

## Call for Papers

Writer's Conference at the Humboldt-Universität in Berlin, from August 20<sup>th</sup> to August 21<sup>st</sup>,  
2018,

organized by the DVPW-Working Group Democracy Research

# Measuring Understanding of Democracy: Discussing Solutions for Methodological Fallacies

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In recent years we observe a rising scientific interest in analyzing the understanding of democracy (UODs). This is because political culture scholars have realized that it is not enough to measure support for democracy only, but also requires a look at the citizen's understandings of democracy. These studies pointed out that we do not only have a plurality of democratic understandings between countries and regions (Dalton et al. 2007), but also between political elites and citizens. These findings are not only relevant for the comparisons between the West and the Non-West (Schubert/Klein 2016), but also amongst the established democracies in the West itself (Ferrín/Kriesi 2016).

With the increase of published research we can also find a broad variety in conceptual and methodological approaches to measure these understandings of democracy. With respect to the conceptual variety, we can see studies, which vary in their normative profiles of democracy, which they want to measure. Others are including non-democratic ideals and measure whether they would be accepted as part of a democracy (Welzel/Kirsch 2017). We find minimalist approaches, where scholars just look at what people are mentioning when asked to define democracy. We can also find maximalist approaches, where scholars ask a broad variety of questions that try to capture a variety of democratic profiles.

With respect to methodological approaches, we can distinguish between quantitative and qualitative approaches to measure these understandings of democracy, and between survey-based and non-survey based approaches. Those different methodological approaches might help to solve some linguistic and cultural obstacles, which can be found in cross-country and cross-cultural research (Davidov et al. 2011). They might also help to lower the bias of lip-service and state-/self-censorship and allow the generalization of findings.

The idea of this Call for Papers is to bring together scholars to discuss the methodological fallacies and search for solutions concerning the measurement of understandings of democracy around the globe. Therefore, authors of selected papers will be invited to a writer's conference which aims at practical problems concerning the measurement of understandings of democracy. Contributions can focus on one of the following aspects and/or cover innovative approaches beyond that:

- Quantitative approaches:
  - Survey-based:
    - Should we ask open or closed questions?
    - Should we use ranking or rating measurements?
  - How many items should we use? Non-survey-based:
    - What kind of sources could we use to measure the political discourse on understandings of democracy?
- Qualitative approaches:
  - Q-Method?

- Focus groups?
- Repertory Grid?
- Semantic analysis?
- Units of analysis:
  - Small-n vs. large-n-studies?
  - Groups of people (young vs. old, migrants vs. non-migrants, elites vs citizens)?
- Comparisons:
  - Comparing over time?
  - Cross-country/cross-culture comparisons?
- Methods & Approaches:
  - Should the measurement of UODs be driven more deductively (by scholars) or inductively (by citizens)?
  - What kind of methods might help us to improve our measurements (PCA; EFA, CFA, multidimensional scaling)?
  - Mixed-method designs, multi-level designs?

Answering those questions will help us to offer solutions to future research. Therefore, we are interested in research articles on those methodological questions opening up new perspectives to the empirical research on measuring understanding of democracy.

In preparation of a publication project on this topic, we will organize a workshop to discuss selected papers and the frame of the special issue. Selected papers will be invited to get published in a special issue of an international peer review journal. The workshop will take place at the Humboldt-Universität Berlin/Germany and is scheduled from August 20<sup>th</sup> to August 21<sup>st</sup>, 2018. We will apply for external funding for participants expenses and conference facilities.

Please send your proposal (max 500 words) by April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2018 to [toralf.stark@uni-due.de](mailto:toralf.stark@uni-due.de), [norma.osterberg-kaufmann@hu-berlin.de](mailto:norma.osterberg-kaufmann@hu-berlin.de), [ch.mohamad@uni-wuerzburg.de](mailto:ch.mohamad@uni-wuerzburg.de) and [sophia.schubert@fu-berlin.de](mailto:sophia.schubert@fu-berlin.de).