Bracketing Democracy:
A comparison of frames used to demarcate democracy

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Abstract
This paper proposes a framework to analyze the varying understanding of democratic developments. Based on the theory of frame-analysis, it distinguishes six brackets within which democratic developments can be interpreted, namely on the side of the electorate, the limitations of suffrage and capabilities of the electorate; taking the election process, fairness of elections and the restraints elections pose on government; and regarding elected officials, their promotion of liberal democracy and of social democracy.

This framework is applied to understand the nature of international rankings of local democracy and to compare the varying framing of developments in Polish democracy in reports from international organizations and in newspaper articles comparing those in Sweden and Poland.

The conclusion is that democratic developments do indeed vary enormously and that this explains the difference in assessments of, among others, the democratic developments in Poland.

Keywords: democracy, framing, Poland, international ranking

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