authoritarian regimes lack. Most typologies follow a strictly institutionalist approach and concentrate on aspects such as free and fair elections, freedom of speech and rule of law, as observable at the national level. **[9]** Depending on the number of variables included, these catalogues often also list numerous subcategories of regime types 'with attributes' (e.g. "competitive authoritarianism", "electoral authoritarianism", "defective democracies", "illiberal democracy", or simply "hybrid regimes") (Levitsky and Way 2010; Schedler 2006; Merkel 2004; Zakaria 1997; Diamond 2002). While furthermore, as mentioned, the analysis of authoritarian regimes is en vogue again and the resilience of many of them is acknowledged, most of these indices nonetheless seem to be driven by the teleological expectation that in the long run all political entities in world society undoubtedly will converge to one of the forms of democracy.

We agree with the observation that in today's world society we can basically distinguish between democratic and non-democratic/authoritarian political regimes. But for us authoritarianism is not a residue, not a negative category primarily defined by things which are not there. It is instead a political regime category of its own. Democracy and authoritarianism thus become the two poles on a continuum of political alternatives. Notwithstanding due respect to the many insights created by existing strands of literature, we, however, try to define our contribution by not joining the common labeling and counting endeavor. Instead, we suggest qualitative distinctions between these two main regime types, which are able to grasp what is observed in country analyses as well as the phenomena to be perceived on trans- and sub-state levels of the formation of 'polities'. **[10]** At the same time we try to base our approach strictly on a descriptive stance and to refrain from attaching normative judgments such as "progress" or "improvement" to the democratic pole. This does not mean, however, that we do not see certain trends and even commonalities within and across regime boundaries, as in this paper especially section 2 will elaborate.

We believe that the political landscape of regimes as it is observable today, can be explained and grasped by the difference of choices taken on the path of functional differentiation. Functional differentiation means that the closed social collectivities of pre-modern society, such as estate, caste and class, are pushed back by comparatively

[9] See, for instance, the summarizing matrix in Møller and Skaaning 2013, in which the indicators *competitive elections, inclusive elections with high integrity, civil liberties*, and *rule of law* decide about a ranking of democracies as well as the separation of democracies from non-democracies.

[10] Our approach towards the bipolarity of democratic and authoritarian regimes is part of an ongoing research program at the 'Forum Internationale Wissenschaft', University of Bonn; see https://www.fiw.uni-bonn.de/demokratieforschung/abteilung-demokratieforschung.

open communication systems, such as law, religion, education, the polity and the economy in modern society, communication systems created around specific topics and meaning complexes. Whereas in pre-modern society each individual person was a member of one and only one of these social collectivities of stratification and the individual integration into one collectivity of this type defined and limited all participations and activities available to this person, the modern situation is completely different. Every person is now partially involved in the operations of many (potentially even of all) of the function systems of society. As one of these modern social systems, the polity is that system in society that holds ready the capacity to take collectively binding decisions (Luhmann 2002). In this context, democratic and authoritarian regimes should be regarded as alternative options within the spectrum of political structures enabling the taking of collective decisions. As will be explained here and in the following section, in modern political systems the main distinctions that characterize regimes are to be defined with regard to differences in *value patterns* and *inclusion formulas* that inform this decision making.

Contingent and Non-Contingent Values

Value patterns as the first variable that underlies a distinction between democracy and autocracy, point to where and in which way values are located, respectively created, in a society. **[11]** *Whereas in an* authoritarian *regime policy making is oriented towards external values of diverse societal origins ('heterogenesis'), democracies create values within the political process itself ('autopoiesis'). This implies that in the most fundamental realization of what a democracy means, every possible issue can be subjected to an open-ended decision making process at the input side*. In this respect Switzerland, for example, might be regarded as the most extreme real-life example of such a political system, in which national direct plebiscitary decision making (a referendum) can even overrule internationally ratified human rights, as probably was the case with the "minaret ban" that was included in the Swiss constitution in 2009 on the basis of such a referendum. These decisions conflict with international human rights treaties signed and ratified by Switzerland and we do not yet know how the 'Federal Supreme Court of Switzerland' ('Bundesgericht, Tribunal fédéral') in Lausanne would adjudicate if it had to decide on a building permit for a planned minaret.

What this example shows, furthermore, is that there may be a kind of oscillatory movement observable in democratic political systems: In processes of endogenous value production a political system may overstep its bounds and encroach on the terrain of another function system. In other cases, the self-limitation of democratic systems is a remarkable property they often display: accepting the autonomy of other societal systems and even respecting their functional primacy for some issues – e.g. of the economy, law, the system of science or of higher education. And there is another extreme: Cases in which the openness of a democratic system to any value statement whatsoever is so strong that this liberality of a democratic system endangers its own survival, cases in which a democracy gives its adversaries such a free rein that it runs the risk that these enemies take over and abolish the same system to which they owe their existence and possibility of articulation. **[12]**

At the authoritarian end of the spectrum we characteristically find values that are external to the political system, i.e. have not been created within the political system, and which steer the political process towards achieving a predetermined, or at least

[11] These arguments require a more detailed discussion than we are able to provide in this paper. Regarding the background of our analysis and more refined typologies differentiating the democratic and authoritarian spectrum, see Stichweh and Ahlers 2017/8, in preparation.

[12] This danger is most often discussed in connection with democracy being in principle open to the rise of demagoguery and populism, as will be taken up again below. The fact that democracy is the "rule of the majority" and related worries about the danger of a highly exclusive "*tyranny* of the majority" have troubled ancient philosophers, early political analysts (such as Tocqueville) and contemporary historians alike; see,

pre-envisioned goal **[13]**. These external values may be religious values or they may be based on non-religious traditional/moral principles. As a third variant of values one could think of forms of knowledge seen as important and not contingent in political processes and perceived as indispensable for the adaptability of the political system. Knowledge then decides among political alternatives, resulting in expertocracy or technocracy as a regime type. Finally, regimes can be based on a certain ideology, crucially pre-structuring reactions to societal problems as in socialist/communist/fascist one-party-regimes, or in ethno-nationalist regimes which may become more prominent in the next years and for which Israel may be an example. In all these four cases of authoritarianism, the political process is not a value or an end in itself and is not appreciated in the openness of its outcomes, but is rather a means towards a preordained goal.

This explains why at the level of institutional structure and internal differentiation of the political system, modern authoritarian regimes often look quite similar to modern democratic regimes, featuring presidents, prime ministers, governors and mayors, governmental cabinets, parliaments, elections, parties, associations, etc., but why they do not grant these institutions the ultimate autonomy to bring about any imaginable result – a result which in a democracy will be accepted as long as it is produced by means of the representative and direct democratic processes institutionalized in the respective system. The possibility of endogenous self-negation and ultimately even self-destruction, a potentiality and sometimes a reality in democratic regimes, is not inherently probable in authoritarianism. What is also striking is that in authoritarian contexts the political system is often seen as claiming authority and primacy (on the basis of non-contingent values) over other function systems, in not accepting the ultimate validity and autonomy of the law, or the complete self-organization of science or other autonomous knowledge foundations. This is easily to be observed with populists, who typically do not take into account the autonomous knowledge basis of other function systems, such as law and science. For them there only exist political statements which use the legitimacy of science and law as a veil. They seem to only know the language of political power (as the ultimate resource either to acquire or to lose) and they often do not understand that others don't speak the same but other languages.

Authoritarian and Democratic Value Patterns in the Light of Functional Differentiation

Functional differentiation is the most important, most constitutive feature of modern world society, but, as was just mentioned, an authoritarian political regime regularly aims at establishing a hierarchy of function systems in society in which the political system reserves for itself the capacity to enforce its non-contingent values over the values of other systems and can principally interfere in operations of these other systems. This presumed legitimacy of intervention refers even to the basic principles of inclusion and exclusion into the other function systems.

Democracy, therefore, may plausibly appear as the modern embodiment of the political system in a functionally differentiated society as it recognizes no values external to it and in this way claims and realizes functional autonomy. Only the ultimate valuation of individuality is non-contingent even for democracies and this includes the valuation of human rights which protect and contextualize modern individuality. And democracy includes and accepts the modern political collectivities to which all individuals belong and which are specifically modern collectivities. 'People' and 'nation' are

for instance, Lukacs 2005; Mudde and Kaltwasser 2012. Most recently, the rise of right-wing populist parties in Europe and the finally successful campaign of the unsuspected US presidential candidate Donald Trump attracts attention; see, for instance, Kagan 2016; Müller 2016; The Economist 2015.

[13] In other words, these *non-contingent values* most often also entail a claim to controllability of "the future" or the knowledge about, or at least certainty to manage conditions under which decision making will have to happen at any given later moment – an aspect that is usually an absent condition in political systems without exogenous values, see Luhmann 2002: 140-169.

the major terms for these modern political collectivities. And these two terms point once again to a commonality between modern democracies and autocracies as both regime types claim to be based on these two collectivities. What distinguishes democracy and authoritarianism is that the latter system often inverses the primacy among individuals and the respective collectivities. Authoritarian systems claim to be based on the will of the people (as a collective unit often speaking with one voice) whereas democracies have to go back to the articulation of interests by each individual member of a political system. As the articulation of interests will be diverse, pluralism is another value inherent to a democracy · a value which is a consequence of individuality and a valuation normally not shared with authoritarianism.

Beyond individuality (and the protective core of human rights around it) in a democracy only those values matter and are considered to be values internal to the polity that are created by its members in the political processes of which a democracy consists. As long as a political system is able to respond to stimuli stemming from its social environment – finding solutions that seem adequate in content and claiming the amount of time necessary for finding these solutions – solely via its own processes, we consider it a democratic regime. It does not take much to imagine where and when alternatives could come into play. As soon as there is any value that is a precondition to the political process or is envisioned as the ultimate goal that cannot be altered during the political process, there is a tendency towards an authoritarian mode of politics. This also explains why 'populism' is to be considered an intermediary stage or a precursor to authoritarianism. Populism comes about as a shift from the self-organization of the decentralized and pluralistic democratic collectivity towards claims of more immediate representation of the 'will of the people' by a populist candidate and/or a populist movement. These claim to know the 'will of the people' and to be capable of an immediate formulation of this will. The populist/populist will usually come from outside the center of the respective political system. He/she often will be an outsider and a newcomer not burdened by a history of compromises, earlier erroneous decisions and less successful earlier stints in public office. The immediate appellation to the 'will of the people' will have to be confirmed, one time at least, by an often unexpected success in a political election, and therefore still represents a democratic takeover of power by the populist/populist movement. But after that first success populism will still claim its immediate and unmediated expression of the will of the people and does not want to be disconfirmed by later electoral defeats by a disappointed populace. Therefore, there is a tendency to rig future elections – and this points to the path which leads from populism arising in a democracy towards an authoritarian regime coming on its heels. This may be combined with the rise of values that become non-contingent values · e.g. efficiency and effectiveness in tackling economic downturns or rampant corruption, or values such as national sovereignty, territorial integrity and domestic stability and security, religious or ethnic purity – values which then explain the ongoing claim of the populist/populist party for political domination and representation of the people.

Populism therefore arises as a possibility when certain problems move into the center of communicative attention and are perceived as so crucial that a) the duration of time usually needed to reach decisions through the established (self-organized) institutions of collective, fair and equal decision making appears as too arduous and long, and b) the proposed solutions, or those that can be expected as results of the usual policy-making process, are considered insufficient or inadequate. The offer of more immediate solutions based on other sources of authority (the populist party or strongman)

and other types of expertise promising responsiveness to the perceived problems may then become attractive. This includes that in the process of building an authoritarian regime the decentralized, pluralistic, diversity-seeking search structures characteristic of a democracy become more or less completely dismantled (Stichweh 2016b: 24-27).

2. THE CAREER OF INDIVIDUAL POLITICAL INCLUSION: DIFFERENT CONSTITUTION OF POLITICAL ROLES IN DEMOCRATIC AND AUTHORITARIAN POLITICAL SYSTEMS

We have pointed to political inclusion formulas as one further core element of our approach to capture regime bifurcations. This will require some more explanation.

The global emergence of democratic regime types is usually seen as equivalent to the emergence of a historically new order of inclusion in politics. As the equal inclusion of all individuals is the internally created, underlying principle for democratic political regimes, democracies appear as the almost ideal embodiment of modernity in politics. But, does this coupling of democracy and universal political inclusion provide an argumentative basis for expectations concerning the ultimate advance of democracy, as has been postulated in teleologically leaning democratization research? Or: how can we make sense of the resilience of alternatives to democracy? We argue that the *imperative of individual inclusion* as such has to be regarded as the most fundamental innovation - representative of modernity - that is the undertone of *all* political development in world society. Whereas we would agree with the claim, that a democratic regime, in theory, represents the full implementation of this idea, the *career* of individual inclusion is observable even across regime types. To trace this career, we suggest refining once again our definition of political inclusion, since it appears that the popular as well as the scientific discourse lack a nonbiased perspective on and concept of 'political inclusion' that is not immediately used interchangeably with 'democracy'. Without weighting their legitimacy or meaningfulness, it is first of all interesting and necessary to observe that there are actually differences in inclusion formulas between different regime types, but also among regional variants of the 'same' regime type. **[14]**

Political Individuality and Political Inclusion Roles

As is true for all the function systems of world society, the political system defines its own concept of individuality, and does it in a way specific to the function system, thereby producing semantics and variants of *political individuality* which are the starting

[14] It may even be argued that in the political system, inclusion formulas are a bit more complex to grasp and categorize than in other social systems. But systems always tend to claim that they are more complex, more multi-stranded than other systems, Fox 1978.

point for the definition of inclusion roles in different political regimes. There are two major aspects of political individuality that can be meaningfully distinguished. Once more we are dealing with a bipolar structure, which separates a *mental* from an *action* pole of political individuality. **[15]** On the mental (experiential) side of political individuality the political individual is primarily seen as an observer who contributes interests and opinions to political processes. On the opposite side, meaningfully to be described as the action aspect of political individuality, an individual is first of all an actor (endowed with agency) contributing action and active engagements to the ongoing events that constitute the political process. The early modern distinction of interests and virtue somehow reconstructs (and, of course, anticipates) this bipolarity of political individuality (see Pocock 1975).

To this bipolarity of political individuality correspond the two alternative and complementary versions of political inclusion roles. In each function system of society we find *public roles* (observer roles, with a certain prevalence of passivity) and *performance roles* (roles for producers of system defining activities). (See Stichweh 2016a) In some cases only the *public role* is accessible to most of the individuals included into the respective function system. The health system is a good example: Everybody will become a patient (meaning someone who has to be patient in suffering) at some point in his/her life, while most persons will never be a doctor (working on the problems of the patient). This is clearly an asymmetrical role structure; there are those persons who do people processing and those who are processed. Modern politics, especially in its democratic version, is different. The concept of democratic political individuality seems to demand the potentiality of inclusion into both types of political inclusion roles. Everybody is an observer of the ongoing events in one's own system (and of all the other systems in the world) and can therefore opt for the elementary possibilities of participation available to public roles (interest based voting, communication of opinions, participation in protests). But, at the same time, everybody is able and legitimized to switch to the other side of the disjunction of political roles and emerge as an actively engaged and virtuous political actor to whom in principle any performance role is accessible. Everybody, without exception, can become the 'President' of the United States or the 'Bundeskanzler' of the Federal Republic of Germany – and recent history demonstrated in both countries that this is not a virtuality but reality. This non-exclusionary universal inclusion into both role types of the political system seems to result from modern political individuality and to be non-negotiable in democratic political systems. But there are interesting alternatives to be observed which as alternatives define different political regimes.

There is first of all the possibility and historical reality of a political system in which the *public role* of an observer with privatized interests is not provided for (and perhaps not seen as legitimate). In these systems everybody who is involved in politics has to take a *performance role*, i.e. participates as an active citizen endowed with public virtue (which pushes back private interests). In an ideological understanding, such a system will be called republicanism and in a structural and historical realization one can only imagine it as an aristocracy consisting of a significant number of bearers of performance roles whose interrelations are defined by equality towards one another. The number of the active role bearers of such an aristocratic republic is not necessarily small, but it is clearly a limited number. The inclusion of everyone is not intended or even allowed. An aristocratic elite is by definition always a minority in the political system, which it governs in an aristocratic way. Aristocracies are a very prominent type of political regime in early modern Europe (16th-18th century), **[16]** but they seem

[15] In terms of sociological systems theory this corresponds to the distinction of *Erleben* and *Handeln* (experience and action), see Luhmann 1981, 67-80.

[16] See, for a fascinating example, Davies 2005.

to have disappeared from the present-day world. This suggests that aristocracies are probably incompatible with the inclusion imperative of modernity.

The Possibility of Modern Inclusive Authoritarianism

Two alternatives remain. There is, first of all, a political system that realizes universal inclusion into public and into performance roles. This is democracy, and again there are many variants. There are some democracies in which the switch from a public to a performance role is a distant possibility, one rarely realized at a later point in the life of a citizen. And there are democratic systems – perhaps Switzerland is the best example – in which all performance roles are designed in a way that the universality of inclusion into performance roles is maximized. **[17]**

And, finally, coming back to the major distinction in this paper, we have autocracies or authoritarian regimes, which do not know universal inclusion into performance roles. This would represent a risk they cannot take. Performance roles are reserved to a small segment of the population, which is considered as consisting of the guardians of the value principles on which the authoritarian regime is based. This can be a party, a kind of clerisy (religious or otherwise ideologically unified) or any other social structure apt to take this guardian role. But authoritarian systems are also modern in allowing and being based on universal inclusion of everyone into public roles. They claim to act in the interest of everyone, and the available paths of exercising influence (elections, petitions) are open to everyone, except to members of stigmatized and therefore excluded populations that conflict with the value principles of the authoritarian regime. Regarding the mutual influence processes between performance roles and public roles, authoritarian regimes, again, use to invert the direction of flows of influence. They often conduct mass mobilization from the top of the political system and in this way they substitute strategies of control over the population via mass mobilization for the possibilities of participation by every single individual. This switch from individualized participation (beginning with individual role bearers) to processes of mass mobilization – trying to include each and every individual – is one of the reasons why autocracies prefer the modern collectivities (i.e. nation, people) to which the many individuals are supposed to belong in contradistinction to the influence potentials resting on individual role bearers. Of course, mass mobilization does differ between different authoritarian regimes. Only in the case of totalitarian types of authoritarianism (e.g. Fascism, Stalinism) is it actually based on the obligatory inclusion of everyone. Modern authoritarianisms don't need everyone. They bear a certain amount of indifference, and of pluralism, too. And they shift their mode of legitimation from the mobilization and participation of the whole populace to inclusion into outputs of political processes. In other words, while access to performance roles remains largely restricted, in the case of modern authoritarianism, more equal inclusion into public roles (i.e. the receivers of welfare benefits, and the like) can be observed, which again bespeaks the inclusion imperative germane to modern society. Finally, as mentioned, modern autocracies try to legitimate themselves via claiming superiority and effectiveness of the authoritarian regime as compared to "messy" and ineffective democracies. Only when effectiveness tangibly fails they may revert to mass mobilization which may then fail them.

[17] Switzerland calls this the 'Milizprinzip'. Since a militia is that type of military organization in which every citizen could take an active role, the Milizprinzip means the generalization of this pattern to other societal sectors. The Milizprinzip also implies that there are only part-time performance roles. There are no – or nearly no – full-time political professionals. The Swiss ‚Nationalrat' is a good example.

3. FORMS OF INTERNAL DIFFERENTIATION OF DEMOCRACIES AND AUTOCRACIES: VERTICAL LEVELS AND HORIZONTAL SUBSYSTEMS

Up to this point, this paper, in comparing democracies and autocracies in the contemporary world, has analyzed the production and invariability of value patterns characteristic of democracies respectively autocracies and the modern inclusion imperative which is to be observed in all the function systems of world society. It turned out that an analytical interest in forms of political inclusion is a good instrument to capture the modernity even of autocracies in a world which has often been described by the democratic inclusion revolution of the 18th century. A third form of observation with which we will conclude this paper pertains to another core aspect of political modernity: the enormous complexity of modern political systems as shown in multiple forms of internal political differentiation. Once more our question will be: In what way can the bipolarity of democracy and authoritarianism be observed if one looks at this core dimension: the ongoing internal differentiation of contemporary political systems?

3.1 MULTILEVEL STRUCTURE OF CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL SYSTEMS

The contemporary system of approximately 200 nation states is still the dominant level for the identification and analysis of political regime types in today's world society. Growing transnational cooperation and global governance do not significantly challenge this observation. Why is this so? One could argue that decision making which is binding for an identifiable collectivity of individuals still mainly happens within one's country's jurisdiction, and one probably would add that citizenship and with it the most vital rights to meaningful political participation are still tied to the nation state. But nonetheless, even if we start with the nation state level, there is a plurality of levels of decision making internal to any nation state and at all these levels semantics and roles of political inclusion arise and diversify political systems.

It is common to include various sub- and supranational perspectives into studies of

democratic politics. This is, for instance, reflected in the old and extensive debate about *size and democracy.* Robert A. Dahl and Edward R. Tufte, among others, took up the strands found in traditional political philosophy and asked "How large should a political system be in order to facilitate rational control by its citizens?" (Dahl and Tufte 1973: 1) and "What is the appropriate political unit for expressing one's identity as a member of a community" (Dahl and Tufte 1973: 3) in times of increasing complexity and diversity in an urbanizing and globalizing world? Whereas "size" can substantively be defined as total area, absolute population, population density and distribution, Dahl and Tufte also add types and the level of representation and government as well as procedural dimensions to their equation. While small units (regions, states, cities, towns, neighborhoods) do facilitate strong grass-roots democracy via direct citizen participation and a sense of individual efficacy, are they always capable of handling all problems, or is this not easier achieved in metropolitan areas, united states or a world federation (see also Fig. 1)? But what meaning would be left for democracy then, if it were reduced to voting in these larger units? Can "democracies with a high degree of autonomy or sovereignty [...] survive in a world of great interdependence?" (Dahl and Tufte 1973: 2). Back then, the authors' empirical approach, a comparative analyses of a number of countries, offered no clear answer to these theoretical questions, as they found that "[n]o single type or size of unit is optimal for achieving the twin goals of citizen effectiveness and system capacity" and "[i]n the extreme case, a citizen could be maximally effective in a system of minimal capacity for dealing with major issues (e.g. international violence) or minimally effective in a system of maximal capacity for dealing with major issues" (Dahl and Tufte 1973: 138). In the end, Dahl and Tufte demanded that "[i]n order to catch up with the problem of the complex polity, it seems, democratic theory must (among other things) help one to decide, according to democratic or other acceptable criteria of political excellence, the optimal number of units, their characteristics, similarities, and differences, the nature of a good political life in each type of unit, and the proper relationships among them" (Dahl and Tufte 1973: 142). More than forty years after their seminal publication, these questions still linger on and, as mentioned, translate into research on community participation and local self-administration, a suitable design of constituencies, representation in and control of transnational and international unions, and many other aspects (see e.g. Denters et al. 2014).

Empirical comparative research on authoritarianism, however, does usually not look to questions of the complexity of the modern polity. Analyses are still mostly anchored at the level of the nation state and the top echelons of political power structures. **[18]** This is rather surprising, since especially autocracies have the tendency to distinguish between different tiers of the political system, which are then related to different principles and degrees of inclusion into collectively binding decision making. For instance, whereas the national political leadership is unchallenged and inaccessible, and its decisions determinate, modern variants of output oriented "adaptive authoritarianism" often especially rely on local (sometimes experimental) adjustments of policies, including different forms of participation by the 'affected' parts of the population. It could therefore easily be assumed that the more local the perspective, the more opportunities for individual participation would arise, i.e. the more inclusive politics should become, even in autocracies. This is, for instance, vividly described for the People's Republic of China (see e.g. Ahlers 2014; He and Thøgersen 2010; Schubert and Ahlers 2012) and Russia (see e.g. Moser 2015, forthcoming). More research that goes beyond the national level **[19]** in the study of autocracies and authoritarianism is needed to test this hypothesis.

[18] Most often it is institutional change at this level that captures the attention of comparative studies of political regimes. For what are regarded as modern types of authoritarian regimes or political subsystems it is, for example, acknowledged that rulers have been able to establish structures of rule that outlived their founders and that led to institutionalized forms of leadership transition, as is documented for cases such as China, Saudi-Arabia, Russia, Iran and some cases in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa.

[19] Moreover, this may even go both ways, sub- and supra-national, as there is an emerging body of research pointing towards an "international cooperation of authoritarian regimes"; see, for example, Erdmann et al. 2013.

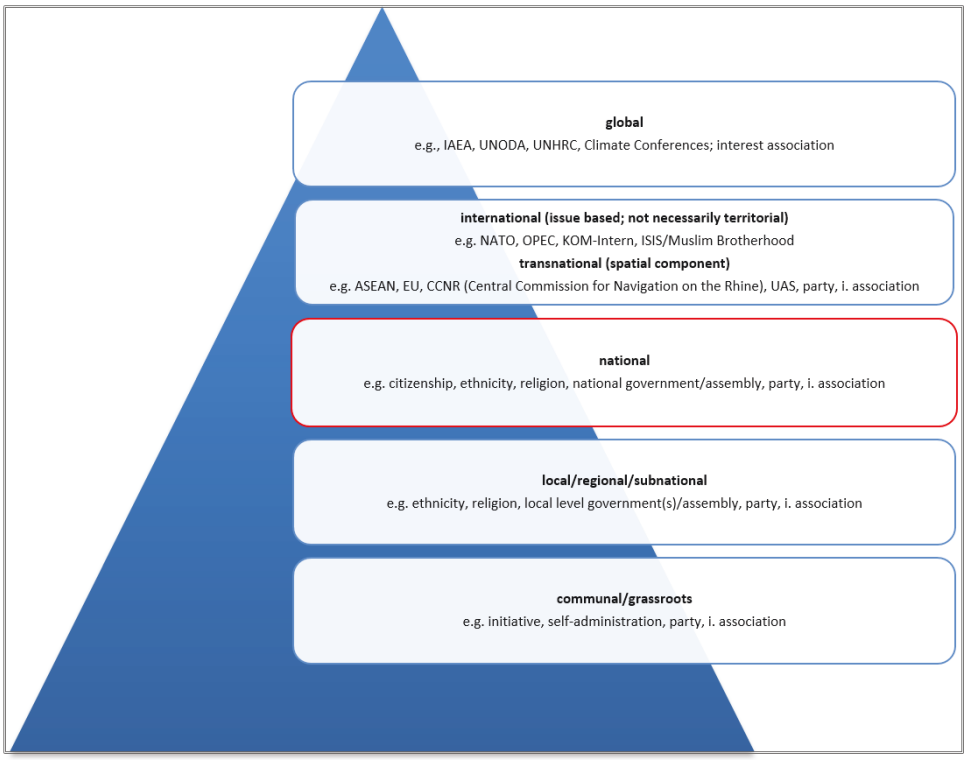

Figure 1: Exemplary levels of the polity with relevance for collectively binding decision making, and related categories and organizations of inclusion

Without claiming to present a complete list, we suggest that a study of different levels of the polity should be open to accommodate any institutional configuration in which collectively binding decision making happens, for example, at the grassroots community, regional, trans-regional and trans-boundary, national, international and global level. Important questions to be asked in each case should include:

» What is decided upon and why?

» Who is included into the decision-making process, on what basis, and in what way, i.e. in a public or a performance role? (e.g. form of representation; direct or indirect election into performance roles, etc.)

» How, and with what effect are decisions taken? (e.g. majority overrules minorities; experts overrule "non-knowledgeable" voters/majorities; collective overrules individual integrity, or vice versa; law overrules elections/referenda/majorities/protest, or vice versa – see also below)

In a general perspective, a core question will certainly be: How do autocracies deal with the control/effectiveness bipolarity built into a differentiation of levels of decision making. Having plural levels of decision making always involves a loss of control po-

tential for higher levels which is usually welcome in democracies (think of the "subsidiarity principle") but might be problematic in autocracies. On the other hand, a plurality of levels seems to promise a higher effectiveness for the realization of policies, based on the ability of more adequate local adjustment: something with appeal for autocracies as long as they try to win legitimacy by the claim of being more effective than democracies.

3.2 HORIZONTAL DIFFERENTIATION OF SUBSYSTEMS AND THE PLURALITY OF ACCESS POINTS FOR INCLUSION

Looking at the vertical differentiation of levels helps us to transgress the limitation to the nation state level in research on political regimes, but it still rests on an understanding of inclusion as access to and representation in formal – and one may say, conventional – institutions of ultimate decision making, usually "the legislative" and "the executive". But there are more, and more complex structures internal to a political system that should be taken into account. In close connection with opening up in close connection for the existence of multilevel variation, we also need to identify and describe precisely relevant political subsystems and other elements of *horizontal differentiation*.

In the classical understanding of horizontal differentiation of the political system we distinguish political subsystems, which comprise party politics, government and public administration, and the public sphere ('Öffentlichkeit') (Cf. Luhmann 2002). Furthermore, we find organizations such as the military, and, more loosely connected, social movements (see Fig. 2). In authoritarian systems membership in parties and mass organizations is often very important. Forms of inclusion into each of these entities can be meticulously supervised.

We will only briefly discuss horizontal subsystems here, with special regard to comparative research interested in the bipolarity of authoritarianism and democracy:

The possibility and characteristics of inclusion via party membership and mass organizations. It has to be examined whether in historical and contemporary one-party regimes, party membership is really obligatory (for performance roles), and how important and effective it is for political inclusion. Interestingly enough, in known communist/socialist regimes, party membership can at the same time foster elitist and exclusive structures. The Communist Party of China, for instance, has shown how membership can be ideologically – actually functionally – modified, as it now even welcomes private entrepreneurs and claims to represent them. **[20]** Authoritarian regimes usually also seek penetration of society through other and obligatory mass organizations, such as youth leagues or trade unions. On the opposite side, democracies seem not to rely to the same degree on (freely chosen) membership in political parties, as, besides the complex processes internal to parties and the party system, there exist further milieus (publics) with relevance for political agenda setting and decision making. In democratic systems, privileges for party members somehow conflict with the universality of

[20] See, for example, Dickson 2008. In general, see especially Heberer's recent and very thorough reflections on the concept of representation and its application to and in China, Heberer 2016.

inclusion into possibilities of participation and therefore they often try not to institutionalize such privileges to a degree where it becomes a principle of exclusion (look, for example, at the organization of primariy elections in the US).

Inclusion into administration via extended client and secondary performance roles. **[21]** In modern societies, it seems, access to performance roles in the administration as well as interaction with these roles from the perspective of public roles (for public administration they are 'clients') is increasing, while at the same time the differentiation and asymmetry of these two role types becomes less pronounced. This applies to the general structures of administrative communication as well as the participation in specific processes, for instance, via deliberative practices (see e.g. Dryzek 2006). Interestingly enough, this seems to be a dynamic that is largely independent of the political context, i.e. the regime type, and a trend that is detectable around the globe, as self-descriptions and the repertoire of modern administration become similar (see e.g. Pollitt and Bouckaert 2004; Treutner 1994).

Inclusion via trans-regional and trans-national networks and organizations. In some cases, there exist trans-regional and trans-national networks and organizations that may have distinct relevance for collectively binding decision making and for the distribution of public goods, but may be in conflict with other established institutions of the political system. They can take, for instance, the form of a "parallel/grey state", as it has been described for the Muslim brotherhood, (see e.g. Roy 2013) - and one might think of Catholic organizations such as 'Opus Dei' or the Jesuit order as other prominent examples.

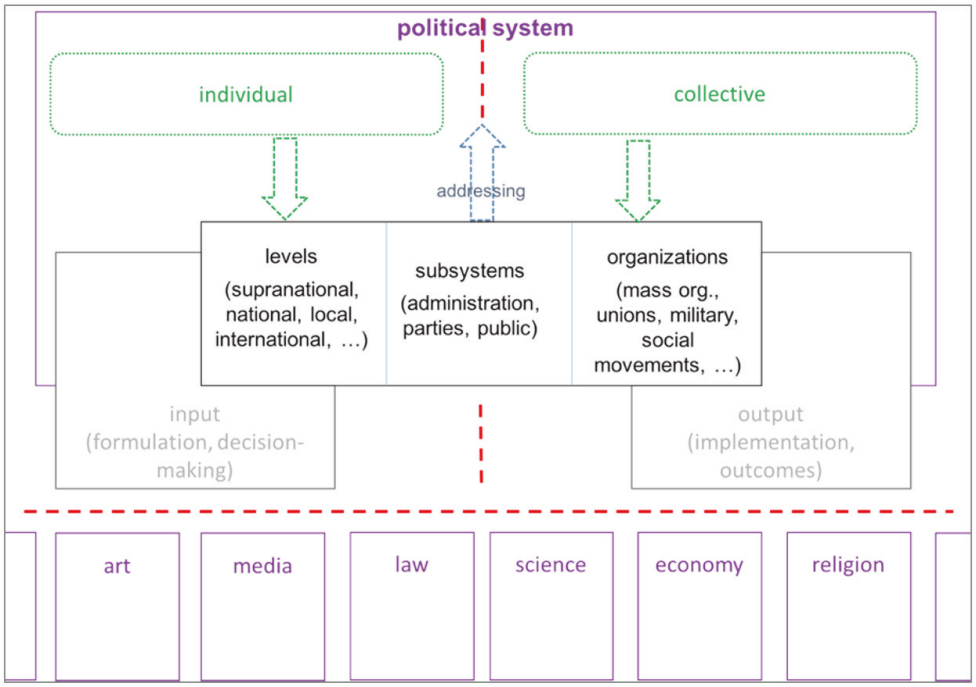

Figure 2: Inclusion points and patterns in the political system and its sub-systems

[21] Secondary performance roles are perfomance roles – temporary or partly – assumed by laymen/amateur or non-professionals. They can also be defined as activist alternatives to pure public roles, see Stichweh 2016a, Ch. 1.

Inclusion via social movements. Social movements can encompass participatory publics or outright protest through formal channels (e.g. debate, petitioning) or informal, even illegal, means (violent protest, riots, occupation). The potential for inclusion that takes the form of an extra-parliamentary and somehow even extra-legal claim or corrective, again, seems to be a paradigmatic context for studying traits of democratic or authoritarian politics.

The further virtualization of inclusion through the increasing and increasingly autonomous relevance of "public opinion". The virtualization of inclusion, as well, is a tendency that can be observed largely independent of the regime type. Usually relevant for the anticipation of election results in democratic contexts, traditional and new (social) media debates and other representations of public opinion gain momentum also in authoritarian politics, as a means of information gathering, a feedback mechanism, and for indirect agenda setting. This is especially true for regimes that constantly fear stability eroding opposition and are thus interested in acting at least partially responsive to public demands (see e.g. Wang 2008). The extreme prominence of public surveys, for instance in US and, although to a lesser degree, European politics, as well as the massive – and recently much more than ever outward-oriented – efforts of political control of public debate and media in authoritarian contexts (e.g., in particular, in China, Singapore, Russia, Egypt, Saudi Arabia) (see e.g. Diamond et al. 2016), seem to be interesting starting points for research in this regard.

CONCLUSION

Classifying political regimes remains a crucial, yet quite complex endeavor in world society. But, in tandem with the seeming 'return of authoritarianism' or at least the resistance and reinforcement of authoritarian claims to rule, what is often neglected is the global career of political inclusion.

We therefore critically revisited the analytical distinction of political regimes and proposed an alternative that allows for extensive investigations inside and beyond the boundaries of the nation state unit. After introducing an approach to political regime bipolarity that rests on value patterns in modern political systems, we have suggested a closer analysis through tracing different forms of political inclusion and its evolution in both democracies and autocracies. At the same time, we have argued that both democratic and authoritarian traits can co-exist in one and the same political system.

The article did not provide causal explanations why types of autocratic regimes came into being and persist. Also, we do not attempt to advance authoritarian forms of political inclusion as full-fledged alternatives to democracy, but we claim that their critical comparative assessment will contribute to a more complete understanding of modern polities and politics and their dynamics. Altogether, we tend to see paradoxes and oscillations between two poles of a political space in today's world society. The clearest divisions seem to exist between political inclusion that is based on individuality versus one that is conditioned by social categories or understood collectively – an observation that has yet to be corroborated by further studies – and this dimension is complemented by the distinction of universal inclusion into public rules and selective or universal inclusion into performance roles which again correlates with the distinction of democracy and authoritarianism.

While our proposals regarding the distinction between democracy and authoritarianism probably appear simplified compared to those proposed by the usual regime research literature, our suggestions for empirical analyses do not promise simplicity. Quite to the contrary, they imply a thorough understanding of the political system, its (historical) semantics of belongingness and citizenships as semantics of inclusion, its institutionalized value patterns, and finally the different levels of the polity and political subsystems. We believe that these explorations represent a fruitful undertaking, not only in terms of encouraging illuminating empirical analyses, but also for furthering theoretical acuity of research on political system bifurcation and political evolution in world society.

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