

# THE ELECTORAL INTEGRITY PROJECT

WHY ELECTIONS FAIL AND WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT IT

---CALL FOR PAPERS – PLEASE DISTRIBUTE---

Closed Panel submitted for the IPSA World Congress, Istanbul 23-28 July 2016

## The construction and use of expert surveys in the social sciences

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Co-sponsored by the Electoral Integrity Project (EIP) and the Variety of Democracies (V-Dem) project

**Paper proposals:** In this closed panel, we invite you to submit a paper proposal and abstract that either i) use expert surveys in comparative politics and related social sciences to develop new ways of testing the validity of expert survey data; ii) use meta analysis to compare expert perceptual surveys standards, methods, and techniques in terms of validity, reliability and legitimacy to other sources of information; or (iii) propose codes of conduct and good practice for conducting expert surveys.

**Submission deadline:** 5pm EST 2 November 2015

**Submit paper proposals to:** <https://istanbul2016.ipsa.org/my-ipsa/events/panel/56369/paper-invite>

**Queries to:** [electoralintegrity \[at\] gmail.com](mailto:electoralintegrity[at]gmail.com) Attn: Lisa Fennis, Project Coordinator

**Synopsis:** Indices and datasets derived from expert surveys have become increasingly common in comparative social science, in risk analysis by private sector organizations, in evaluation research, and among NGOs and policy makers (Meyer & Booker 1991). Expert surveys are often used to deepen understanding of, among others, the left-right position of political parties and news media outlets, the perceived extent of corruption or bribe-paying, and the quality of democratic governance. Expert surveys increasingly supplement alternative sources of information, such as citizen mass surveys, event analysis of media reports, and official statistics.

This data collection technique has been applied to diverse research topics such as the series of studies on party and policy positioning (Laver and Hunt 1992; Huber and Inglehart 1995; Saiegh 2009; Laver, Benoit, and Sauger 2006; McElroy and Benoit, 2007), the power of prime ministers (O'Malley 2007), evaluations of electoral systems (Bowler, Farrell, and Pettitt 2005); policy constraints horizons (Warwick 2005); campaign communications (Lileker, Steta and Tencher 2015); human rights and democracy (Landman and Carvalho 2010), and the quality of public administration (Teorell, Dahlstrom and Dahlberg 2011). Expert surveys have been widely used in research on corruption - the Corruption Perceptions Index (Transparency International 2013; Global Integrity); measuring democracy since the 1900s -Varieties of Democracy (Coppedge et al. 2011)- and electoral integrity (Norris, 2014; Norris, 2015; Martinez i Coma and Van Ham, 2015). The World Bank Institute Good Governance indicators combine an extensive range of expert perceptual surveys drawn from the public and private sectors. Indeed among the mainstream indicators of democracy, Freedom House's estimates of political rights and civil liberties, Polity IV's classification of autocracies and

democracies, and the Economist Intelligence Unit's estimates of democracy are all, in different ways, dependent upon expert judgments.

Expert surveys seem especially useful for measuring complex concepts that require expert knowledge and evaluative judgments; and for measuring phenomena for which alternative sources of information are scarce (Schedler 2012). Yet, expert surveys are not risk free and scholars have pointed out their limitations (Budge, 2000; Mair 2001; Steenbergen and Marks, 2007). Moreover, in contrast to mass social surveys, we still lack a common methodology to construct such surveys, as well as agreed technical standards and codes of good practice. There has been heated debate about the pros and cons of methods used to evaluate the spatial positions of party policies, and about the use of governance indicators more generally, but by contrast there has been remarkably little discussion about the challenges of validity, reliability, and legitimacy facing the construction of expert perceptual surveys. Yet it is critical to consider these issues given the lack of a clear conceptualization and sampling universe of 'experts', contrasting selection procedures and reliance upon domestic and international experts, variations in the number of respondents and publication of confidence intervals, and lack of consistent standards in levels of transparency and the provision of technical information. Moreover, more research needs to be done on how to evaluate the consequences of expert and context heterogeneity on the validity of expert judgments (Martinez i Coma and van Ham 2015), for example by using item response models to test and correct for expert heterogeneity (Pemstein *et al.* 2015), and using techniques such as 'anchoring vignettes' (King & Wand 2007) or 'bridge coders' (V-Dem) to test and correct for context heterogeneity.

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