

# Democratization

## Conceptualisation and measurement

Jos Elkink

University College Dublin

25 January 2011

Conceptualisation

Venezuela

Operationalisation

Measurement

Measures of democracy

**Concept:** abstract notion (in social science). E.g. “culture”, “democracy”, “money”.

**Conceptualisation:** defining the concept.

**Operationalization:** deciding on how to measure the concept.

## Conceptualisation

Venezuela

Operationalisation

Measurement

Measures of democracy

Conceptualisation

Venezuela

Operationalisation

Measurement  
Measures of  
democracy

What do you think of when you think of a democracy?

What are requirements for a country to be considered democratic?

Generally, concepts of democracy can be divided in two types:

**Minimalist:** universal suffrage, regular elections and basic civil rights;

**Substantialist** (or inclusive): political equality in actual practice.

(Rudebeck 2010)

Generally, concepts of democracy can be divided in two types:

**Minimalist:** universal suffrage, regular elections and basic civil rights;

**Substantialist** (or inclusive): political equality in actual practice.

In contemporary theories of democratization, almost all definitions are minimalist.

(Rudebeck 2010)

Democracy is “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 1976: 269)



Democracy “as a political system which supplies regular constitutional opportunities for changing the governing officials, and a social mechanism which permits the largest possible part of the population to influence major decisions by choosing among contenders for political office.”

Democracy as a regime where the government is fully responsive to its citizens.

Democracy as a regime where the government is fully responsive to its citizens.

**Polyarchy** as a regime by many, where government is mostly responsive to many citizens.

For a country to be a polyarchy, citizens must be able to:

- ▶ formulate preferences;

1. Freedom to form and join organizations
2. Freedom of expression
3. Right to vote
4. Right of political leaders to compete for support
5. Right of political leaders to compete for support
6. Alternative sources of information

For a country to be a polyarchy, citizens must be able to:

- ▶ formulate preferences;
- ▶ signify preferences;

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
6. Alternative sources of information
7. Free and fair elections

For a country to be a polyarchy, citizens must be able to:

- ▶ formulate preferences;
- ▶ signify preferences;
- ▶ have equal weight to preferences.



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
6. Alternative sources of information
7. Free and fair elections
8. Institutions for making government policies depend on votes

Two dimensions to democracy:

- ▶ Political contestation
- ▶ Participation

(Dahl 1971, 4)

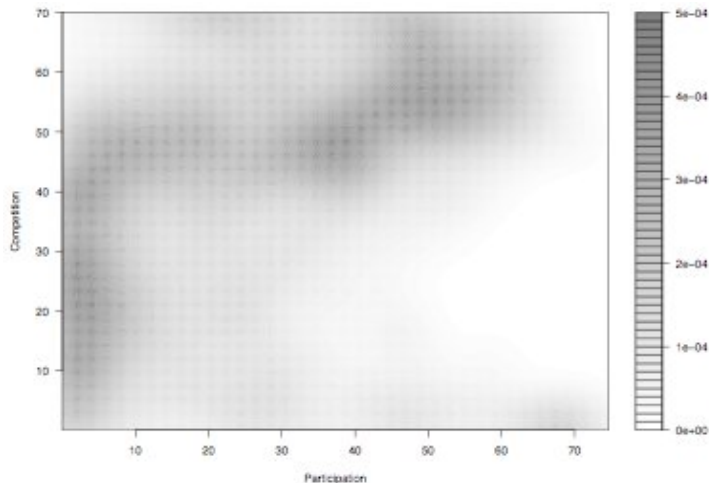


Figure 1.1: Density of regime-years in Dahl's two dimensions of democracy 1816-2000. Based on measures of democracy by Vanhanen (1997).

Conceptualisation

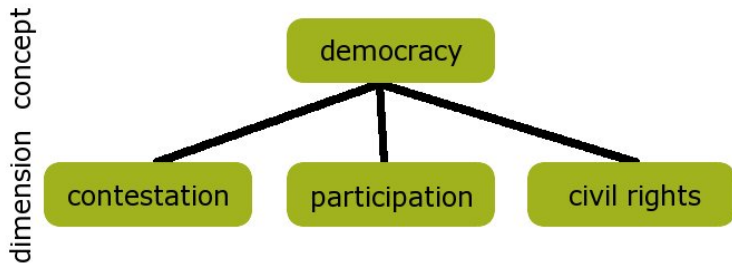
Venezuela

Operationalisation

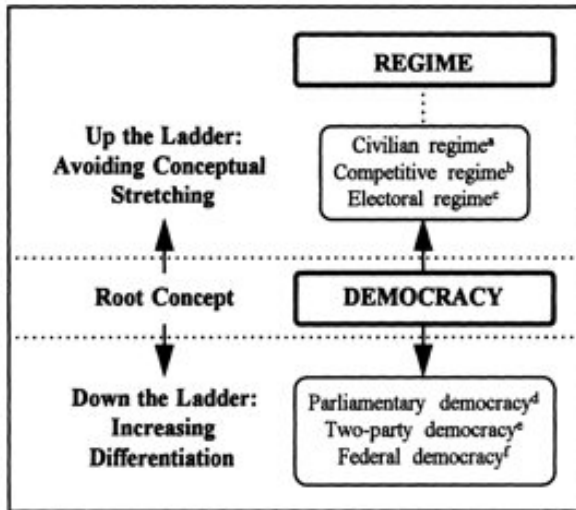
Measurement  
Measures of  
democracy

Democracy requires both “democratic constitutionalism” (rule based on universal suffrage, regular elections, legal guarantees for free discussion and opposition for everybody, etc.) and “popular sovereignty” (equalisation of power with regard to rule over matters of common concern and significance).

(Rudebeck 2002: 175–176)



# Ladder of abstraction



democracy

Jos Elkink

Conceptualisation

Venezuela

Operationalisation

Measurement  
Measures of  
democracy

<b>1. Diminished from Procedural Minimum Definition</b>		
<b>(1a)</b> <b>Missing Attribute: Full Suffrage</b> Limited democracy <sup>a</sup> Male democracy <sup>b</sup> Oligarchical democracy <sup>c</sup>	<b>(1b)</b> <b>Missing Attribute: Full Contestation</b> Controlled democracy <sup>d</sup> De facto one-party democracy <sup>e</sup> Restrictive democracy <sup>f</sup>	<b>(1c)</b> <b>Missing Attribute: Civil Liberties</b> Electoral democracy <sup>g</sup> Hard democracy <sup>h</sup> Illiberal democracy <sup>i</sup>
<b>2. Diminished from Expanded Procedural Minimum Definition</b>		
<b>Missing Attribute: Elected Government Has Effective Power to Govern</b> Guarded democracy <sup>j</sup> Protected democracy <sup>k</sup> Tutelary democracy <sup>l</sup>		

Democracy

Transition

Democratization

Democratic consolidation



“A **democratic transition** is complete when sufficient agreement has been reached about political procedures to produce an elected government, when a government comes to power that is the direct result of a free and popular vote, when this government *de facto* has the authority to generate new policies, and when the executive, legislative and judicial power generated by the new democracy does not have to share power with other bodies *de jure*.”

(Linz & Stepan 1996: 3)

A democracy is **consolidated** when:

no significant actor spends resources attempting to achieve objectives by creating a nondemocratic regime or turning to violence;

(Linz & Stepan 1996: 6)

A democracy is **consolidated** when:

no significant actor spends resources attempting to achieve objectives by creating a nondemocratic regime or turning to violence;

strong majority of public opinion pro-democratic;

(Linz & Stepan 1996: 6)

A democracy is **consolidated** when:

no significant actor spends resources attempting to achieve objectives by creating a nondemocratic regime or turning to violence;

strong majority of public opinion pro-democratic;

governmental and non-governmental forces throughout the territory of the state are subjected to and habituated to the resolution of conflict within the democratic process.

(Linz & Stepan 1996: 6)

Conceptualisation

Venezuela

Operationalisation

Measurement

Measures of democracy

Conceptualisation

Venezuela

Operationalisation

Measurement  
Measures of  
democracy

Is (contemporary) Venezuela a democracy?

Conceptualisation

Venezuela

Operationalisation

Measurement

Measures of democracy

Conceptualisation

Venezuela

Operationalisation

Measurement  
Measures of  
democracy

Conceptualisation

Venezuela

Operationalisation

Measurement

Measures of democracy

Conceptualisation

Venezuela

Operationalisation

Measurement  
Measures of  
democracy



**Validity:** does the measurement measure what it is suppose to measure?

**Accuracy:** does the measurement measure correctly? (e.g. 2.3 when really 2.5)

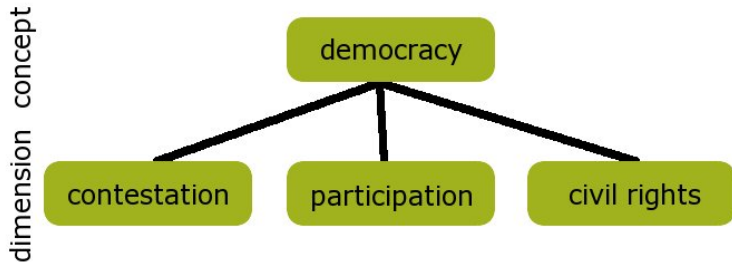
**Reliability:** would repeated measurements lead to similar results?

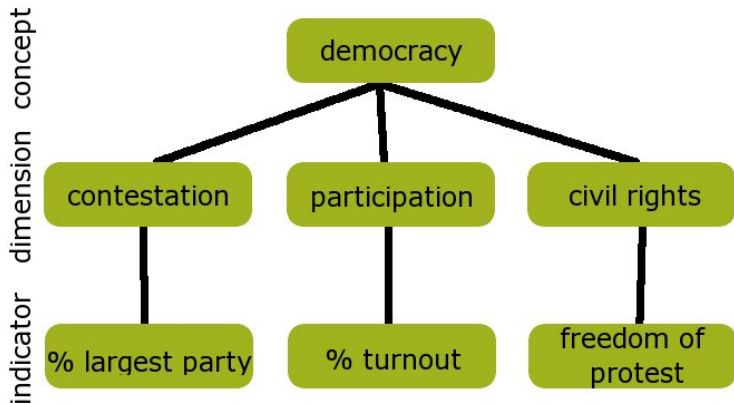
**Precision:** is the measurement precise? (e.g. 2.3 vs 2.31432)

Measures *a/ways* contain error, but this error can be:

**Random** (i.e. on average correct)

**Systematic** or biased (i.e. on average incorrect)





Conceptualisation

Venezuela

Operationalisation

Measurement

Measures of democracy

Conceptualisation

Venezuela

Operationalisation

Measurement

Measures of  
democracy

- ▶ Scale or dichotomy?

- ▶ Scale or dichotomy?
- ▶ One- or multidimensional?



**Table 1** Ten measures of democracy

<i>Measure</i>	<i>Countries</i>	<i>Years</i>	<i>Scale</i>	<i>Components</i>
Arat	65–150	1948–1982	29–109	Participation, Inclusiveness, Competitiveness, and Coerciveness
BLM	5	1946–2000	0.0, 0.5, or 1.0	Political Liberties, Competitive Elections, Inclusive Participation, Civilian Supremacy, and National Sovereignty
Bollen	60, 70, 105, 117, and 158	1950, 1955, 1960, 1965, and 1980	0–100	Political Liberties and Popular Sovereignty
Freedom House	135–191	1972–2000	1–7	Political Rights and Civil Liberties
Hadenius	129	1988	0–10	Elections and Political Freedoms
PACL	66–189	1946–2000	0 or 1	Executive Elections, Legislative Elections, and Party Competition
Polity	60–151	1946–2000	–10 to –10	Competitiveness of Participation, Regulation of Participation, Competitiveness of Executive Recruitment, Openness of Executive Recruitment, and Constraints on the Executive
Polyarchy	162 and 191	1985 and 2000	0–10	Free and Fair Elections, Freedom of Organization, Freedom of Expression, and Pluralism in the Media
PRC	64–143	1946–1998	1–4	Competitiveness, Inclusiveness, and Political Liberties
Vanhanen	41–155	1946–2000	0.01–53.81	Competition and Participation

democracy

Jos Elkink

Conceptualisation

Venezuela

Operationalisation

Measurement  
Measures of  
democracy

“Freedom in the World, Freedom House’s flagship publication, is the standard-setting comparative assessment of global political rights and civil liberties. Published annually since 1972, the survey ratings and narrative reports on 193 countries and 15 related and disputed territories.”

“Freedom in the World, Freedom House’s flagship publication, is the standard-setting comparative assessment of global political rights and civil liberties. Published annually since 1972, the survey ratings and narrative reports on 193 countries and 15 related and disputed territories.”

“The survey does not explicitly measure democracy or democratic performance. Rather, it measures rights and freedoms integral to democratic institutions.”

- ▶ Electoral process (12 pt)
- ▶ Political pluralism and participation (16 pt)
- ▶ Functioning of government (12 pt)

(<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=35&year=2006>)

- ▶ Freedom of expression and belief (16 pt)
- ▶ Associational and organizational rights (12 pt)
- ▶ Rule of law (16 pt)
- ▶ Personal autonomy and individual rights (16 pt)

(<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=35&year=2006>)

- ▶ Based on Dahl's two dimensions of democracy

- ▶ Based on Dahl's two dimensions of democracy
- ▶ Participation: turnout as % of total population

- ▶ Based on Dahl's two dimensions of democracy
- ▶ Participation: turnout as % of total population
- ▶ Competition: 100 minus % seats to largest party



- ▶ Based on Dahl's two dimensions of democracy
- ▶ Participation: turnout as % of total population
- ▶ Competition: 100 minus % seats to largest party
- ▶ Sum of these two scales are Index of Democracy

“The Polity scheme consists of six component measures that record key qualities of executive recruitment, constraints on executive authority, and political competition. It also records changes in the institutionalized qualities of governing authority.”

(<http://www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm>)

“autocracies” (-10 to -6)

“anocracies” (-5 to +5 and the three special values:  
-66, -77, and -88)

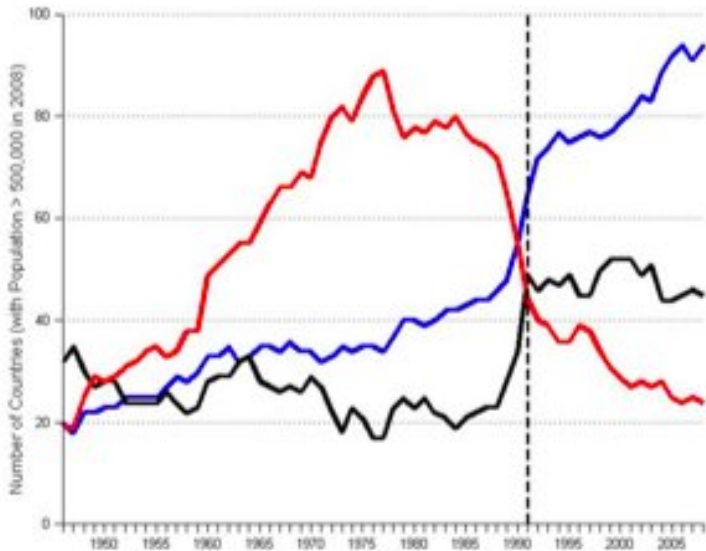
“democracies” (+6 to +10)

(<http://www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm>)

# Polity IV: trends

democracy

Jos Elkink



Conceptualisation

Venezuela

Operationalisation

Measurement  
Measures of  
democracy

Competitiveness of participation	Democracy	Autocracy
Competitive	3	
Transitional	2	
Factional	1	
Restricted		1
Suppressed		2

Regulation of participation	Democracy	Autocracy
Regulated		
Factional or transitional		
Factional/restricted		1
Restricted		2

Competitiveness of recruitment	Democracy	Autocracy
Election	2	
Transitional	1	
Selection		2

Openness of recruitment	Democracy	Autocracy
Election	1	
Dual: hereditary & election	1	
Dual: hereditary & designation		1
Closed		1

(Gleditsch & Ward 1997: 365)

Constraints on chief executive	Democracy	Autocracy
Parity or subordination	4	
Substantial limitations	2	
Slight to moderate limitations		1
Unlimited power		3

(Gleditsch & Ward 1997: 365)

Gleditsch & Ward (1997), "Double take: a reexamination of democracy and autocracy in modern polities." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 41: 361-83.

- ▶ Categorical nature of Polity



Gleditsch & Ward (1997), “Double take: a reexamination of democracy and autocracy in modern polities.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 41: 361-83.

- ▶ Categorical nature of Polity
- ▶ “Multipath” issue and arbitrary additive scale

Gleditsch & Ward (1997), “Double take: a reexamination of democracy and autocracy in modern polities.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 41: 361-83.

- ▶ Categorical nature of Polity
- ▶ “Multipath” issue and arbitrary additive scale
- ▶ Higher dimensionality suggested by indicators than in resulting data

Gleditsch & Ward (1997), "Double take: a reexamination of democracy and autocracy in modern polities." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 41: 361-83.

- ▶ Categorical nature of Polity
- ▶ "Multipath" issue and arbitrary additive scale
- ▶ Higher dimensionality suggested by indicators than in resulting data
- ▶ Really just about constraints on chief executive

Gleditsch & Ward (1997), "Double take: a reexamination of democracy and autocracy in modern polities." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 41: 361-83.

- ▶ Categorical nature of Polity
- ▶ "Multipath" issue and arbitrary additive scale
- ▶ Higher dimensionality suggested by indicators than in resulting data
- ▶ Really just about constraints on chief executive
- ▶ "The practical import is to focus more on the change that does exist within these authority patterns by a greater concentration on the subdimensions."

Indicator	Bollen	FH	Vanhanen
Constraints	.82	.85	.82
Competitiveness, recruitment	.85	.83	.79
Openness, recruitment	.37	.33	.31
Regulation, participation	.11	.10	.28
Competitiveness, participation	.82	.92	.86

(Gleditsch & Ward 1997: 379)

Treier & Jackman (2008), "Democracy as a latent variable."  
American Journal of Political Science 52(1): 201-217.

- ▶ Measurement error in indicators

Treier & Jackman (2008), "Democracy as a latent variable."  
American Journal of Political Science 52(1): 201-217.

- ▶ Measurement error in indicators
- ▶ Less arbitrary aggregation of subdimensions

Treier & Jackman (2008), "Democracy as a latent variable."  
American Journal of Political Science 52(1): 201-217.

- ▶ Measurement error in indicators
- ▶ Less arbitrary aggregation of subdimensions
- ▶ Develop model with unknown latent variable





“To help alleviate these problems, this paper eschews the difficult - and often arbitrary - decision to use one particular democracy scale over another and favors a cumulative approach that allows us to leverage the measurement efforts of numerous scholars simultaneously.”

(Pemstein *et al* 2010: 2)

“To help alleviate these problems, this paper eschews the difficult - and often arbitrary - decision to use one particular democracy scale over another and favors a cumulative approach that allows us to leverage the measurement efforts of numerous scholars simultaneously.”

Is this reasonable?

(Pemstein *et al* 2010: 2)

# Measurement

democracy

Jos Elkink

	Valid?	Reliable?	Accurate?	Precise?
FH				
Vanhanen				
Polity				
T&J				
PMM				

Conceptualisation

Venezuela

Operationalisation

Measurement

Measures of  
democracy