V Dem

VARIETIES OF DEMOCRACY

Organization and Management

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This document contains an overview of the organization and management of the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem). It provides information about the team working on the project, the V-Dem infrastructure and the website, as well as the outreach and policy-oriented activities, our funding, and the progress of data collection so far. It also present the plans for sustainability of our activities and benchmarks by which the impact of the V-Dem project on the development community (encompassing both policymakers and academics) can be monitored in the coming years.

Project Team

A complex undertaking such as the V-Dem project requires coordinating the work of many individuals, each of which bringing unique skills and knowledge to the project.

Principal Investigators (PIs) – Coppedge, Gerring, Lindberg, Skaaning – constitute the V-Dem PI Board, charged with the overall management responsibilities. This is the highest decision-making body of the project and generally functions by consensus but may also make decisions by a qualified (3/4) majority rule. The PIs began work on this project in 2008. Jan Teorell was one of the founding members and was until March 2015 part of the PI board.

Project Managers, along with the PIs, were instrumental in the development of survey questions and the preparation of the collection of data in specific substantive areas, as follows: Direct Democracy (David Altman, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile), Civil Society (Michael Bernhard, University of Florida), Sovereignty (Michael Bernhard), Legislatures (M. Steven Fish, UC Berkeley), Parties and Party Systems (Allen Hicken, U. of Michigan), Subnational Government (Kelly McMann, Case Western), Formal and Descriptive Representation (Pamela Paxton, University of Texas, Austin), Elections (Lindberg), Media (Coppedge), Civil Liberty (Svend-Erik Skaaning), Judiciary (Jeffrey Staton, Emory University), Executives (Teorell), Political Equality (Gerring), Historical Data (Carl Henrik Knutsen, University of Oslo), Experiments (Brigitte Zimmerman, University of North Carolina), Evolutionary theory and democratization (Patrik Lindenfors, Stockholm University). Adam Glynn (Emory University) is the project manager on methodological issues, Daniel Pemstein (North Dakota State University) on measurement methods, they are assisted by a Research Fellows and Data Managers (described below). The diverse specialization of the team and

the division of labor enable us to define concepts, identify existing data sources, and create survey questions that reflect the wide-ranging work and accumulated knowledge on these topics. It also allows for a decentralized system of informal consultation among experts (academics and practitioners) in these areas. Project managers are also responsible for assuring cross-country equivalence for their indicators, so that a given question is not interpreted differently in varying country contexts. Most of the Project Managers have been part of the project since 2009.

Regional Managers (RMs) are responsible for recruiting and managing expert coders, overseeing coding, and checking for problems of validity at the regional level. Occasionally, RMs manage only a single country, in which case we refer to them as a *Country Managers* (CMs). The first Regional Managers were recruited in fall 2011.

Country Experts (CEs) code type (C) indicators (see *Methodology* document). They are generally holders of a PhD and usually residents or citizens of the country they are coding. They also have specialized knowledge in at least one of the thematic sections of the V-Dem survey. The Country Experts have been recruited on a rolling basis since the start of the pilot study in Spring 2011.

A *Country Coordinator* (CC) is selected by the Regional Manager for each country to gather the type (B) data for that country and to check A* ratings (as explained in the *Methodology* document) and assist the Regional Manager with the identification of Country Experts.

An *International Advisory Board* provides guidance on the project (the board is not responsible for the content or conduct of V-Dem). The Board includes a mix of academics, jurists, and practitioners from around the world. While communication is normally conducted through email and Skype, we hope to bring the board together periodically in the coming years to facilitate in-depth discussion.

[The V-Dem Institute](#) is the executive management arm of V-Dem with responsibility for most aspects of the project (data collection and processing, management of the research program, international collaborations, training and capacity building for partners, regional centers, policy analysis and outreach) and are located at the University of Gothenburg:

Program and Financial Manager Josefine Pernes (MA, International Administration

and Global Governance, University of Gothenburg 2012) and *Operations and Outreach Manager* Natalia Stepanova (MA, International Administration and Global Governance, University of Gothenburg 2011) oversee the daily operations at the V-Dem Institute, including among other things financial management, fundraising, policy-related work and external relations, overall coordination of staff, outreach and communications. They are also coordinating all activities relating to data collection involving some three thousand country experts, handle most coordination and collaboration with Regional Managers and Country Coordinators around the world, coordinate lateral coding, web-sites maintenance, organize workshops and conferences, and development of the coding management system.

The Analyst and Data Operation Manager Valeriya Mechkova (MA International Administration and Global Governance, University of Gothenburg 2014) and the *Analyst and Data Operation Officer* Frida Andersson (MA International Administration and Global Governance, University of Gothenburg 2014) have the overall responsibility for the management of the V-Dem data and coordination of the main reference documents. They are responsible for coding (A) type data, which is factual in nature, independently, or in dialogue with the Country Coordinators; they lead and perform quality control of the data collected with the expert surveys by carrying out systematic checks for discrepancies; making necessary revisions; developing and implementing scripts and protocols to clean the data[1]. In addition, they are in charge of updating the codebook and other reference documents, as well as uploading data into the V-Dem online database and managing the website online graphing tools. Andersson and Mechkova are also involved in the policy-related work of V-Dem in terms of producing thematic and country reports and policy briefs based on V-Dem data and working papers. They are also actively engaged in the V-Dem collaboration with partner organizations such as IDEA, the European Commission, Foreign Ministries, UNDP. Holding capacity-building trainings on quantitative research methods and the V-Dem online analysis tools are other tasks of this team. A number of graduate students at Notre Dame and Lund University have also provided research assistance in the past, including Talib Jabbar, Sandra Botero, Chad Kiewiet de Jonge, Cecilia Lero, Krystin Krause, and Rodrigo Castro Cornejo. More than 30 Notre Dame undergraduate students have also helped in various ways.

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[1] To read more on the cleaning process and protocols, please refer to the V-Dem Methodology document.

The Data Manager Farhad Miri (MA, Department of Economics, University of Gothenburg 2014), employed by the University of Gothenburg, is involved in a number of tasks related to preparation and release of the data. The data manager is largely involved in the work of developing and running the Measurement Model and works closely with the measurement model-team. He is also in charge of compiling the dataset and creating the V-Dem indices.

Post-Doc Research Fellows, located at the University of Gothenburg, assist with various aspects of constructing the final measurement model, data validation, aggregation, policy-analysis, and training. The current post-doctoral research fellows are. Kyle Marquardt (Wisconsin-Madison, 2015), Anna Luhrmann (Humboldt University, 2015) and, from April 2016, Rachel Sigman (Syracuse University, 2015). Former research fellows are Eitan Tzelgov (PhD, Penn State University, 2013), Brigitte Zimmerman (PhD, University of California, San Diego, 2014) and Yi-ting Wang, (PhD, Duke University), who are all still involved with the project.

More details on the project team can be found at the website: www.v-dem.net

V-Dem Institute, Database, Web Site

The V-Dem project has two institutional homes: the V-Dem Institute in the Department of Political Science at University of Gothenburg (Sweden) and the Kellogg Institute at the University of Notre Dame (USA).

The V-Dem Institute and its work with the research infrastructure is lead by Director & Professor Staffan I. Lindberg, Department of Political Science, University of Gothenburg. Professor Michael Coppedge is the head of the work conducted at Kellogg Institute, Notre Dame University.

The V-Dem research infrastructure consists of four interrelated parts: a Postgres database containing the experts coding, indices and related data; software management for management of data collection processes; a set of web-based coding and administrative interfaces; a public website with information, access to download of the data free of charge as well as a set of online tools for analyzing the data for example in terms of graphing tools

and motion charts.

The staff at the V-Dem Institute is responsible for the management and coordination of work with coders, Regional Managers and Country Coordinators, coordination of research, data collection, coding of type (A) data, quality control, cleaning and revisions of the data coded by experts, the working papers series, research workshops and annual conferences, capacity-building courses in quantitative research methods and the online analysis tool, country and thematic reports and policy briefs, guest scholarship and internship programs, and outreach and dissemination of the project. The Institute is hosting the management software that is connected to the Postgres database and the web-based coding interfaces, being the "heart" of the operations of the infrastructure, the update of the data, progress benchmarking, and management of experts. In a simplified description, the management software handles a roster of potential experts numbering some 15,000 individuals, and for the roughly 2,500 country experts a lot of information on qualifications, country-expertise, surveys, affiliation, emails sent and received, coding progress, forms and informational material sent, dates logged in and coding conducted, payments made and a series of other information. The management software was developed by Josefine Pernes at the V-Dem Institute in collaboration with the consultant agency Premium System AB. The coder management tool is just one out of over 20 tools. There are tools for management of countries, rounds of surveys, surveys and questions, Country Coordinators, Regional Managers, for logging activities, analyses of progress on recruitment and well as coding, planning and general management. Connected to this software is also a web-interface portal which makes is possible for Regional Managers to securely upload Country Expert rosters, without having to share confidential information via email. The quality control, cleaning, revision, uploading and extraction of data are carried out by the Data Operation Manager and Officers in Gothenburg. The tools used for these tasks have been developed specifically for the V-Dem research infrastructure.

The Postgres database consists of some 15 million data points and includes a large set of tables that relates to the data collection.

The V-Dem website can be viewed at www.v-dem.net. The website, survey interfaces and underlying relational database was originally designed following our guidance, by the Center for Research Computing (CRC) at the University of Notre Dame

2011-2013. It has since been extensively overhauled and refined by the independent company Imaginary Landscape in a process directed from Natalia Stepanova at the V-Dem Institute. The most used section of the website and the one that will attract more and more attention in the coming years, is the section hosting the online tools for analysis. Specifically designed for the V-Dem data and website, we have at present four tools for online analysis.

- Country Graphs: for displaying user-selected series of variables for one country over time, allowing for several design features such as varying time period, as well as "drilling down" into the components of indices at the will of the users, and allows for free download of graphs in pdf or another selected format.

- Variable Graph: As above but with the ability to compare many countries for one variable at a time.

- Map: Allows for mapping the level of democracy or the level of development on a particular indicator on to the world map of nations 1945-present, this tool is under development and will be made public at a later stage.

- Motion Chart: Allows for bivariate graphical modeling over time of two variables with control/illustration of a third variable, using the same type of software Hans Rosling has used for his famous illustrations of the Gapminder initiative.

- Features to come: Radar chart.

The V-Dem website is also progressively expanding to provide additional services besides download of the data and online analysis tools. V-Dem indicators, coding schemes, aggregation formulas, podcasts of selected V-Dem talks, a V-Dem Working Paper series with emerging results based on the data, thematic and country reports and policy briefs on democracy are elements that will be featured in years to come.

The website also hosts the coding interface where Country Experts submit their ratings. Almost all data is entered online with exceptions for those doing lateral coding. The coding interfaces consist of a series of web-based functions that in combination allow experts to log in to the system using their individual, randomized username and self-assigned, secret password, access the series of surveys assigned to them for a particular country (or set of countries), and submit ratings for each question in each survey over long series of years (typically 113 years in the first phase of the V-Dem data collection). The coding interfaces combines features such as allowing for many types of questions

(binominal, ordinal, multiple selection, etc.), country-specific and question-specific year masks (for example to allow coding of elections only in years they occurred), question-specific instructions and clarifications, and importantly assignment of coder-self assessed confidence levels for year rating, in every country-year. All data except confidential information about the coders is made public.

Outreach and Communications

The current project is international in character and composition to a much greater extent than any other democracy index. With dual headquarters on two different continents, the project team – consisting of Principal Investigators, Program Managers and Data Managers, Project Managers, Research Fellows, Regional Managers, Country Experts, and Country Coordinators – includes nationals of virtually every country in the world. The International Advisory Board includes nationals of Brazil, Burkina Faso, Canada, Ghana, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Mongolia, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Russia, South Korea, Turkey, the United States, and Yemen. Altogether, members of the project team and the advisory board connect the V-Dem project to several dozen universities located in every region of the world. Most important, V-Dem currently enlists over 2,500 Country Experts from nearly every country in the world to serve as coders for our questionnaires.

We anticipate that the direct involvement of academics and professionals in V-Dem will result in numerous projects, many of which are collaborative in nature. Indeed, many of these collaborative projects have already begun. In future decades, we anticipate that the V-Dem database and web site will become a focal point for policymakers, practitioners, students, and scholars across the social sciences that are interested in democracy.

To facilitate this, we have created a visiting scholars program for selected individuals who have served as country experts, Regional Managers, or advisors in the project so that they can visit the V-Dem Institute at the University of Gothenburg for a period of a month or so. During this time, they are expected to complete research on a theme related to the project.

The V-Dem Institute holds annual conferences at University of Gothenburg, as well as smaller workshops, as means to further stimulate innovative collaborations and as additional venues for generating new ideas and publicizing the results of research

conducted with V-Dem data.

We are also introducing the project at social science conferences throughout the world. This includes the International Political Science Association meetings, at workshops organized with our Regional Managers in Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe, and Latin America, and at meetings of regional political science associations (Africa, East Asia, Southeast Asia, Europe, Latin America, the United States). Project team members and members of the advisory board who live or work in each region will assist in that region's conferences.

Publications in high-profile academic journals and press outlets of a more popular nature will ensure that all relevant communities of interest are informed of the availability of V-Dem and how it can be used to help them do their work better.

V-Dem has also initiated a working paper series, up to date, 27 working papers are posted on the V-Dem website – and there are more to come. All data is a public good but we are also asking users of the data to contribute initial drafts of their work to the V-Dem Working Paper series. We anticipate that by the release of the data, V-Dem data will generate an increasing number of working papers, journal articles, chapters, and books by scholars around the world, contributing to a growing stream of interrelated research.

Traffic to the website, as channeled by Google and other search engines and links on related sites, offers a further channel for outreach – making V-Dem accessible to anyone who searches on key terms (e.g., "democracy"). Funding permitting, we plan to commission the creation of a V-Dem App for smart devices that would enable users to check scores for selected countries, variables, and years, and even to generate color-coded graphs and maps on demand. The V-Dem App will also provide access to working papers, and podcasts of selected V-Dem talks. We are also reaching out to the public via social media, and we are launching a weekly graph to attract attention.

Policy Relevance and International Collaborations

In terms of policy-oriented work, V-Dem is aiming to reach out to a wider community of policymakers, practitioners and organizations beyond academia. In order to do so, we have engaged in several collaborations and participated in different types of policy forums and dialogues. Below we are listing a selection:

- V-Dem and International IDEA entered into a collaboration during 2014. This has generated funding via NORAD/Norway and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs-Sweden, members of IDEA. The funding includes updating of data for 40 countries as well as a series of country reports. We are now co-fundraising with IDEA with the aim to gain wider support for a multi-year collaboration including annual updating of the V-Dem data and country briefs, joint conferences and publications, and outreach and training activities.

- V-Dem has been involved in UNDP's work on how to measure Sustainable Development Goal 16After presenting the V-Dem data and achievements in the UNDP Headquarter in New York, V-Dem has been active in the discussions on how to measure the milestones for Goal 16 in a Virtual Network expert group organized by UNDP. In the report resulting from the network, 60 V-Dem indicators are included. In connection to this V-Dem representatives have participated in several high level meetings devoted to the post-MDG agenda.

- We have developed an index on political participation, based on V-Dem data, for the Council of Europe.

- We are frequently conducting capacity building trainings for NGOs, young researchers and partner organizations. For instance, in July 2015 we led a workshop in Fiji for a large number of organizations from Melanasia on how to measure democracy progress in the region. We are also conducting statistical trainings on quantitative research methods and how to use the V-Dem online analysis tools and data, first one was held in Alexandrina, Egypt in October 2015.

- The V-Dem Institute produces thematic reports and country reports based on the V-Dem data and to this data 10 such reports have been released. In order to become even more policy-relevant, V-Dem also offers policy briefs based on the V-Dem data and the working papers of the project. The purpose is to communicate the latest research to the policy community in a brief and accessible way.

- The team has also had direct interaction and often substantial exchange with for

example: European Partnership for Democracy (EPD), OECD / DAC, Fordi, UNDP, UN Democracy Fund, USAID, the European Endowment for Democracy, Transparency International, Global Integrity, the Foundation for International Relations and Foreign Dialogue (Fride) Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), The Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD), The African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP), the World Bank Collaboration on International ICT Policy in East and Southern Africa (CIPESA), The National Endowment for Democracy (NED), The United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade / Australian Aid, Zambia National Women's Lobby, Foundation for Democratic Process / Zambia, Swisspeace Foundation, the International Forum for Democratic Studies, German Development Institite, GIZ, CARE / DK, IBIS / DK, ONE, and many more.

In addition to this, we are also in the process of establishing regional V-Dem centers all around the world. These centers will bring V-Dem closer to the local and regional levels, and will further enhance regional research and the involvement of regional scholars. V-Dem Regional Centers have been already established in Estonia and Egypt, and are evolving in Portugal, Kyrgyzstan, the Philippines, South Africa, Zambia and Burkina Faso.

Progress to Date

The progress of V-Dem may be summarized in three phases.

First, there is the conception and management of the project itself, including the pilot study. This phase was completed in October 2011. With the support of Sweden's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Riksbankens Jubileumsfond (Sweden), the Vice-Chancellor's Office, the College of social Sciences, and the Department of Political Science at University of Gothenburg, and the Kellogg Institute and other bodies at the University of Notre Dame, we conducted a pilot study in twelve countries from May to December 2011. These included two countries from each of six regions: Mexico and Suriname in the Americas, Japan and Burma in Asia, Russia and Albania in the post-Communist region, South Africa and Ghana in Africa, Egypt and Yemen (North and South) in the Middle East, and Sweden and Switzerland in Europe. These pairs were chosen to represent countries in each region that, in our

judgment, would be fairly easy, and fairly hard, to code. (For example, in the Americas we judged that Mexico would be fairly easy and Suriname fairly difficult.)

Almost 100 experts submitted 461,000 country-date-question-expert observation ratings to the database. Preliminary analyses indicate that the methodology we developed was sound and worked as intended to collect data of highest quality. For example, we ask all experts not only to choose a response to each question but also to estimate their confidence in all their responses. The average summary certainty level in the pilot data is 84 percent, which means that based on the agreement among experts and their confidence in their ratings, we can be, on average, 84 percent confident that the summary scores are correct. Cronbach's alpha averages .709 (conventionally considered in the "acceptable" range) for the 131 pilot-study type (C) questions for which we have enough data to calculate it. In addition, very preliminary analyses have shown that aggregated scores discriminate well not only across countries and over time, but also across components. For example, a country can do well with respect to civil society but less well on administration of elections or legislative strength. Such distinctions are among the most important contributions of our approach. But we also used the pilot study data to pinpoint the weakest questions and modify or drop them, and used this information to revise the questionnaire extensively in order to improve reliability before the current phase of data collection. In addition, the pilot study demonstrated the need for having more coders/country-question, a better system for standardize instructions and management, as well as the need for an expanded post-survey questionnaire allowing for systematic assessment of potential biases in coding.

The second phase of V-Dem, comprising of data collection for the entire world from 1900 to 2012, began in March 2012 and was concluded in fall 2014. We covered 167 of the 197 countries/territories existing today, this required the involvement of some 2,500 coders. The database now contains more than 15 million data records.

This phase also involved cleaning of the data, conducting extensive quality control and measures for correcting for errors, and finally preparations of the data for public through the web site. The full V-Dem dataset, which was first released by the end of December 2015, includes the data collected through the country experts' survey, factual data collected by assistant researchers together with numerous other existing democracy indicators and indices, and finally, data on background factors. Several grants have also

made it possible for the team to begin a large-scale research program addressing the issues of democratization both in terms of endogenous processes of sequencing and diffusion, and the role of various exogenous factors in explaining transitions to and development of various types of democracies.

By December 2014, V-Dem entered into a third phase where three somewhat separate activities run simultaneously.

A) *Updates*. In December 2014 to March 2015 the first update of the data was completed. We collected data for 2013-2014 for 54 countries and collected data for the full time period from 1900 to 2014 for 6 new countries. The data collected was launched online 31 March 2015. By March 2016 the second update was concluded. This time, we updated the data for 76 countries for 2013-2015. Going forward we hope to be able to update the data on an annual or biannual basis for all countries. The next update takes place December 2016 - March 2017, the data will be launched by March 31, 2017. When updating the data, we build on our established network of Regional Managers, Country Coordinators, and Country Experts;

B) *Outreach & Dissemination*. This involves the V-Dem institute reaching out to potential end-users (including the community of democracy practitioners) with general information but also research outputs and data resources, training, workshops, and conferences possibly involving producing country- and thematic reports as well as some form of annual report for the policy community, as well as the possibility of establishing Regional V-Dem Centers in collaboration with our Regional Managers; and

C) *Historical V-Dem*. The goal is to extend coding for as many political units and as many indicators and years as possible of the period from 1800 to 1899 in order to supplement the current coverage. This project is funded by the Swedish and Norwegian Research Councils and the data collection started in December 2015, principally hosted by Lund University (Jan Teorell) and University of Oslo (Carl-Henrik Knutsen).

Funding

The principal funding for the pilot phase of the program came from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Sweden, supplemented by a small grant from the Riksbankens Jubileumsfond.

The Second Phase was funded by the Research Council of Norway (through a collaborative arrangement with Håvard Hegre, Oslo University) which financed data collection for 17 countries; the Canadian International Development Agency funded another 12 countries; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Denmark/Danida provided resources to conduct data collection for 14 countries; the European Commission/EuroAid supplied a contract that contributed to both data collection in 42 countries and a series of country- and thematic reports as well as database and website programming; an additional 47 countries' data collection was provided for with funding from Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Sweden; research grants from the Swedish and Danish national research councils allowed us to collect data in 29 more countries; and a contribution form the Quality of Government Institute gave the opportunity to collect the data for 3 more countries. We thus secured funding for the data collection in 173 of the current 197 countries in the world with a total funding of about USD 4 mn.

The third phase focuses on updating the data for these 173 countries, and enhancing processing and quality control. International IDEA financed data collection in 6 countries and update of the data in 29 countries (2013-2014); European Commission/EuroAid provided funding for update of the data in 21 countries over five years (2014-2019); Ellen Lust/Swedish Research Council provided funds for five additional countries in MENA (2013-2015); and University of Gothenburg contributed funding to cover about 60 countries (2013-2017). We also recently got a grant from the Marianne and Marcus Wallenberg Foundation for covering updates of 35 countries (2013-2019).

The hosting universities, the Kellogg Institute of Notre Dame and the University of Gothenburg, have provided substantial seed funds for the pilot phase and both institutions have committed additional co-funding for the data collection: University of Notre Dame at USD 500,000 and University of Gothenburg at about USD 2,000,000.

Outreach, capacity building and networking with Regional Managers and Country Coordinators across the world has also been supported by the Riksbankens Jubileumsfond during 2012 and 2013.

Sustainability

V-Dem must continually be revised and updated in order to remain useful for scholars, practitioners, and citizens. The set of indicators comprising V-Dem may be expanded, and some indicators may require revision. In the latter case, revisions will need to be implemented systematically (for all countries and years in the database) so that equivalence across countries and through time is maintained.

Most importantly, V-Dem will need to be updated on an annual or semiannual basis in order for the data to stay relevant. We may use these updates as opportunities to re-code prior years (e.g., the 5 years prior to the update), offering a further check on inter-coder (or intra-coder) reliability. In any case, we would employ the same coders whenever possible, further enhancing the efficiency of each update (since coders would be already familiar with the database and the on-line coding system).

At present, we are discussing continued funding of (bi-)annual updates with our existing funders and other interested parties for the period 2017-2020.