

Book Review

Knowledge and Innovation as Key Drivers for Democracy Advancement: *Global Quality of Democracy as Innovation Enabler. Measuring Democracy for Success,* by David F. J. Campbell¹

Democracy is a term often used lightly. Therefore it is reasonable to every so often reinvestigate where its stands, what it stands for, and in how many shades it exists.

Global Quality of Democracy as Innovation Enabler, Measuring Democracy for Success, is a product of a lifetime of interest and almost a decade-long research into the topic, undertaken by the author, David F. J. Campbell, a Vienna-based political scientist. As such, it represents a global and up-to-date view on democracy and its quality, as well as its potential.

This comprehensive analysis attempts to answer the governing research question *How to conceptualize and measure democracy and quality of democracy in a global comparison?* (1)

Moreover, the author also ponders further developments of the quality of democracy, by referring to democracy as an “innovation enabler”: *How does the quality of democracy act and play in favor of enabling innovation?* (2)

Democracy Is in the Details

Campbell’s belief is that without developing precise and up-to-date measurement tools, advancement of theories and concepts of democracy will be hindered. Thus when developing his own macro model, he thoroughly reassesses previous attempts at measuring democracy integrating them in his vision. His scope of interest is global, his approach eclectic.

¹ Campbell, David F. J. (2019). *Global Quality of Democracy as Innovation Enabler. Measuring Democracy for Success*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-72529-1>

His empirical macro model samples 160 countries over a period of 15 years (2002–2016). As such, this model takes into account more than 90% of the world's population. What is more, this analysis is referring not only to democracies, but semi- and non-democracies as well. It is Campbell's belief that a global perspective is necessary for understanding democracy, its quality and development. Starting from the 6 data sources out of which he is deriving 13 indicators, the author is using Freedom House, Heritage Foundation, Fraser Institute, World Economic Forum, World Bank as well as his own calculations on the peaceful political power shifts.

The author's fresh take on how democracy should be measured, primarily based on existing indicators, namely "three dimensional", "four-dimensional", and "quadruple structural" conceptualizations of democracy extends them to a next level of inquiry. In his conceptual framework of analysis, Campbell refers to a *Quintuple-Dimensional Structure of Democracy and Quality of Democracy*, thus identifying the following basic dimensions as relevant for comprehending and critically reflecting upon democracy: freedom, equality, control, sustainable development, and political self-organization. The penultimate and ultimate dimensions are making his design stand out from the classical conceptions of democracy.

According to Campbell, government-opposition cycles (political swings) are a pivotal manifestation of self-organizing within a democracy. Peaceful alternation of political power enables its further evolvement. The book refers to democracy and the quality of democracy discourses, but also cross-refers with discourses on knowledge, sustainable development, and innovation. Campbell understands growth as a threefold development: of society, democracy, and economy. For him, sustainable development relates crucially with economic growth, but more so with economic development.

The comparison undertaken by Campbell represents an imposing account on the current status of development of democracies worldwide. Integrating ecological and civil society aspects, the author aims to both promote analytical pluralism, and to elude any misinterpretations or operationalizations of his models at hand. He demonstrates how existing models are not sufficient and that it takes an extra mile to render understanding of democracy sensitive for the global context. Innovative in his approach, this open-minded author sees his investigation as a work in progress that should contribute to future research and proposes several paths to follow in fields uncharted as one of innovation studies.

For Future Research: Hypotheses Emerged from Explorative Research Design

Suggesting that research into “democracy (seen) as innovation enabler” is traversing uncharted lands, the author names this endeavor a “new analytical territory”. Thus he proclaims his analysis explorative. Without having any (detailed) ex-ante hypotheses, several engrossing hypotheses emerged from his intensive research. Openly inviting the debate on so-called *output-propositions*, for the future research (among others), he proposes the following:

Comprehensive democracy measurement in global comparison is already possible (Campbell, 2017, p. 319). What is new about this proposition is that indicators and data available publicly at the present time render this endeavor achievable on a truly global level, wherein not only democracies, but also non-democracies and semi-democracies are to be taken into account. Such analysis is necessary, Campbell posits, for trying to understand the development of the quality of democracy. However, there are challenges. Not all the indicators (in all dimensions that are relevant for researching democracy) are of the same quality and many relevant data are still missing.

The understanding of democracy would, furthermore, benefit from fostering the practice to co-design theory and democracy measurement. This cross-disciplinary approach, very much in tune with the author’s understanding of science and his *Weltverständnis*, states that “democracy measurement informs theory of democracy and theory of democracy structures democracy measurement” (p. 316). In other words, conceptualizing and measurement of democracy are to be seen as parallel processes.

On the other hand, Campbell warns of the possibility that an “objective” comparison may “bias” a representative statement. His claim (or rather “concern”) here is that *the specific design per se may affect the interpretation of quality of democracy* (p. 317). Following the example of comparison between India and China, he is showing that e.g. higher ranking in terms of political freedom does not necessarily guarantee more sustainable development of the society and economy. Conversely, if the design is used to compare Asia with Latin America, then the implication drawn may be to assert that political freedom is necessary for sustainable economic development.

The next hypothesis follows in a similar fashion. *Economic freedom accretes more rapidly than political freedom* (p. 319). As stated in the example of the aforementioned case study, economic freedom does not necessarily require political freedom. Moreover, there is a disturbing trend of stagnation of political freedom worldwide.

What follows is on the same page with regard to the idiosyncratic ambiguous democracy measurement practices.

Procedure for freedom measurement of Freedom House, a U.S.-based government-funded non-governmental organization, has methodic ramifications that create some challenges. Once a country (democracy) hits the top score, it is fixed and without the possibility to increase in the following years, should there be a positive development in terms of freedom. *This creates the so-called ceiling effect or cap for measurement* (p. 319).

Quoting Nordic countries as countries that have scored top on political freedom during the period of 2002–2016, the author points out that this success puts the benchmark already high, also in comparative terms. Nonetheless he warns that for the aforementioned reasons, tracking additional advancements in the said regard will pose a challenge.

Countries, according to Campbell, look more alike when it comes to economic freedom, and differ significantly more in terms of political freedom. “Economic freedom increases faster than political freedom” (p. 319). The ideology of a free economy seems to be assuming hegemonic supremacy in the contemporary world.

Among other idiosyncrasies, the author quotes a dissimilarity between countries with regard to income equality in comparison to gender equality (gender equality is on the rise). What is more, gender equality may perhaps be pushing income inequality to the sidelines of political attention. Data quality for income inequality, Campbell asserts, is poorer when contrasted with other indicators. The author calls here for a greater transparency and advancement of respective income distribution indicators such as Gini index measures.

Furthermore, *freedom seems to progress in the world faster than equality* (p. 323). The provocative questions Campbell raises here are whether equality was sacrificed for gains in freedom and what the meaning of progress is—should it only lead to more freedom, but not to more equality? Fearing that income inequality poses a serious challenge and bearing the potential to erode political freedom, Campbell emphasizes that more research on income equality is needed.

As far as environmental pollution is concerned, it seems that the situation with CO₂ emission has worsened during the examined period. The more advanced a country is, the more likely this country will pollute the Earth. Here, the so-called “social ecology” is a key issue, perhaps being crucial for the survival of humanity. The concept of democracy as an innovation enabler represents a pivotal component within the framework of the “Quadruple and Quintuple Helix innovation systems”, where the intention lies in transforming ecological

and environmental challenges into drivers for knowledge production, knowledge distribution and innovation (Campbell & Carayannis, 2017).

Yet another interesting insight is a tendency for more and more frequent political swings in the “real” democracies. The question here is whether a political system, where there is no political change, still can represent a democracy.

Last but not least, one of the final statements is that (by referring to the empirical macro model that was developed for this specific research design) neither the USA nor the European Union are expressing a clear lead in terms of quality of democracy. Paradoxically, it appears that it is not possible to convincingly make an uncontested claim regarding whose quality of democracy outperforms the other.

If the USA and European Union are not the global leaders in democracy, then one might wonder who is leading the way. Based on Campbell’s analysis, one certainty is that for the period being taken into account (2002–2016), the Nordic nations are leading as a world region that achieved the highest level of the quality of democracy in contemporary context. The author argues against critics who are labeling the Nordic states as a niche that profited from such an advantageous position. Instead, Campbell advocates for taking a closer look at and more systematic learning from the “Nordic Model”, which he marks as an important reference point for the further discourse development on the quality of democracy.

Knowledge as a Key Driver for Enabling Democracy

For Campbell, the quality of democracy is closely associated with knowledge democracy.

Knowledge democracy emphasizes the importance of knowledge and of innovation for the quality of democracy and the sustainable development of democracy, society and economy. The assertion is that higher levels of democracy are expected to produce also knowledge democracies. *Democracy as Innovation Enabler* entails political pluralism and diversity of knowledge. Advanced economies are driven by knowledge and innovation. For knowledge democracy, of course, education and higher education (tertiary education) do matter: “*But tertiary education has certainly qualities of and for sustainable development. Tertiary education also supports the characteristics of a ‘knowledge democracy’ and refers to an underlying ‘dimension of knowledge’*” (Campbell, 2019, p. 174).

Moreover, Campbell emphasizes *art-based innovation, innovation culture, and multi-level innovation with universities and sciences and arts* (p. 61).

Who Should Read?

This reading presents a comprehensive summary of the current state of democracy worldwide. It invites both academic researchers and practitioners alike. It gives teachers, researchers, policy-makers, innovation thinkers, and problem-solvers different sets of tools and relevant data for implementing decisions and solutions in their respective practices.

The book is innovative in both its approach and its content. The author's personal touch and experimentative spirit are noticeable from the very beginning.

How elusive democracy is, Campbell vividly points out by starting the book with his own "Poem on Democracy" in a meta-reflective manner and by openly asking himself and the reader: "*What is democracy?*" (p. xix) The poem is followed by translations into several languages, symbolically stating how much a pluralistic view is needed, and how every single interpretation differs, even from the point of visual layouting.

Lastly, Campbell makes obvious how much the fresh views and methods to approach the matter at hand are needed, when in the very last paragraph of his conclusion he calls upon artists and the like to express their understanding of the quality of democracy through their means, in the ways that can contribute to understanding and advancing of the quality of democracy. Let us hope that they read this title and proceed accordingly.

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