# Politics and democracy in microstates. A comparative analysis of the effects of size on contestation and inclusiveness

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# CHAPTER FOUR

## *Research Design*

## Concepts, Methods, and Case Selection

1. Introduction: the Need for a New Approach

As described in chapter 2, in recent decades a variety of publications have highlighted the statistical association between size and democracy, and have endeavored to find an explanation for this correlation. Until now, this quest has however not resulted in a satisfactory or broadly endorsed theory, and in this sense academic thinking has not progressed much beyond the point of speculation. Since a large part of especially the sociological literature on size now perceives smallness to impede on democratic development, these theories cannot be referred to in explaining the statistical link between size and democracy. In similar fashion, as chapter 3 has demonstrated, whereas the case study-literature on the characteristics of politics in the individual microstates confirms that these countries do have democratic institutions and structures, their practical, informal, and more substantive political dynamics often diverge markedly from the democratic ideal. In this respect, the political systems of (non-European) microstates in many ways resemble those of larger new democracies.

As discussed in the conclusion of the previous chapter, two alternative explanations of democracy in microstates can be conceived of that do not rely on the 'classical' literature on size and democracy. On the one hand, the variable of size can be deemed to overlap with other, democracy-stimulating factors such as religion, geography, colonial history, or international politics. On the other hand, it could be argued that the statistical link is exclusively based on formal indicators of democracy, and that microstates – like other third wave-countries – are characterized by a discrepancy between formally democratic structures on the one hand, and a more antidemocratic political environment on the other hand. If one thing is clear however, more statistical analyses on the relationship between size and democracy are not going to bring academic theorizing in this field any further, and will almost certainly not yield a convincing explanation of this link. As a consequence, the present study explicitly aims to address this puzzle from a new angle.

In the present chapter, the contours and substance of this new approach are outlined. Whereas chapters 2 and 3 have already explored a large part of the academic literature on this study's key concepts of size and democracy, this chapter commences with a further conceptualization and operationalization of these terms. Subsequently, the theoretical model of this dissertation is sketched out and discussed, and the expectations that follow from the literature are once more presented. This is followed by a discussion of the qualitative and exploratory research method that this study employs, and the various components that it entails. After that, section five discusses the case study-methodology of this study, and devotes further attention to the characteristics of both within-case and cross-case analyses. The subsequent sixth section deals with various issues that relate to the selection of cases for in-depth analyses, and explains and justifies the selection of four microstates for qualitative analysis in the chapters to come. The chapter ends with a conclusion, in which the main points are summarized, and the structure of the four case study-chapters is outlined.

## 2. Concepts: Defining and Operationalizing Size

Since at least the 1950s, an academic debate has emerged about the conceptualization of state size. The size of nations can be measured on the basis of multiple variables, among which population, territory, economic indicators, or military capacity. In addition to highlighting the existence of multiple 'size'-variables, this scholarly debate has also focused on the question of categorization; i.e. how a country should rank on these variables in order to be for example classified as a small state or microstate. As Charles Taylor points out in this respect, countries can score markedly dissimilar on the different size-variables, which encumbers attempts to classify them according to their size (1969: 105).[1] As a consequence of this problem, and the fact that no 'natural' break-off points in each of the three variables under investigation can be detected, Taylor proposes a statistical solution to his puzzle about the definition of a microstate (1969: 102).[2] By integrating three size-variables, Taylor

[1] Taylor refers to the examples of Hong Kong, which is small in area but much larger in terms of population and GDP-size, and Namibia, which has a large territory but a very small population.

[2] In fact, two possible solutions are proposed in the article; the first is to use statistical thresholds such as medians, quartiles, and deciles as cut-off points (Taylor 1969: 102). For example, a researcher could decide that all countries that fall within the first quartile of the population distribution of all countries can be considered microstates (Taylor 1969: 105). A second option would be to "employ all three dimensions simultaneously" by standardizing the scores of the three variables (ibid.). In a resulting composite dimension, the effects of the three variables would all be represented.

eventually creates an index in which a total number of 74 micro-territories can be separated from 107 non-micro-territories (Taylor 1969: 110-111).

The integration of various size-variables to arrive at a composite measure or index of state size has been proposed by other authors as well (e.g. Downes 1988; Crowards 2002). In contrast to Taylor's observations, Andrew Downes and Tom Crowards argue that the three variables of population, territory, and gross domestic product are closely interrelated (Downes 1988: 87-88), and that natural break-off points in the ranking of countries on these variables can be identified (Crowards 2002: 145-149).[3] In spite of their validity and suitability however, these proposed composite measures have not been widely adopted by other authors, who mostly stick to only one of the size-variables. In this light, population size has been by far the most often applied measure of size, and especially in analyses that seek to examine the influence of state size on politics. Whereas several authors are not really clear about their specific definition of size (Benedict 1967a; Dahl and Tufte 1973; Dommen and Hein 1985; Clarke and Payne 1987; Alesina and Spolaore 2005), and others use a combination of population and territorial size (Ott 2000; Congdon Fors 2007), at present population size unquestionably remains the most frequently used standard.

As Taylor argues, the choice about the variable according to which state size is defined should be primarily guided by the theoretical criteria of the researcher (1969: 116-117). As mentioned before, state size has not only been employed as an explanatory variable in relation to politics and democracy, but also to explain variations in other areas. For studies that aim to analyze the effects of size on economic success or international political behavior for instance, definitions of size according to respectively economic indicators and military capacity may be more appropriate. Since the primary goal of the present dissertation is to examine the influence of size on politics and democracy, the conceptualization of the state size-variable should be consistent with the theoretical assumptions that underpin this relationship. As the discussion of the literature in chapters 2 and 3 has revealed, most of the existing publications on the influence of smallness on politics and democracy depart from a definition of size according to population figures. In addition, the statistical link between size and democracy that was presented in the introduction, and that has been

[3] Just like Taylor, Downes proposes the solution of selecting a statistical divisor to classify countries according to size. Crowards suggests that a country may be defined as falling into a certain size-category when it is classified as such for at least two of three size-variables (Crowards 2002: 149). A subsequent cluster analysis confirms the existence of five 'size' categories of nations, and creates what Crowards argues to be a non-arbitrary classification of discrete and mutually exclusive groups of countries (Crowards 2002: 173).

confirmed by various scholars in recent decades, is also based on population size. As a consequence of these facts and circumstances, in the present study state size will be conceptualized on the basis of population numbers.

*2.1. The Operationalization of Size*

As a result of the fact that the current study aims to investigate the effects of state size on politics and democracy, for the purpose of case selection a classification has to be made that separates microstates from other states. As already mentioned, such a classification is hampered by the fact that 'natural' cut-off points on the continuum of population size are hard to find, which renders a decision about any cut-off point inevitably random and therefore hard to defend. All countries in the world can be ranked on their population size, but seeing that there are no a priori reasons why a small increase of decrease in population size would result in different political dynamics, any boundary is arbitrary and capricious. That being said, this does of course not mean that there can be no arguments in support of a certain population threshold, and there are a number of motivations and justifications for locating the cut-off point at 250.000 inhabitants, as the current study does.

Over the years, the population size that is referred to in defining a small state or microstate has been decreasing, due to an increase in the number of small states, and "a growing recognition that the economic characteristics of small size apply more comprehensively to a narrower range of very small countries" (Sutton and Payne 1993: 581-582; cf. Crowards 2002: 145). Whereas for example Kuznets defined small states as having less than ten million inhabitants (1960: 14), Ott looks at countries with populations less than 1.5 million (2000: 18), and Clarke and Payne locate the threshold at one million people (1987: xvii). In addition to the category of small states, several scholars also pay attention to defining microstates, which generally have under a million inhabitants. Diamond and Tsalik (1999: 117-118) and Carsten Anckar (2008a: 440), for example, define a microstate as having less than half a million inhabitants, whereas Hadenius (1992: 125), Ott (2000: 18) and Clague et al. (2001: 25) locate the cut-off point at a population size of 100.000. There is thus no consensus in the academic literature on an appropriate cut-off point to distinguish microstates from small states, and small states from large states.

In the process of selecting a practicable cut-off point in population size to identify the microstates, several factors can be taken into account. To begin with, it would be preferable to have enough cases included in the microstate-group to be able to meaningfully compare this group with the group of other states, and in

order to facilitate the generalization of the findings. In addition, the generalizability of the findings is also enhanced if the microstates differ on as many background variables as possible, since this entails that the effects of size can be more easily distinguished from those of other variables. Thus, a microstate-threshold of 25.000 inhabitants would not be feasible, since only three states would meet this criterion, which are all located in the same region of the world.[4] By contrast, a threshold of 250.000 is clearly more practicable, since it results in a group of twenty-one microstates which are spread over four world regions. The statistics presented in the introduction of this dissertation moreover reveal that the association between smallness and democracy is also strongly significant at the boundary of 250.000 people (see table 1.1). As a third element that should be taken into account, several scholars have pointed to the existence of so-called 'roof effects', in the sense that smallness only has an influence on politics below a certain population figure. According to Hadenius, this 'roof' is located at 100.000 inhabitants, whereas Carsten Anckar believes it to exist at half a million inhabitants (Hadenius 1992: 125; Anckar 2008a: 440). Since a threshold of 250.000 is situated almost in between these two estimates, it can be deemed fruitful in this respect as well. Finally, it is also worth noting that this cut-off point also results in an analysis of exactly the countries that Lijphart has chosen to exclude (1999: 52).

Now that a population threshold has been selected and motivated, it has to be decided what a 'state' is. Whereas earlier publications on size and politics have also analyzed non-independent territories and dependencies (Benedict 1967a; Dommen and Hein 1985; Ott 2000), such a decision necessarily involves hard-to-defend distinctions between the territories that are analyzed and those that are not. Furthermore, at least part of the academic literature suggests that full sovereignty (including membership of international organizations) has a significant effect on the likelihood of democratic governance. As a consequence, the current study applies the scope condition of United Nations-membership to distinguish between independent and non-independent polities. It should be noted that this scope condition results in the exclusion of the Vatican, which is often seen as an independent country, but is at present the only permanent observer state of the United Nations. Since the Vatican has no native population, a completely unique and incomparable political structure, and can be seen as an absolute theocracy (cf. Murphy 1974), I however do not regard this exclusion as problematic.

[4] These are Nauru, Tuvalu, and Palau, which are all located in the Pacific.

*Table 4.1: List of Small Countries by Population, Area, and Regime Type*[5]

| Country | Inhabitants | Area (in km2) | Democracy? |
|---|---|---|---|
| Nauru | 9.322 | 21 | Yes |
| Tuvalu | 10.544 | 26 | Yes |
| Palau | 20.956 | 459 | Yes |
| Monaco | 30.539 | 2 | Yes |
| San Marino | 31.817 | 61 | Yes |
| Liechtenstein | 35.236 | 160 | Yes |
| St. Kitts and Nevis | 50.314 | 261 | Yes |
| Marshall Islands | 67.182 | 181 | Yes |
| Dominica | 72.969 | 751 | Yes |
| Andorra | 84.825 | 468 | Yes |
| Antigua and Barbuda | 87.884 | 443 | Yes |
| Seychelles | 89.188 | 455 | Yes |
| Kiribati | 100.743 | 811 | Yes |
| St. Vincent and the Grenadines | 103.869 | 389 | Yes |
| Tonga | 105.916 | 747 | No |
| Federated States of Micronesia | 106.836 | 702 | Yes |
| Grenada | 108.419 | 344 | Yes |
| St. Lucia | 161.557 | 616 | Yes |
| São Tomé and Príncipe | 179.506 | 964 | Yes |
| Samoa | 193.161 | 2.831 | Yes |
| Vanuatu | 224.564 | 12.189 | Yes |
| *Barbados* | *286.705* | *430* | *Yes* |
| *Iceland* | *311.058* | *103.000* | *Yes* |
| *Bahamas* | *313.312* | *13.880* | *Yes* |
| *Belize* | *321.115* | *22.966* | *Yes* |
| *Maldives* | *394.999* | *298* | *No* |
| *Brunei* | *401.890* | *5.765* | *No* |
| *Malta* | *408.333* | *316* | *Yes* |
| *Suriname* | *491.989* | *163.820* | *Yes* |
| *Luxembourg* | *503.302* | *2.586* | *Yes* |
| *Cape Verde* | *516.100* | *4.033* | *Yes* |
| *Solomon Islands* | *571.890* | *28.896* | *No* |
| *Montenegro* | *661.807* | *13.812* | *Yes* |
| *Equatorial Guinea* | *668.225* | *28.051* | *No* |
| *Bhutan* | *708.427* | *38.394* | *No* |
| *Guyana* | *744.768* | *241.969* | *Yes* |
| *Djibouti* | *757.074* | *23.200* | *No* |
| *Comoros* | *794.683* | *2.235* | *No* |
| *Qatar* | *848.016* | *11.586* | *No* |
| *Fiji* | *883.125* | *18.274* | *No* |

[5] Data on the number of inhabitants and territorial size have been retrieved from the CIA World Factbook (2011). The Freedom House-benchmark of 'electoral democracy' has been applied to distinguish democracies from non-democracies (2012).

The joined application of the size-threshold and the condition of UN-membership results in a group of twenty-one microstates, which together with all other countries with less than one million inhabitants have been presented in table 4.1. The countries in the table have been subdivided into four groups of a roughly equal size, being countries with less than 100.000 inhabitants, countries with between 100.000 and 250.000 inhabitants, countries with between 250.000 and half a million citizens, and countries with between half a million and one million citizens. In order to distinguish them from the group of microstates, countries belonging to one of the latter two categories have been presented in italics. From the table, it can be seen that the number and proportion of non-democratic states grows as the population size increases; whereas no undemocratic states exist within the group of less than 100.000 people, among the countries with between half a million and one million people more than half are non-democracies. The table therefore provides an additional incentive for locating the cut-off point of population size at 250.000 inhabitants.

## 3. Concepts: Defining and Operationalizing Democracy

Democracy can literally be translated as 'rule by the people' (Held 2006: 21). A democracy can therefore be defined as a political system in which 'the people' are sovereign, in the sense that they rule themselves. Hence, it follows that governance in a democracy should be based on the preferences and interests of the people, and that a democratic system should therefore be "responsive to (…) its citizens" (Dahl 1971: 2). Since democracy has become the most fashionable and universally appreciated system of government however, almost all countries in the world now claim to have democratic governments.[6] Yet, the extent to which different regimes around the world are considered to be democratic by scholars or by other countries differs markedly, and this undermines efforts to establish a universally acceptable definition of democracy (Held 2006: 2-3). Whereas democracy is by now almost universally recognized as the best form of government, and while the number of democracies continues to expand progressively, it has become increasingly difficult to formulate a consistent and broadly accepted definition of the concept.[7]

[6] The exceptions are Brunei, Myanmar, Saudi Arabia, and Vatican City.

[7] The concept of democracy is actually among the most hotly disputed ones in political science (cf. Schmitter and Karl 1991; Collier and Levitsky 1997). Since it has been questioned in how far the term of democracy is applicable to new, third wave-democracies, the accusation of conceptual stretching has figured prominently in this debate (Collier and Mahon 1993: 850-851; Collier and Levitsky 1997: 430; cf. Sartori 1970: 1034, 1041; Goertz 2006: 70-72).

In the last decades of the twentieth century, the number and proportion of countries in the world with authoritarian forms of rule diminished rapidly. This development, which is most eminently discussed in Samuel Huntington's *The Third Wave* (1991), attracted widespread attention from both the academic community and politicians all over the world, and created a general sense of optimism with regard to the spread of democracy. As communism collapsed in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, the authoritarian governments of Latin America and Southern Europe suffered from legitimacy crises, and several autocratic East-Asian and sub-Sahara African nations entered phases of political liberalization, some scholars even argued that these events signaled the final triumph of the liberal democratic model of government over all its alternatives (Fukuyama 1992: 48). Whereas the concept of liberal democracy had originated in the Western world, and for long was believed to pertain to this part of the world almost exclusively,[8] many authors asserted that the third wave of democratization demonstrated the fallaciousness of this assumption, as countries with decidedly non-Western cultural backgrounds now appeared to make the transition towards democratic government as well. Thus emerged what Thomas Carothers refers to as the 'transition paradigm' (2002); the teleological belief that the countries in which authoritarian governments subsided were 'in transition' from authoritarianism to full-fledged liberal democratic government.

At the dawn of the new millennium, it became apparent that the initial optimism associated with the transition paradigm was unwarranted (O'Donnell 1994, 1996; Zakaria 1997; Diamond 2002; Levitsky and Way 2002). On the positive side, several third wave-countries, among which Costa Rica, Uruguay, Taiwan, and the Southern and Eastern European countries of Spain, Portugal, Greece, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia appeared to have successfully abandoned their authoritarian legacies and have made a definitive transition to democracy. For most of the Latin American, Asian, and African states however, this positive pattern did not materialize, and whereas some countries even slid back to outright authoritarianism (e.g. Russia, Nigeria, and Pakistan), most of them entered what Carothers calls 'the gray zone' between democracy and authoritarianism (Carothers 2002: 9).[9] It appears to be the case, therefore, that

[8] Before the start of the third wave, Japan and India were commonly seen as among the major and only exceptions to this general rule (cf. Sartori 1995: 101) .

[9] The emergence and growth of the group of countries that are neither democratic nor authoritarian has posed scholars of democracy with the question of how these cases should be classified. This problem becomes readily apparent when the number and variety of labels that have been used to refer to these cases is examined; whereas Zakaria (1997) talks about 'illiberal democracies', O'Donnell (1994) labels them 'delegative democracies', Diamond (2002) calls them 'hybrid regimes' or 'pseudo-democracies', Ware (1992) mentions them as 'elective dictatorships',

the third wave has at least partially ended in "the slow, bleeding death of a thousand subtractions" (Diamond 1999: 63).[10]

According to several authors (e.g. Linz 1997; Zakaria 1997), the fundamental problem with the institutionalization of democracy in non-Western settings can be found in the absence of a tradition of constitutionalism or a *Rechtsstaat* in these countries. These traditions were well-established and rooted in the countries of Western Europe already *before* the advent and introduction of democracy, and were never really distinguished from democratic procedures and institutions (Schmitter 1995: 16; Linz 1997: 118-119). In Latin American countries for example, such a spirit and tradition never really existed, which means that democratic institutions (in the form of free and fair elections) in these countries coexist with attitudes and practices that are more particular to this region of the world (and which according to many authors are not really democratic). Guillermo O'Donnell points to the coexistence of electoral practices with widespread particularism in the form of patron-client relationships in the Latin American political context (O'Donnell 1996: 40-41), and also highlights that, once elected, Latin American presidents are largely free to rule as they see fit and without constraints (so-called 'delegative democracy'; O'Donnell 1994). In summary therefore, the exportation of democratic procedures to new settings and contexts has not led to the paralleled exportation of a democratic 'spirit' or democratic norms of behavior to these places (Sartori 1995; Huber et al. 1997: 330-331).

According to O'Donnell, the proliferation of new regime types not only raises questions with regard to classification, but also demonstrates flaws in the way political scientists are used to study democracies and other regimes (O'Donnell 1996: 40). Whereas scholars have usually been focused on the observation of "highly formalized and complex organizations", according to O'Donnell the "extremely influential, informal, and sometimes concealed institution" of particularism remains obscured in this way (ibid.). In these new regimes, free and fair elections are continuously held largely due to "close international attention and wide reporting abroad of irregularities", O'Donnell stipulates, whereas the rest of the political system can be characterized as a "sea

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and Carothers (2002) distinguishes between 'feckless pluralism' and 'dominant-power polities'. In their seminal article *Democracy with Adjectives* (1997), David Collier and Steven Levitsky discuss the many (550) 'diminished subtypes' of the concept of democracy as they have been formulated over time, and examine the various strategies that can be pursued to deal with the 'new' third wave-regimes. In the conclusion of their article, the authors argue that the "excessive proliferation of new terms and concepts" should be avoided (Collier and Levitsky 1997: 451).

[10] It should be mentioned, however, that not everyone endorses this view. In fact, some authors have even found evidence of a fourth wave of democratization (Doorenspleet 2001).

of particularism and blurred boundaries" (ibid.). In addition to clientelism, these hybrid regimes may also be characterized by an "uneven playing field between government and opposition", in which the government assures electoral victories through manipulation, intimidation, and harassment of the opposition, journalists, or judges (Levitsky and Way 2002: 53). In such systems, the existence of free and fair elections "masks the reality of authoritarian domination" (Diamond 2002: 24).

Although they are almost never studied as such, the seventeen non-European microstates that are examined in the present chapter are new democracies as well. As a result, it can be questioned whether the political features and characteristics that scholars have observed in larger new democracies also play a large role in these microstates. This question is particularly germane in relation to some of the theories that have been discussed in the previous chapter, which by contrast envisage a higher quality of democracy in small settings. As a result, the newly democratic microstates may not to the same extent be plagued by the democracy-undermining and obstructing political characteristics of larger third wave-countries. On the other hand, as discussed in the preceding chapter, other scholars have argued that smallness promotes the development of particularistic relationships, which would mean that the newly democratic microstates are at best equally, at worst to a larger extent beset by these kinds of linkages between citizens and politicians. The analysis of the four microstates that follows in chapters four through eight will shed more light on this question.

The proliferation of new and ambiguous types of third wave-regimes, and the question of how these regimes should be classified in terms of their democratic quality, have accentuated an already-existing divide in the democracy-studying academic community, which boils down to a discussion about the specific attributes (or, in Sartori's words, intension (1970: 1041)) of the concept of democracy. In the academic, distinctions are often made between liberal versus procedural democracy, and between continuous versus dichotomous operationalizations of the concept. A long and influential tradition of academic literature assumes that democracy essentially entails the regular organization of free and fair elections. This conceptualization of democracy, which has been alluded to as the 'electoral', 'minimalist', or 'procedural' definition, does not envisage the protection of elementary freedoms, the availability of alternative sources of information, and the independence of the judiciary and media as defining characteristics of democracy, although these phenomena are often expected to transpire as a side-effect of free and fair

elections (Huntington 1991: 7; Przeworski 1999: 24).[11] According to scholars who employ a procedural definition of democracy, the conditions and requirements that are part of more extensive and demanding conceptions of democracy are essentially irrelevant, either because they are side-effects or variations of the electoral aspect of democracy, or because they do not belong to the domain of democracy in the first place (cf. Di Palma 1990: 15-16; Gurr et al. 1990: 83; Karl 1990: 2; Alvarez et al. 1996: 4; Przeworski et al. 1996).[12] Over the years, procedural conceptualizations of democracy have had many followers, who have sometimes added a number of conditions that relate to the particular circumstances under which elections should take place (Collier and Levitsky 1997: 434).[13]

Whereas the procedural definition of democracy has remained widely embraced, in recent decades attempts have been made to formulate a more demanding, compound definition of the concept, mostly referred to as *liberal democracy*. Until fairly recently, free and fair elections occurred almost exclusively in countries whose governments were also respectful of civil liberties, and the latter were accordingly mostly seen as a side-effect of the regular holding of elections (Zakaria 1997: 22-23). Over the last two decades however, it has become clear that many countries in Latin America, Africa, and Asia do continue to organize regular elections, but do not always (fully) respect

[11] The electoral definition has been employed in a number of seminal studies in the field of political science. In his seminal work *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*, Joseph Schumpeter for instance famously asserts that democracy can be seen as "that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote" (Schumpeter 1943: 269). In similar fashion, Seymour Martin Lipset defines democracy as "a political system which supplies regular constitutional opportunities for changing the governing officials" (Lipset 1959: 71). For Anthony Downs, finally, democracy can be conceived of as a political system in which "two or more parties compete in periodic elections for control of the government apparatus" (Downs 1957: 137)

[12] Mike Alvarez and his colleagues, for example, argue that: "[p]erusing the innumerable definitions, one discovers that democracy has become an altar on which everyone hangs his or her favorite ex voto. Almost all normatively desirable aspects of political, and sometimes even of social and economical, life are credited as definitional features of democracy: representation, accountability, equality, participation, dignity, rationality, security, freedom – the list goes on. Indeed, the set of really existing democracies under many definitions is empty. And from an analytical view, lumping all good things together is of little use" (1996: 4).

[13] Samuel Huntington, for example, stresses the requirement that suffrage rights should be extended to include all adult citizens, as he "defines a twentieth-century political system as democratic to the extent that its most powerful collective decision makers are selected through fair, honest, and periodic elections in which candidates freely compete for votes and in which virtually all the adult population is eligible to vote" (1991: 7). In similar fashion, Przeworksi and colleagues stress the presence of "an opposition that has some chance of winning office as a consequence of elections" as a precondition for democratic elections (1996: 49). Elklit and Svensson (1997), finally, focus on the specific meaning of the adjectives 'free and fair' when it comes to elections, and provide some benchmarks on the basis of which election observers can determine whether elections have indeed been free and fair.

civil rights and liberties (O'Donnell 1993, 1994; Diamond 1999: 27-31). As a consequence, a distinction was created between so-called *electoral* or *illiberal* democracies, that only live up to the conditions of procedural definitions of democracy, and *liberal* or *consolidated* democracies, in which civil rights and liberties are respected as well (Ware 1992: 133; Collier and Mahon 1993: 848-850; O'Donnell 1993: 1361; Bollen 1993: 1208-1209; Linz and Stepan 1996: 15; Diamond 1999: 10-13; Held 2006: 74-75). In the view of scholars who employ a liberal definition of democracy, the Schumpeterian, electoral notion of democracy places too much emphasis on the electoral element of democracy (which is referred to by Schmitter and Karl as the 'fallacy of electoralism'), while it largely disregards other characteristics that they feel should belong to a democratic political system (Schmitter and Karl 1991: 78; Diamond 1999: 9). In particular, these scholars assert that electoral conceptions of democracy place too little emphasis on the safeguarding and preservation of political rights and liberties, which they see as another pivotal element of democracy (Diamond 1999: 8-10).[14] Although the liberal conceptualization of democracy is thus clearly distinguishable from the electoral or procedural one, in the literature a plethora of definitions of liberal democracy can be found.

There are good arguments in favor and against both procedural and liberal definitions of democracy. On the one hand, it appears that uniting many features into one concept of democracy is of little use. Not only would it be theoretically incorrect to equate democracy with all that is good in the world, but it must also be stressed that doing so decreases the analytical value of the concept, as Alvarez and his coauthors correctly point out (1996: 4; cf. Huntington 1991: 11). If too many attributes are attached to the concept of democracy, there is a danger that research becomes tautological, since democracy cannot explain phenomena that are part of the concept itself. On the other hand, a minimalist definition of democracy also appears impracticable, because free and fair elections are meaningless if institutions like the judiciary or the media are politicized, or if real executive power is in the hands of a person or institution that cannot be held accountable. It should also be highlighted that the case study-literature principally implies that the classification of microstates as democracies essentially depends on the definition of this concept, since whereas virtually all

[14] Additionally, as Schmitter and Karl argue, these academics believe that the participation of citizens in a democracy should not be confined to casting a vote once in every four or five years, but should also involve opportunities for expressing opinions or exerting influence on the political process by means of other channels (Schmitter and Karl 1991: 78).

microstates do organize free and fair elections, their adherence to the conditions of liberal democracy often appears questionable.

Dahl's concept of polyarchy can be seen as an intermediate alternative between liberal and procedural democracy. Although it is often regarded as a procedural version of the concept (Diamond 2002: 21-22), Dahl's definition is definitely more extensive and demanding than the minimalist Schumpeterian notion that for example Przeworski and others have adopted, in the sense that a number of elementary freedoms are highlighted as attributes of the concept of polyarchy. For example, the first two of Dahl's conditions refer to the freedom of expression and the freedom of assembly, whereas Dahl's requirement of 'alternative sources of information' can be translated into the existence of a free press. Finally, the condition of 'institutions for making government policies depend on votes and other expressions of preference' alludes not only to the electability and accountability of the executive, but also to the existence of checks and balances between other political institutions.

In addition to the discussion about the definition (or conceptualization) of democracy, an extensive academic debate has emerged on the question of whether democracy should be seen as a dichotomous or as a continuous variable. This debate is somewhat related to the preceding discussion, in the sense that scholars who employ a procedural definition of democracy are usually more likely to divide the world in the two (dichotomous) categories of democracies and non-democracies, whereas academics who employ a liberal definition generally use more graded dimensions to classify their cases.[15] Such a graded measure allows scholars to distinguish between liberal democracies and illiberal, flawed, or pseudo-democracies, which are usually seen as in-between categories (Levitsky and Way 2002; Diamond 2002; Carothers 2002). In addition however, many of these authors also argue that democracy necessarily has to be a continuous measure, since it is always present or absent to a certain degree (Bollen and Jackman 1989: 616-619; Bollen 1990: 13-14; Coppedge and Reinicke 1990: 52; Elkins 2000: 299).[16]

[15] Samuel Huntington, for example, defends his choice for a procedural, dichotomous approach to democracy on the grounds that it "better serves the purpose of this study because our concern is with the transition from a nondemocratic regime to a democratic one" (1991: 11). Similar arguments in favor of a dichotomy can be retrieved in other studies that employ an electoral definition of democracy (Sartori 1987: 184; Alvarez et al. 1996: 4; Przeworski et al. 1996: 54; Doorenspleet 2001: 14-15).

[16] According to Kenneth Bollen, democracy must be thought of as a continuous variable since it is possible to rank groups of countries from democratic to non-democratic, which means that it is possible to distinguish between more and less democratic countries within both the groups of democracies and non-democracies (Bollen 1990: 13-14).

According to Giovanni Sartori, who is strongly in favor of a dichotomous approach to measure democracy, assessing levels of democracy on a continuous scale is a "stultifying" exercise in "degreeism", which is analytically invalid because democracy and non-democracy are contradictories (Sartori 1987: 184). Collier and Adcock, on the other hand, extensively examine and discuss the various justifications and motivations that have been used to defend both dichotomous and continuous operationalizations of democracy, and argue that generic claims for both alternatives are incomplete (Collier and Adcock 1999: 537).[17] Instead, the authors propose and suggest that the choice between dichotomous or continuous measures of democracy should be based on "specific arguments about the goals and context of research" (Collier and Adcock 1999: 561). In this light, Collier and Adcock argue, "research that is focused on democratization as a well-bounded event and on classical subtypes of democracy favors dichotomies" (Collier and Adcock 1999: 561-562). In light of these recommendations, such a measure will indeed be adopted in the current analysis, and Dahl's definition of polyarchy also envisages a dichotomous measure of democracy.

### *3.1. The Operationalization of Democracy*

On the basis of the considerations described above, in the present study I make use of Dahl's conceptualization of democracy as outlined in his landmark work *Polyarchy* (1971).[18] For a political system to be classified as a polyarchy, according to Dahl the following eight conditions have to be met (1971: 3):

1) Freedom to form and join organizations
2) Freedom of expression
3) Right to vote
4) Eligibility for public office
5) Right of political leaders to compete for support and votes
6) Alternative sources of information
7) Free and fair elections
8) Institutions for making government policies depend on votes and other expressions of preference

[17] According to the authors, a generic claim refers to the argument that "the concept of democracy inherently requires one approach or the other" (Collier and Adcock 1999: 546).

[18] Dahl prefers to reserve the term 'democracy' for the ideal-type polity in which a political system is completely responsive to its citizens' needs. Since the existence of this kind of system is according to Dahl unknown, he prefers to use the term 'polyarchy' to refer to real-world instances (Dahl 1971: 2).

Dahl's eight conditions of polyarchy can broadly be transformed into two separate dimensions (Dahl 1971: 4; Doorenspleet 2001: 7-9; Coppedge et al. 2008). On the one hand, the dimension of *contestation* (or competition) refers to the extent to which public offices are open to public and political competition, and therefore also to the opportunities for the existence of a political opposition. On the other hand, the dimension of *inclusiveness* stands for the proportion of citizens who are allowed to participate in the political process.[19] In this regard, active and passive suffrage rights have generally been regarded as the most important indicator. In polyarchies, contestation of government is present and practically all adult citizens are granted the right to take part in political affairs (Dahl 1971: 8).[20]

For the purpose of the present analysis, and particularly in light of the specific hypothesized effects of size that were discussed in the two previous chapters, each of Dahl's two dimensions can be subdivided into two sub-dimensions. Whereas the dimension of contestation on the one hand refers to the presence of substantive political alternatives and a political opposition, in line with condition eight it can also be translated into the existence of political checks and balances between institutions.[21] If institutional checks and balances are able to function as a restraint on executive power, the abuse of power and executive dominance are controlled for, and this generally means that the preferences of

[19] Several scholars have questioned the independence of Dahl's two dimensions of inclusiveness and contestation, and have found democracy to be a one-dimensional concept (cf. Bollen and Grandjean 1981). Others, however, have confirmed the separate value of each of Dahl's dimensions, even though some aspects of democracy such as the holding of free and fair elections correspond to both contestation and inclusiveness (Coppedge et al. 2008: 633).

[20] As Dahl himself readily acknowledges, the requirements of contestation and inclusiveness are somewhat problematic in the sense that in no country all public offices are open to contestation, and in no country all citizens are entitled to participate in the electoral process. In most countries judges are for example not elected, and in many countries (e.g. most parliamentarian systems) the head of state is not directly elected (Alvarez et al. 1996: 4-5). Furthermore, in some countries non-elected officials such as army officers or traditional leaders exert considerable influence on the daily conduct of politics (Gurr et al. 1990: 94-95; Valenzuela 1992; Whitehead 1992; O'Donnell 1993). In order to deal with these problems related to contestation, several scholars have emphasized that in a democracy at least the offices of the chief executive (mostly the head of government) and the legislature have to be contested (Bollen 1980: 376; Gurr et al. 1990: 80-82; Alvarez et al. 1996: 7-8). Regarding inclusiveness, Dahl points out that in a polyarchy practically all adult citizens should have the right to participate in the political process (Dahl 1971: 4). Thus, if democracy is rule by the people, 'the people' should be conceived of as everyone in the polity, except for children and specific, small groups of adults (such as foreigners or the mentally disabled). As Schmitter and Karl point out, suffrage rights were historically granted to only a small number of citizens (Schmitter and Karl 1991: 77). Thus, whereas the United States and Switzerland are generally regarded as among the most consolidated and high-quality democracies, the fact that African Americans were not allowed to vote in the US until 1965 and women did not obtain suffrage rights in some Swiss cantons until 1990 entails that these countries should be classified as competitive oligarchies before the extension of the franchise.

[21] In line with Montesquieu's *Trias Politica*. In fact, later in his book Dahl also refers to the balance of power between institutions as a major indicator of polyarchy (1971: 240).

citizens are more closely reflected in the conduct of government. In light of the specific and often-mentioned effects of size on the relations between citizens and politicians, the dimension of inclusiveness can be split up into one sub-dimension that refers to this aspect alone, whereas the second sub-dimension alludes to the more conventional forms of participation such as voter turnout and membership of political parties. In summary, this means that the characteristics and quality of democracy in microstates can be assessed on the basis of the following four sub-dimensions:

1) Contestation I: the presence of political alternatives and a political opposition;
2) Contestation II: the horizontal balance of power between institutions;
3) Inclusiveness I: the relations between citizens and politicians;
4) Inclusiveness II: the political participation of citizens.

Now that the choice for a dichotomous measure of democracy based on Dahl's conditions of polyarchy has been explained and motivated, the specific indicators of the four sub-dimensions of democracy that the present study employs should be described. In table 4.2, Dahl's two dimensions of contestation and inclusiveness have been presented in the first column, followed by the four sub-dimensions of this particular study in the second column. The sub-dimensions have been further subdivided into a total of fifteen indicators on the basis of which politics and democracy is studied in four selected microstates. In addition, in the last column the specific means by which each indicator is measured has been listed. As a consequence of the lack of existing data on microstates and the qualitative, exploratory nature of this research in general, the scoring on these indicators does not occur on the basis of specifically demarcated categories or numbers, but instead is largely based on the conclusions that follow from my own assembled interview data.

With regard to the first sub-dimension, which examines the presence of political alternatives and a political opposition, the first indicator of free and fair elections can be seen as a first minimal requirement that has to be adhered to in order to classify as a democracy. The second and third indicators should be seen as attempts to measure the presence and relevance of the opposition, since they measure the number of available political alternatives (# 2) and the extent to which these alternatives have been able to realize their objectives by taking office in the executive. In order to examine the supposition that microstate-politics is personality- instead of ideologically-oriented, the fourth indicator aims to investigate whether the available political alternatives also aim to realize divergent policies and interests. Finally, in order to control whether the system

also allows these alternatives to attract and mobilize supporters, the fourth indicator examines if citizens can freely support the opposition. With the exception of the third indicator, all indicators have emanated from the variables by means of which Dahl measures polyarchy (1971: Appendix A).

*Table 4.2: Dimensions, Sub-Dimensions, and Indicators of Democracy*

| Dimensions | Sub-Dimensions | Indicators | Operationalization |
|---|---|---|---|
| Contestation (Opposition) | Presence of Political Alternatives and a Political Opposition | Free and Fair Elections | *Freedom House*; Election Reports |
| | | Party System | Effective Number of Parties (ENP) |
| | | (Frequency of) Alternation in Office | Official & Local Statistics |
| | | Interest Articulation by Parties | Election Manifestos; Interview Data |
| | | Freedom to Support the Opposition | Interview Data; Secondary Literature |
| | Horizontal Balance of Power between Institutions | Freedom of the Press | *Freedom of the Press Index*; Interview Data |
| | | Status of the Legislature | Interview Data; Secondary Literature |
| | | Status of the Judiciary | Interview Data; Secondary Literature |
| | | Status of the Bureaucracy | Interview Data; Secondary Literature |
| Inclusiveness (Participation) | Relations between Citizens and Politicians | Contact With and Access to Representatives | Interview Data; Secondary Literature |
| | | Nature of Contact between Citizens and Politicians | Interview Data; Secondary Literature |
| | Political Participation of Citizens | Universal Suffrage | *Freedom House*; Election Reports |
| | | Turnout at Elections and other Plebiscites | *Inter-Parliamentary Union*; *Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance* |
| | | Party Membership | Available Local Statistics |
| | | Participation in political activities (e.g. rallies, demonstrations) | Interview Data; Available Local Statistics |

Regarding the second dimension, which measures the horizontal balance of power between institutions, four indicators have been listed that measure the autonomy and independence of the four institutions that can be expected to endure the consequences of executive dominance. Whereas the freedom of the press can be measured on the basis of an available index, the scoring on the other indicators will primarily occur on the basis of assembled interview data. On the basis of these indicators, it is also possible to examine the hypothesis that microstate-institutions tend to be ignored or circumvented by both politicians and citizens. The third dimension, which deals with the relations between citizens and politicians, can be measured on the basis of the frequency of contact and the accessibility of politicians for citizens, and nature and characteristics of citizen-politician contacts. On this basis, it can firstly be assessed whether the increased frequency of citizen-politician contacts that the literature suggests can be corroborated, and secondly it can be determined whether these contacts have a substantive political or a more particularistic nature.

The dimension of political participation, finally, can firstly be measured on the basis of the minimalistic condition of universal suffrage. In addition, the most frequently used indicators of participation, which are voter turnout, party membership, and participation in political activities such as (campaign) rallies and demonstrations, can be analyzed. Whereas data and statistics on turnout are widely available, this is not the case for the other manifestations of political participation. With the exception of the indicators that are used to measure the third sub-dimension, virtually all indicators have been adopted from the ones that are used in Dahl's original work. Now that the key concepts of this study have been operationalized, the theoretical model and expectations that follow from the academic literature are presented in the subsequent section.

## 4. The Theoretical Model: Expectations

A first impression that follows from both the empirical literature on microstates and the statistics that were presented in the introduction of this dissertation is that the overwhelming majority of microstates conform to the Freedom House-standards of democracy. Although this conjecture is further examined in the case studies, where Dahl's eight criteria of polyarchy are used as benchmarks of democracy, twenty of the twenty-one microstates are classified as electoral democracy by Freedom House (2012). However critical the empirical literature may be about the practical operation of politics and democracy in microstates, it is generally agreed that elections are free and fair, and other democratic

institutions are in place. In this light, a distinction can be made between the group of authors who primarily focus on formal institutions and who accordingly have a positive idea about democracy in microstates (e.g. Diamond and Tsalik 1999; Ott 2000; Anckar 2002b), and those who (also) examine the less formal aspects of politics, and have a more negative perspective (e.g. Peters 1992; Sutton 2007a; Gerring and Zarecki 2011).[22] In large part, this distinction coincides with the division between minimalistic versus more substantive definitions of democracy. Although the formalist and anti-formalist perspectives diverge in terms of their appreciation of microstate-democracy (cf. Hinds 2008), it must be emphasized that even anti-formalist scholars highlight the fact that microstates have democratic institutional structures.

As formulated in the introductory chapter, the aim of the present study is to assess the influence and consequence of size on a political system, and more specifically, democracy and its sub-dimensions. In this regard, the question to what extent the formal democratic structures of microstates can be explained by their smallness is actually only a side issue, especially since the literature has shown that size can be hypothesized to affect many other facets of politics as well. In table six of the second chapter, the main expectations that follow from the theoretical literature on size were already summarized. If these points are contrasted with the main findings that follow from the case study-literature in chapter 3, the expectations that are not corroborated or even disconfirmed in the case study-literature on microstates can be deleted. When the remaining expectations are subsequently sorted out on the basis of the four sub-dimensions of democracy that this study employs, the theoretical model of this study emerges. In table 4.3, for each of the four sub-dimensions of democracy the primary expectations have been listed. With exception of the fourth sub-dimension, the expectations clearly point in one direction, which is basically in line with the more pessimistic or skeptical part of the academic literature on the effect of size on the quality of democracy.

The image that follows from the theoretical model is largely in line with the earlier-mentioned hypothesis that microstates are characterized by a divergence between formally democratic institutions and a markedly less democratic political reality, which is caused by the fact that institutional structures are expected to be recurrently disregarded. If this hypothesis can be

[22] To a certain degree, the distinction between 'formalist' and 'anti-formalist' studies appears to hinge on their relative definitions of democracy, since whereas formalist scholars primarily focus on the existence of free and fair elections, anti-formalist academics also examine more substantive and informal aspects of politics in assessing the quality of democracy.

confirmed in the analysis that follows in the upcoming chapters, the question remains to what extent the microstates differ from other (new) democracies in which a similar pattern has been observed. On the one hand, since the analytical chapters specifically focus on the effects of size on politics, dissimilarities between microstates and other third wave-democracies that result from size may automatically surface in these chapters. On the other hand, it should be noted that one of the microstates that are studied, San Marino, is not a new democracy. By comparing the political system of this country with that of the other microstates, the effects of size can even be more clearly be distinguished from those that result from the status as a new democracy.

*Table 4.3: Theoretical Model: Expectations of this Study*

| **Sub-Dimension** | **Expectations** |
|---|---|
| 1: *Presence of Political Alternatives and a Political Opposition* | - Greater homogeneity of interests<br>- Decreased number of factions and interests<br>- Less political competition, weakened political opposition<br>- Personalistic politics; strong person-based polarization |
| 2: *Horizontal Balance of Power between Institutions* | - Executive dominance in relation to other institutions (parliament, media, judiciary, and civil service)<br>- Infrequent alternation of power<br>- Circumvention or ignorance of institutional structures |
| 3: *Relations between Citizens and Politicians* | - Increased accessibility of politicians<br>- Increased direct contacts and communication between citizens and politicians<br>- Conflicts of interest due to multiple-role relations<br>- Prevalence of clientelism, patronage, and nepotism |
| 4: *Political Participation of Citizens* | - Increased opportunities for participation due to closeness<br>- Equal or lower turnout levels in relation to larger states (on the basis of case study-literature)<br>- Decreased political role for minorities and opposition |

## 5. Methodological Approach: Comparative, Small-N Research

As discussed before, large-N statistical analyses have thus far neither yielded a convincing explanation of microstate-democracy, nor resulted in a persuasive and universally valid theory of the political effects of size. In addition to the lack of satisfactory explanations that quantitative, statistical analyses have generated,

it also deserves attention that these quantitative studies are almost exclusively based on Freedom House-data. Since other indices of democracy exclude microstates, the Freedom in the World-survey is the only reliable and well-known aggregate index of democracy that provides information on microstates. This however means that any potential errors or biases in the Freedom House-data will automatically appear in every quantitative-oriented publication on microstates as well, thereby making it impossible to cross-validate or triangulate these findings. Although the present study does rely on Freedom House-scores for the initial, preliminary scoring of microstates in order to facilitate case selection, during the in-depth analyses the presence and nature of Dahl's conditions of polyarchy are examined on the basis of on-the-ground evidence.

Instead of statistics, it therefore seems plausible that a qualitative and comparative analysis of a small number of microstate-systems represents a more fruitful research avenue. In comparison to the number of quantitative analyses of smallness and democracy however, the qualitative approach to studying microstates is significantly underdeveloped. A small number of qualitative, in-depth case studies of individual or small groups of microstates does exist (and has been discussed in previous chapters), but Dana Ott's (2000) study is to my best knowledge the only global qualitative investigation of the nature of politics and democracy in small states.[23] In addition to a number of other shortcomings discussed in chapter one, Ott's study employs a population threshold that is much more inclusive than the one of the present study, as a result of which the generalizability of Ott's findings to the microstates that this study examines is questionable.[24] It can therefore be asserted that the current study is a pioneering global, qualitative analysis of politics and democracy in the smallest countries of the world. As a consequence, in some ways this research assumes explorative character, and can be regarding as incorporating both theory-generation and theory-testing elements (cf. Mahoney and Goertz 2006: 230-232).

The qualitative research in the chapters to come occurs along the lines of a small-N case study analysis, or what Evan Lieberman refers to as a model-building small-N analysis (2005: 444-446). It must be noted that the use of case studies in social science research has often been criticized (cf. Lieberson 1991; King et al. 1994). According to Stanley Lieberson, the methodological assumptions that lie at the root of case study-analysis are "usually indefensible in

[23] In fact, Ott employs a mixed research design which consists of multiple quantitative statistical analyses and two in-depth case studies of the Gambia and Trinidad and Tobago.
[24] This is especially the case in light of the fact that both of the cases that are qualitatively studied have populations of more than one million inhabitants.

social research" (1991: 318). Since qualitative research techniques cannot effectively deal with errors in measurement and the absence of interaction effects, the methods can according to Lieberson not be used to study causation on the basis of a small number of cases. Other authors however point out that case study research has a lot to offer, but that its value and usefulness depends on the goals of the analysis (cf. Gerring 2004; Mahoney and Goertz 2006; Levy 2008). According to John Gerring, small N-case study research is very useful for exploratory research, of which the goal is to search for evidence of new theories. When it comes to exploratory research, "case studies enjoy a natural advantage" (Gerring 2004: 349). As Gerring points out however, exploratory research is significantly undervalued in social science, and it is also under-theorized (2004: 350). Since the present study is at least partially exploratory in nature, on the basis of these recommendations and theories case study-research appears a very feasible method to conduct this analysis.

As a consequence of the character of this research, the expectations that follow from the theoretical model are looser and less stringent than genuine, testable hypotheses. Since the study only examines microstates and makes no comparisons between small and large states, the testing of such potential hypotheses would also hardly be achievable. In this sense, the present study should really be seen as a first initial step in mapping the contours of microstate-politics. However, since large states are extensively covered in existing research and publications, the findings of the in-depth analyses of microstates can not only be mutually compared, but can also (implicitly if not explicitly) be contrasted with this existing literature on both larger consolidated democracies and larger third wave-countries. In this way, it can even more persuasively be demonstrated that their smallness is at the root of diverging political patterns in the microstates that are investigated.

## 6. Within-Case Analysis, Cross-Case Analysis, and Case Selection

Where quantitative research is generally more useful for studying causal effects, case studies are valuable when it comes to identifying causal mechanisms (Rogowski 1995; Gerring 2004: 349). In order to do so, case study research relies on both within-case and cross-case analyses. On the cross-case level, four microstate-cases are studied as part of the current project, which are compared in order to determine whether the expected political effects of size can be observed across the cases. In the second part of this section, the specific techniques that are used for cross-case comparison are further outlined. On the

within-case level, in each of the microstates under scrutiny evidence for the expectations that are part of the theoretical model are searched, as well as possible indications of other political characteristics that are a result of size. Whereas the cross-case analysis is primarily focused on the observation of causal effects, the aim of the within-case analysis is to detect a causal mechanism (George and Bennett 2005: 206-207).

*6.1. Within-Case Analysis: Field Research and Semi-Structured Interviews*

The major aim of the within-case analysis is to acquire so-called causal-process observations, which offer indications of a link between different causes or causes and effects at the within-case level of one case (Collier et al. 2004: 252-253). In the present research, the main aim of the within-case analysis is to discover whether and how the political patterns that are observed can be attributed to the size of the microstates under scrutiny. Although most scholars would agree that causal mechanisms are ultimately unobservable, it is mostly possible to observe indications of the existence of a causal process (George and Bennett 2005: 137). The attainment of such observations can best be achieved by conducting a research strategy of process tracing or (historical) thick description. Using the method of process tracing, a researcher engages in a kind of 'detective-work' in which the different causes and their relevant relationships which are leading up to the outcome are carefully analyzed and described (Gerring 2007: 134). The observations that are collected as part of the process tracing can be subsumed under the various expectations and the indicators of democracy, so that they serve to support or weaken earlier formulated conjectures. On this basis, the results of this analysis should offer a general overview of the existing causal processes, and if similar causal processes can be found in other cases as well, the generalizability of the findings can be ascertained.

In the process of within-case analysis, different sources about the political system and specific political characteristics of the respective microstates can be consulted and used for data collection (Thies 2002: 355-356). Regarding the primary sources, official government documents, manuscripts, and reports can be analyzed to find out how the smallness of the analyzed microstates affects the political composition and dynamics of microstates. Secondary sources such as the academic literature about microstate-politics are consulted as well. The major component of the case study research however, consists of interviews with public officials, experts, and ordinary citizens. As a consequence of the limited presence or availability of publications on microstates, and as a result of

the exploratory nature of this study, interviews are an excellent way to uncover information that cannot be obtained by analyzing written sources.

In order to conduct interviews with microstate-respondents and in order to access documents and reports that are only available in the microstates themselves, field research has been carried out in the four microstates that were selected for in-depth analysis. By spending three weeks to a month in every microstate, approximately fifteen interviews with various respondents were held, on the basis of which a comprehensive overview of the microstate-political system has been obtained. A list of the respondents that were interviewed in each of the four microstates can be found in Appendix A of this dissertation. Since microstate-politicians are relatively easily accessible, there are great opportunities for conducting interviews with even the highest public officials. In addition to politicians, other public officials such as civil servants, legal representatives, electoral commissioners and ombudsmen have been interviewed, as well as non-public figures such as journalists, academics, business leaders, and interest group-representatives. The criterion that representatives from as many societal and political backgrounds were included in the sample has guided the selection of interview respondents. Last but not least, although I have not formally interviewed them as respondents, discussions with ordinary citizens are valuable in providing insights on the consumer-side of the political system.

Since this analysis is exploratory in nature, the specific questions that are posed during the interviews should retain an open character, and the interviews should be geared towards theory generation (Bogner and Menz 2009: 46-48). Under these circumstances, a semi-structured interview format with flexible questions and the possibility to raise new questions during the interviews is most suitable. Whereas the hypotheses and the theoretical model can serve as a framework on which to build the initial set of questions, it should also be possible to diverge from these questions and pose other ones instead. For the interviews that I conducted during four stages of field research, a basic shortlist of questions that address the core themes and hypotheses of this study has been established, and can be found in Appendix B of this book. The content of the specific interviews, however, is also based on 1) the country in which the analysis was conducted, 2) the job or specialization of the respondent, and 3) the issues that the respondent raised during the interview.

In addition to interviews that serve as the most important sources on which to construct the analysis, other sources such as government documents, (international) reports, statistics, and newspapers are also analyzed. Besides the

intrinsic value of these sources for the analysis, they are also used for triangulation; i.e. as a check on whether the issues that have been raised by the participants to the interviews are substantiated (Thies 2002: 359). In addition, these sources can reduce or correct eventual biases that might arise during the interviews, and are used to reconstruct historical events or causal processes (Lustick 1996; Yin 2003: 85-89). As such, documentary and archival analysis primarily serve to supplement the data that is derived from the interviews. The evidence from the analysis is further strengthened by using and referring to existing case studies on the microstates.[25] In contrast to the documentary and archival material, academic case studies are more likely to provide an inclusive overview of the entire microstate-system, and in that sense are used to validate the general conclusions that are drawn from the in-depth analysis.

### *6.2. Cross-Case Analysis: the Method of Agreement*

Whereas the within-case analysis serves to expose the political effects that result from a small population size, a cross-case analysis is required to cancel out the notion that these political characteristics are caused by idiosyncratic characteristics of the individual cases, or by other background variables. Since it is however not possible to expansively study all twenty-one microstates, a selection of microstates has been made. Seeing that the goal of the small-N analysis is to acquire a universally valid and generalizable model of microstate-politics, the cases that are selected for in-depth analysis should be *typical* or representative of the larger group of microstates (Seawright and Gerring 2008: 296-299). In addition, the case selection should lead to a sample on the basis of which as many secondary background variables can be eliminated as explanatory factors, so that the explanatory value of the remaining variable(s) of size is maximized. In order to achieve this, Mill's method of agreement provides the most fruitful research design (Lijphart 1971: 687-688).

When it comes to small-N comparative research, two classical strategies for cross-case comparison have been introduced by John Stuart Mill: the method of agreement (or the most different systems design) and the method of difference (Mill 1843). Whereas the method of difference is employed to study variance on the dependent variable, the aim of the method of agreement is to explain a similar outcome in the cases that are studied. In order to be able to make strong causal inferences, the latter method departs from a selection of cases that are as different as possible on all potential explanatory variables, but

[25] Much of the case study-literature was already discussed in the previous chapter, but the case studies on the four selected microstates have not been analyzed there.

have one independent variable in common. Since the goal of this analysis is to examine the influence of a variable that all the cases share (which is their small population size) the selected cases would preferably differ on as many other background variables as possible (Seawright and Gerring 2008: 300-301).

Over the years, Mills methods have become the subject of rigorous criticism. According to Stanley Lieberson, Mills methods are based on a deterministic logic, and should therefore conform to a number of criteria[26] that are normally unattainable in qualitative research (1991: 318). In addition, Lijphart, Lieberson, and King, Keohane and Verba all caution for an indeterminate research design, which comes about if the number of observed cases is lower than the number of independent variables (Lijphart 1971: 685; Lieberson 1991: 314; King et al. 1994: 118-122). In case of an indeterminate research design, it becomes impossible to assess the explanatory value of the separate independent variables. However, King, Keohane and Verba also emphasize that indeterminacy is only a problem if the goal of the analysis is to make causal inferences, and not in the case of exploratory or descriptive studies (King et al. 1994: 119).

It is clear that the present study has an indeterminate research design. In the first place, it can be posited that it is hard to analyze the effects of size on the quality of democracy if the cases under investigation are all microstates. In the second place, the number of cases that are analyzed can be perceived as limited in relation to the relatively large number of variables and indicators on which the cases are ranked. In reaction to these objections, it can be argued that the two dimensions and four sub-dimensions on the basis of which democracy in microstates is studied offer a robust and workable framework to analyze the quality of democracy, by means of which not only formal and institutional effects of size can be examined, but also the more practical and informal political dynamics that figure so prominently in the theoretical literature described in chapters 2 and 3. Whereas the shortcomings of this research design imply that no final conclusions can be drawn about political differences between large and small countries, by means of the cross-case comparisons it is however possible to acquire an accurate image of the nature of microstate-politics and –democracy. In this sense, it is likely that the research design does result in a number of political patterns that can be ascribed to the size of the cases under scrutiny.

[26] Specifically, according to Lieberson the research must have 1) a deterministic rather than a probabilistic logic, 2) no errors in measurement, 3) the existence of only one cause, and 4) the absence of interaction effects (Lieberson 1991).

*6.3. Case Selection: The Four Microstates*

In the literature on methodologies of case studies, extensive attention is paid to strategies of case selection (Geddes 1990; Collier and Mahoney 1996; Seawright and Gerring 2008). The primary recommendation that follows from this literature is to avoid the pitfall of selecting on the dependent variable. According to Barbara Geddes, the selection of cases with a similar outcome leads to a situation in which it can never be ascertained that the indentified causal variable really explains the outcome (1990: 132). This view is shared by Collier and Mahoney, who add that selection bias can lead to an underestimation of the effects of the main independent variable (1996: 62). In the view of other scholars, however, case selection in small-N research should not occur randomly, but cases should be carefully selected on the basis of the twin criteria of representativeness and useful variation on the variables of interest (Seawright and Gerring 2008: 296; Levy 2008: 9).

These yardsticks for case selection are also adopted as leading strategies for case selection in the current study, which means that case primarily occurs on the independent variable that is central in this dissertation: size. The goal of the analysis is to discover the effects of this independent variable on a political system, and by ensuring as much variation as possible on other potential explanatory factors, any political features that the microstates share can with a greater degree of confidence be attributed to their small size. It is important to emphasize that this study only to a limited degree selects cases on the basis of their scoring on the dependent variable. Whereas the dependent variable of this study is 'democracy', the main question of this dissertation focuses not so much on the *presence* or *absence* of democracy, but rather on the *quality* of democracy - in terms of contestation and inclusiveness - that results from a small size. Since this outcome obviously remains unknown before the current analysis is conducted, in this regard no selection on the dependent variable has occurred. In fact, as will be explained below, the selection of one case that according to Freedom House is only partially free – which is the Republic of Seychelles – actually ensures at least some variation in outcomes on the dependent variable. If the political effects of size are also found to play a role in a political system that is regarded as only partially democratic, the explanatory value of the size-variable arguably becomes even stronger.

If it can be asserted that – in line with the method of agreement - the selected microstates are preferably as different as possible on potential background variables, but similar on the key independent variable under

scrutiny, the question arises which background variables to take into account in this respect. Firstly, since the method of agreement requires one shared explanatory variable, only cases that fall within the parameters of size that this study employs have to be selected. Secondly, geographical or regional bias can be avoided by selecting microstates from different regions in the world.[27] Since the microstates are clustered in four world regions, a preliminary decision is to select one microstate from each region, which leads to the feasible number of four in-depth case studies. Thirdly, it would be sensible to select microstates that score differently on variables that have also been hypothesized to affect the microstate-political system, such as colonial history, religion, culture, ethno-linguistic homogeneity, economic development, geographical factors, and political institutions. The ranking of these three criteria as they have just been described also determines which criterion prevails over the other(s) in the case that incompatibility between the criteria arises.

On the basis of the three case selection-criteria, the microstates of San Marino, St. Kitts and Nevis, Seychelles, and Palau are selected for in-depth analysis and field research. In the following four paragraphs, the choice for each of these four microstates is motivated and defended. In table 4.4 at the end of this chapter, the twenty-one microstates have been ranked on background variables in order to further clarify the choices that have been made as part of this case selection.

*6.3.1.. The European Microstate: San Marino*

Being among the smallest of the four European microstates in terms of population size,[28] the Republic of San Marino is in this sense a logical European case for in-depth analysis. Like the other three microstates in the region, San Marino has never been colonized, has a predominantly Catholic population, a high level of economic development, and a parliamentary system of government in which pre-modern institutions exist up to the present day. The main difference with Andorra, Liechtenstein, and Monaco is that San Marino is no principality but a republic, and in this sense the oldest one of its kind in the world.[29] From the viewpoint of my study, San Marino is an appealing case to

[27] The twenty-one microstates are clustered in four different regions of the world (the Pacific, the Caribbean, Europe, and Africa), and the microstates in each region are largely similar to the other microstates in that region (in terms of economic development, colonial legacy, culture, religion, and so on), but very different from microstates in other regions.

[28] Monaco is the smallest of the European microstates, but since the difference with San Marino is only a little over 1.000 inhabitants (on a total of approximately 30.000), I consider this difference to be negligible.

[29] According to the legend, San Marino was founded in 301 AD.

study because it has been known for centuries as a bastion of liberty and democracy.[30] In contrast to European microstates such as Liechtenstein and Monaco, which both have politically powerful monarchies, San Marino therefore appears to be an exemplary case of microstate-democracy. Since virtually no publications on politics in San Marino have appeared in recent years, however, only its *formal* political institutions are superficially known, and little is known about the practical, informal conduct of politics in this microstate.

*6.3.2. The Eastern Caribbean Microstate: St. Kitts and Nevis*

Out of the six microstates in the Eastern Caribbean region, the Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis is selected for field research. The microstates in this region are remarkably similar on their background characteristics, so the preference for the smallest state has been guiding in the selection. Aside of being the smallest of the Eastern Caribbean microstates, St. Kitts and Nevis shares its British colonial heritage, Westminster parliamentary institutions, medium level of economic development, and insular geographical nature with the other five microstates in this region. In contrast to these other states however, St. Kitts and Nevis constitutionally is a federation that consists of two separate states, coinciding with the two islands of the nation. Since the federal government suggests the existence of at least a geographical cleavage, St. Kitts and Nevis embodies an especially appealing political system to examine the assumption of (attitudinal) homogeneity in microstates. Attaining independence in 1983, St. Kitts and Nevis is (as of yet) the last of the former British colonies in the Eastern Caribbean region to acquire statehood.

*6.3.3. The African Microstate: Seychelles*

Given that only two of the microstates are located in Africa, it is impossible to pick a case that is 'representative' for the microstates in this region. As a consequence, again the benchmark of smallness has therefore guided case selection, and the Republic of Seychelles has been selected as the African case to be analyzed. Seychelles is different from the other African microstate, São Tomé and Príncipe, in almost all variables that can be thought of: it has a French-British instead of Portuguese colonial heritage, a moderate to high instead of a low level of development, and a presidential rather than a semi-presidential system. The two countries are similar, however, in the sense that they both have a predominantly Catholic population, both had a one-party socialist regime from

[30] The country refers to itself as the *Antica Terra della Libertà*, which translates into the "ancient land of freedom".

the mid-1970s to the early 1990s, and both are island nations. Although Seychelles is classified as an electoral democracy in the Freedom House-survey, it has a score of 'partly free' on political rights as well as civil liberties (Freedom House 2012).[31] Because of this, Seychelles can to some respects be seen as a deviant case, in which the more demanding requirements of liberal democracy have not all been attained (yet).

*6.3.4. The Pacific Microstate: Palau*

Out of the nine Pacific microstates, the Republic of Palau has been chosen for case-study research. Palau is the third smallest state in the Pacific, but the smaller island states of Nauru and Tuvalu are not selected because certain features make them less attractive cases to study. Like St. Kitts and Nevis and Seychelles, Tuvalu is a former British colony with (predominantly) Westminster institutions, and its inclusion would have led to a clear bias towards ex-British colonies. Palau, on the other hand, is a former US trust territory and has adopted the most important institutions of the American presidential system. Nauru has been left out because I consider it unrepresentative for the region; whereas the political systems of all other Pacific island nations are characterized by a significant influence of (councils of) traditional leaders, this is not the case in Nauru. According to the literature on the subject, Palau on the other hand does have a strong heritage of traditional leadership (cf. Shuster 1994). With regard to the variables of economic development, insularity, and democratic governance, Palau is also unmistakably representative of the Pacific region as a whole. The microstate acquired statehood and UN-membership only in 1994, rendering it the youngest independent microstate in the Pacific region.

## 7. Conclusion: Summary Remarks and Structure of the Analytical Chapters

The goal of this chapter was threefold. In the first place, its aim was to translate the two central concepts of this dissertation – size and democracy – into workable variables and indicators on the basis of which the analysis in subsequent chapters can be carried out. Secondly, attention has been paid to a description, explanation, and justification of the research method that this study employs. On the basis of the observation that quantitative research is unlikely to generate new findings, I have chosen for an exploratory, qualitative research design that is based on four in-depth case studies of microstates around the

[31] The only other microstate that does not rank as 'free' on these dimensions is the Kingdom of Tonga, which however is no electoral democracy either (Freedom House 2012).

world. In each of these microstates field research is conducted, which focuses on semi-structured interviews with local respondents, and a supplementary analysis of available written sources and secondary literature. As a third objective, this chapter has sought to explain and motivate the selection of four microstates that serve as cases for in-depth analysis in the four analytical chapters that follow. On the basis of various arguments, the microstates of San Marino, St. Kitts and Nevis, Seychelles, and Palau were selected as cases.

The four analytical chapters that follow are organized on the basis of a similar structure. Each chapter commences with a brief introduction, followed by an overview of the political history of the particular microstate under scrutiny. Subsequently, one section in each chapter is devoted to the discussion of a number of factors that can explain the existence of democratic institutions, after which one section deals with an overview of the political-institutional framework of the microstate. After this, four analytical sections deal with an examination of the nature and characteristics of each of the four sub-dimensions of democracy that this study employs. Each chapter ends with a conclusion in which the main findings are summarized. The first case study, which follows in the next chapter, is focused on San Marino, whereas chapter six offers an analysis of St. Kitts and Nevis. Subsequently, in chapter seven the political system of Seychelles is analyzed, and as a final case study the characteristics of politics and democracy in Palau are examined in chapter eight.

As mentioned before, the largest part of the findings that are presented and reported in the analytical chapters are based on interview data. In the analytical narrative, fragments and quotations from these interviews are occasionally presented in order to substantiate the findings and as illustrations of the themes that are discussed. Because of the intimate social relations and the lack of personal anonymity in small states, and in light of the sensitivity of some of the statements, I have decided not to disclose the names and professions of the individuals by whom the specific interview excerpts were expressed. Only in cases in which the profession of the respondent gives an additional dimension to a quote, and in which the information that the excerpt contains is not overtly touchy, I have made it public. However, a complete list of the people I interviewed in each of the microstates can be found in Appendix A of this book.

*Table 4.4: Overview of Microstate-Scoring on Background Variables for Case Selection*[1]

| Microstate | Population | Region | FH-Score | Independence | Colonizer | Religion | Pol. System | Wealth |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Nauru | 9.322 | Pacific | 2 (Free) | 1968 | Australia | P/C | Parliamentary | Low |
| Tuvalu | 10.544 | Pacific | 2 (Free) | 1978 | UK | P | Parliamentary | Low |
| Palau | 20.956 | Pacific | 2 (Free) | 1994 | USA | C | Presidential | Low |
| Monaco | 30.539 | Europe | 3 (Free) | *(1297)* | - | C | Principality | High |
| San Marino | 31.817 | Europe | 2 (Free) | *(301)* | - | C | Parliamentary | High |
| Liechtenstein | 35.236 | Europe | 2 (Free) | *(1866)* | - | C | Principality | High |
| St. Kitts and Nevis | 50.314 | Caribbean | 2 (Free) | 1983 | UK | P | Parliamentary | Medium |
| Marshall Islands | 67.182 | Pacific | 2 (Free) | 1986 | USA | P/C | Hybrid | Low |
| Dominica | 72.969 | Caribbean | 2 (Free) | 1978 | UK | C | Parliamentary | Medium |
| Andorra | 84.825 | Europe | 2 (Free) | *(1278/1993)* | - | C | Principality | High |
| Antigua and Barbuda | 87.884 | Caribbean | 4 (Free) | 1981 | UK | P | Parliamentary | Medium |
| Seychelles | 89.188 | Africa | 6 (P. Free) | 1976 | UK | C | Presidential | High |
| Kiribati | 100.743 | Pacific | 2 (Free) | 1979 | UK | P/C | Parliamentary | Low |
| St. Vincent - Grenadines | 103.869 | Caribbean | 3 (Free) | 1979 | UK | P | Parliamentary | Medium |
| Tonga | 105.916 | Pacific | 8 (P. Free) | 1970 | UK | P | Monarchy | Low |
| Fed. St. of Micronesia | 106.836 | Pacific | 2 (Free) | 1986 | USA | P/C | Presidential | Low |
| Grenada | 108.419 | Caribbean | 3 (Free) | 1974 | UK | C | Parliamentary | Medium |
| St. Lucia | 161.557 | Caribbean | 2 (Free) | 1979 | UK | C | Parliamentary | Medium |
| São Tomé and Príncipe | 179.506 | Africa | 4 (Free) | 1975 | Portugal | C | S-Presidential | Low |
| Samoa | 193.161 | Pacific | 4 (Free) | 1962 | N. Zealand | P | Parliamentary | Low |
| Vanuatu | 224.564 | Pacific | 4 (Free) | 1980 | UK-France | P | Parliamentary | Low |

[1] Data retrieved from the 2011-indices of the CIA World Factbook, Freedom House, and the World Bank. Regarding religion, P stands for Protestant, and C for Catholic. On the issue of wealth, 'Low' indicates a GDP per capita figure up to US $10.000, Medium represents a GDP per capita figure between $10.000 and $20.000, and High signifies a GDP per capita figure of over $ 20.000.