

**Comments on:**

**"The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems"**

**A Stimulus Paper Circulated by**

**The International Committee for Research into Elections and Representative Democracy  
(ICORE)**

**Steering Committee:**

**Jacques Thomassen (chair)**  
**University of Twente**

**Steven J. Rosenstone**  
**Institute for Social Research**  
**University of Michigan**

**Hans-Dieter Klingemann**  
**Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung**

**John Curtice**  
**University of Strathclyde**

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0.0. Introduction

As part of its call for an internationally collaborative program of cross-national electoral research, the International Committee for Research into Elections and Representative Democracy (ICORE) circulated a stimulus paper -- "The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems." That paper identified several themes around which this collaborative effort might be organized, sketched a study design, and suggested how the planning process might unfold. Eighty-five social scientists from 42 different polities offered comments and suggestions that we summarize below.

Colleagues from around the world are enthusiastic about this endeavor. Nearly everyone endorses the proposal for international collaboration and expresses a willingness to join in the creation of a module of survey questions that we will all ask in our respective national election studies. Although we need to resolve a number of issues and work out many details, we begin our deliberations with consensus on the importance of this enterprise and with universal good will toward the goal of collaborating in a way that facilitates the collection of data that will support the comparative study of elections.

This document starts by summarizing reactions to the three broad themes discussed in the stimulus paper: electoral institutions (parliamentary versus presidential systems of government; the electoral rules that govern the casting and counting of ballots; political parties); the role that political parties play in encapsulizing political economic, racial, ethnic, and environmental conflict; and the nature of political alignments in the face of social change. Next, we review the suggestions that colleagues make for additional themes that might serve as the focus for this collaboration. We then turn to issues concerning the study design and implementation (timing of interviewing; issues about comparability in comparative survey research; quality of survey data). Next we summarize suggestions for survey questions that should be asked and macro-level data that should be collected. We close by reviewing comments that were made about data dissemination and funding.

1.0. Electoral Institutions (pp. 1-8)

Of the three general themes discussed in the stimulus paper, colleagues are clearly most enthusiastic about a collaborative study of the impact of electoral institutions on the quality and nature of democratic choice.

"The [stimulus] paper successfully outlines the major questions that ought to be tackled in order to properly understand how electoral systems affect electoral behavior. There is an urgent need for a collaborative program of research along the lines proposed here. It would seem more fruitful to focus, in a first stage at least, on only one theme. The most logical choice would be, I think, the impact of electoral institutions on voters" (André Blais, Université de Montréal, Canada).

"Concerning electoral institutions, I agree that the role of parties, the comparison of political systems (parliamentarianism vs. presidentialism), and allocation of legislative seats are central issues" (Oscar Hernandez, Universidad de Costa Rica).

"I think that the availability of hypotheses, theories and macro-level evidence all suggest that such a large-scale international cooperation would most easily bring about important results in regard to the effects of electoral institutions, legislative fragmentation, and comparative economic voting" (Gabor Toka, Central European University, Hungary).

"I welcome the proposal to organize a segment of national elections studies that contain questions relating to aspects of the electoral system. The study of electoral institutions seems more than ready for a large scale comparative project. The emergence of new democracies in recent years and instability in some existing ones and widespread voter disillusion with politicians have heightened interest in the fundamental structures of democracy" (Helena Catt, The University of Auckland, New Zealand).

"Being in full agreement with the premise that electoral systems do indeed constrain and condition the behavior and beliefs of citizens in their participation in democratic politics, I would like to signal my strong agreement with the idea which has led to the purposed ICORE Berlin conference. . . . I believe that comparative international study on electoral systems is long overdue" (Bishnu Ragoonath, The University of the West Indies, Trinidad).

Adam Przeworski (University of Chicago, USA) articulates a concern that several colleagues express: "I am . . . worried about the endogeneity of institutions. . . . Are electoral systems exogenous with regard to the structure of cleavages? Are parties exogenous with regard to various characteristics of voters?"

### 1.1. Parliamentarism vs. Presidentialism (pp. 2-4)

Colleagues also express interest in investigating the electoral consequences of parliamentary vs. presidential systems. Matthew Shugart (University of California, San Diego, USA) cautions, however, "that to pose the issue as "presidential versus parliamentary" obscures the variations in presidential powers (alluded to in a footnote) and the numerous regimes that fit neither category (France, Finland, etc.)." Gabor Toka (Central European University, Hungary) warns that "there is a potentially serious problem, . . . namely that there might be simply too few non-parliamentary and non-PR systems in the sample of participating countries.

### 1.2. The Political Consequences of Electoral Laws (pp. 4-5)

There was also strong support for investigating the political consequences of electoral laws. Herbert Kitschelt (Duke University, USA; and Humboldt University, Germany) writes: "In my view, it is particularly timely to analyze the behavioral assumptions and implications drawn by rational choice theories of institutions and strategic competition at the level of individual voter's perceptions, for example about the consequences of institutional incentives (e.g., electoral laws) and strategic configurations (e.g., the bargaining power of a party in coalition formulation)." Barry Ames (Washington University, USA) adds: "I think Latin Americanists will benefit from systematically collected data that bear on the relationship between questions of open-list versus closed-list electoral rules, ability to reelect officials immediately, etc. The same thing is true about the party theme: questions of accountability are important in newly consolidating democracies in Latin America, and this project could have considerable payoff."

The Japanese Election Studies team suggests that we examine "the association between electoral laws and the nature of representation. Much of [the literature on the mandate-independence controversy] has been normative discussion and there still are many empirical questions left untested. For example, does an electoral district magnitude influence the degree of congruence between what representatives assume as their job and what their constituency expects from their representatives? The proponents of the recent electoral reform in Japan claim that an introduction of a single-member district system will increase a chance that the Japanese elections will be contested on the basis of broader national issues. Their assumption is that the introduction of single-member district will enable candidates to conduct electoral campaigns on the bases of party platforms. It is reasonable, however, to expect that a smaller district will force candidates to 'listen' to individual demands of constituents even more than the old multi-member district system."

On the general theme of representation, Matthew Shugart (University of California, San Diego, USA) adds, "The point about local representation in presidential systems would seem to be conditional on the electoral system. Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina's book, after all, asserts that single-member districts inherently push legislators to cultivate local ties, but that presidentialism in the U.S. encourages more of a personal vote than does parliamentarism in the U.K."

Oscar Hernandez (Universidad de Costa Rica) suggests that "it would be useful to compare the costs of financing the electoral campaigns. Do electoral laws promote the emergence of new parties? How long are the campaign periods? How do voter registration systems differ?"

### 1.3. Political Parties (pp. 5-8)

Many colleagues endorse an inquiry into the role that political parties play in democratic systems. Russell Dalton (University of California, Irvine, USA) writes: "I think the theme of political parties has the greatest potential. . . . Parties are the central political sectors of electoral studies, yet we have very little cross-national evidence on the nature of party images, . . . the sources party attachments, . . . or images of party government (or its decline). Furthermore, a focus on partisan images has links to a wide range of other political and electoral phenomena -- and there is precious little good empirical research on this topic. As you note in the memo, this is an area with great and varied potential."

Oscar Hernandez (Universidad de Costa Rica) argues that "the two-party system deserves a close analysis. In Costa Rica, we have a two-party system that is becoming highly criticized. For the 1994 election, there was a great number of undecided voters (25%) 3 months before the election. Are the two main parties so close ideologically or are their campaign promises so similar?"

Gabor Toka (Central European University, Hungary) is more cautious: "There are many hypotheses about the relations between party fragmentation, ideological polarization, representation and accountability on page 6-7 of the draft proposal. I may well be wrong but I think that with the exception of the accountability under certain coalition governments theme, these hypotheses rather invite secondary analysis of available longitudinal data than original data collection. The same may apply for the effects of party organization on the clarity of parties' ideological positions and strength of party attachment and loyalty."

Several colleagues suggest that we investigate anti-party sentiment (Danica Fink Hafner, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia; Susan Scarrow, Harvard University, USA). Thomas Poguntke (Universität Mannheim, Germany) points to "the lack of adequate and cross-nationally comparable data on citizen's attitudes towards political parties." He suggests that "it is necessary to distinguish two dimensions of anti-party sentiment on the mass level: a) the rejection of existing parties without a principled rejection of party as actor in the political process; b) generalized rejection of party as actor in the political process."

Some colleagues argue that we should attend to a broader range of institutions: political groups, social movements, unions, and the church: how they structure politics and how they mobilize participation. The assumption that parties are central needs to be tested. (Robert Tardos, Research Group for Communication Sciences, Hungary; Guillermo O'Donnell, University of Notre Dame, USA).

## 2.0. Encapsulizing Political Conflict (pp. 8-10)

Few colleagues express much enthusiasm for investigating differences in the ways that political parties encapsulate conflict. There is also little support for examining conflict around economic change, ethnicity and race, or the environment. As Barry Ames (Washington University, USA) put it: "The three sub-themes don't really resonate with me at all. Perhaps this is because the countries I think about are mostly recovering from a long-term debt problem that severely crippled economic growth in the 1980s. . . . Latin America is still of region where distributional questions are very serious. This is about 'class.' I would think your theme needs to touch much more directly on class. Of course there is a neo-liberal economic movement in the region, with attendant declines in protection and the old-import substitution industrialization model, but that mostly affects people in the government or state sector of the economy. Unless these groups were targeted specifically, it's hard for me to see how you would be able to tap that kind of conflict."

Oscar Hernandez (Universidad de Costa Rica), expressed similar skepticism: "Economic change, the politics of ethnic and racial conflict, and global environmental change are certainly becoming increasingly relevant to the voter, internationally. In Costa Rica, economic change is more important, e.g. on accountability; ethical and ecological issues, however, are not factors that currently separate voters from the two main parties."

Several colleagues, though, urge that we attend to the ways in which politics and parties structure conflict and opinion. In post-socialist countries parties generate different conflicts than in the West: privatization, reconstruction of social structure, new institution-building, influence on creation of new social elites, etc. (Danica Fink Hafner, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia). Herbert Kitschelt (Duke University, USA; and Humboldt University, Germany) writes: "One of the main problems in the analysis of public opinion is to determine whether the public's issue opinions are the consequence of spontaneous social process of preference formation (via economic interests, cultural currents, etc.) or whether the competitive political struggle itself shapes voters' preference. We do have some evidence that in the short term, the latter is definitely and important element (see Zaller's work in the intermediately informed citizens, etc.). But does the same also prevail in the long term when we analyze basic political issue dimensions? For example, could it be a consequence of institutional and partisan attributes of the competitive arena in Britain, France, and Sweden that the political parties in these countries have traditionally competed more over questions of economic distribution and property rights than the political parties in Denmark, Germany, and the Netherlands, and that, as a consequence, voters in the first group of countries are more influenced by economic divisions in their choice of parties than in the second group?"

### 2.1. Economic Change (p. 8)

Ognian Shentov (Center for the Study of Democracy, Bulgaria) suggests that the theme of economic change may be useful for understanding electoral politics in Eastern Europe where "social and economic reforms since 1989 have created a situation where hardships are often attributed to reforms rather than to preceding communist national and international arrangements."

Jim Alt (Harvard University, USA) suggests inquiry into "differing national perceptions of economic tradeoffs and constraints and opportunities, a sort of cognitive companion to all the work done on the impact of the economy on the individual a few years ago."

### 2.2. The Politics of Ethnic and Racial Conflict (pp. 8-9)

Gabor Toka (Central European University, Hungary) writes: "I doubt whether racial and ethnic conflict as described in the draft would be a relevant subject of investigation in election studies. It is simply doubtful whether sufficiently large parts of the non-US electorates would be moved by the related issues. There is, however, a possibility that the guest-worker problem is just part of a broader, much more relevant, though mostly symbolic issue domain, which can be linked to the internationalization process and is said to have quite significance for both American and European elections. This theme is that of the various challenges to national identity in the face of changes in international power relations in both politics and economics. I could make more sense of this broader theme than that of ethnic and racial conflicts in the East European context."

### 2.3. Global Environmental Change (pp. 9-10)

No colleague endorses global environmental change as the focus of our cross-national inquiry into elections. "The environmental change and changing political alignments topics sound very broad themes where not many micro-level hypotheses are available, and the operationalization may be difficult and fairly demanding in terms of interview time that need to be devoted to them. Concerning the first, I think it would be worthwhile to do nothing before the ISSP 1994 data (which is devoted to environmentalist attitudes and the like) become available" (Gabor Toka, Central European University, Hungary). "While we all agreed that an increasing number of people show interest in environmental and ecological issues in recent years in Japan as well. The issues, however, have never been politicized in Japan like in Western Europe. The environmental movement have never been a major single issue during national level elections" (Japanese Election Studies). "Global environmental change is simply not an issue for people outside the OECD countries and Eastern Europe (Barry Ames, Washington University, USA).

### 3.0. Political Alignment in the Face of Social Change (pp. 10- 11)

Few colleagues commented on the theme of political alignments. Oscar Hernandez (Universidad de Costa Rica) suggests, however, that "close attention should be paid to young voters. Are they behaving in a different way as compared to middle-age or older groups? What is more important: the party, the candidate or the campaign process? What is the elector's credibility (by age) in the political system as an instrument to solve society's problems? What is the relative importance of the several means of expressing political participation (at the electoral booths, at the protest marches, street blockading, etc.)?"

### 4.0. Suggestions for Additional Themes

Colleagues have put on the table an extensive and wide ranging set of suggestions for additional themes that might organize our collaborative effort.

4.1. The stimulus paper envisioned this international collaboration would encompass both consolidated democracies and those undergoing democratic transitions. This design poses both extraordinary opportunities and challenges. Several colleagues express concern that the themes discussed in the stimulus paper are less relevant to electoral politics in Eastern Europe than in the West.

George Karasimeonov (University of Sofia, Bulgaria) writes: "All of the topics to be studied are of major importance especially for post-communist countries. Of course, these countries are just "creating" their civil society and party systems and the problems they are facing are quite different from those in developed countries. At the same time in many ways these unique transformations taking place in Eastern Europe present political scientists with new challenges to confirm or reject many of the established theories and presumptions. For example, . . . to what extent [does 'cleavage theory'] apply to post-communist societies? Are there new types of electoral systems which are more adapted to these transitions than the classical ones (for example various kinds of mixed systems)? Do the new parties represent parties or fractions, since most of them do not have roots in civil society? In many ways the question do 'parties matter' is coming to the forefront before they have established themselves. This explains the shrinking number of people participating in elections. In a way the parties are in crisis before they have come to life! What is the role of political elites and whom do they represent?" These questions require "nontraditional answers and revisions of many theories based on the experience of established democracies. The crumbling of the communist system brought much more unexpected challenges than foreseen and the deficiency of many imported theoretical models from developed democracies. All this should be taken into mind when the final framework of the study is established."

Pavel Campeanu (The Independent Center for Social Studies, Rumania) writes: "I have been really delighted with the theoretical density of this promising prelude and particularly with the systematic enumeration of what the political scientists still ignore. In my opinion such a study is as well necessary and possible.

"For me the main problem of the Project consists in its excessively Western approach. This state of mind seems to me the most obvious in the selection of topics, the determination of priorities, and in the bibliography. In this

region of the continent the most ardent problem is the dynamic trend toward the electoral rehabilitation of the former Communist Parties, connected with the so-called nostalgia; here the first source of inter-ethnic conflicts is not located in recent immigrations, but in centuries old traditional hostility between nationalities sharing the same territories, internal tensions which tend frequently to become external, inter-state conflicts; as for the bibliography, impressive by its richness, it doesn't include any author from Eastern Europe, despite the numerous papers, studies, articles, many of the published in Western languages.

"The crucial, methodological question which arises from such remarks is how to integrate in the Project not only the similarities, but also the most significant dissimilarities between the existing electoral systems. The distinctions between established and emerging democratic electoral systems oblige us to face another, consequential question: that of the limits of comparability. Maybe the Project should have a general object: comparison between electoral systems in democratic and predemocratic regimes. This dichotomous taxonomy could be extended through the inclusion of electoral systems in non-democratic regimes.

"My desire to prevent a possible one-sided Western approach cannot be fulfilled by a one-sided Eastern approach. What I wanted to suggest is not that in this region the specificity is comprehensive, but that it is real and significant. The aim . . . is not to deny the comparability, but to enlarge it."

Ognian Shentov (Center for the Study of Democracy, Bulgaria), similarly argues that, "Several additional problems should however be considered, if former "communist block" countries e.g. Bulgaria, are to be included in the comparative research: - Social and economic reforms since 1989 have created a situation where hardships are often attributed to reforms rather than to preceding communist national and international arrangements. This is a result of various factors, the most important being the lack of consistent interpretation patterns of the ongoing changes in public consciousness. - The political system and the electoral institutions as a whole are reformshaped: they are rather a product of the momentary balance of political forces than a system based on substantive reasons and tradition. - The political Left and Right have specific meaning and content which is in essence the reverse of traditional concepts of Left and Right. Apart from this obvious characteristic, it should be noted that there is a multitude of painful reform measures to be implemented that have no alternative. There are the bottom-line of reforms, and their political stance is clearly rightist. However, the often have to be implemented by leftist parties (coalitions) which accumulate public support due to the drastic downfall of living standards, the sharp rise of unemployment, etc. - The public role of private business is in many cases still arbitrary because the ongoing process of privatization creates objectional "wide spaces" for economic and political corruption."

We need to forge a research agenda that incorporates the intellectual concerns of scholars in both consolidated and emerging democratic regimes. At the same time, however, we need to recognize that some comparisons are more safely made across or between regime types while others are more safely made within regime type. As Oscar Hernandez (Universidad de Costa Rica) points out, there may some body of instrumentation that is most appropriate in consolidated regimes and other instrumentation that will serve the research needs of colleagues concerned with regimes undergoing democratic transition.

4.2. Information About Politics: Several colleagues suggest that we should attend to the level of information that people have about politics. Marc Swyngedouw (University of Leuven [IPSO], Belgium) writes: "a lot, if not most, of the questions with connection to citizen and voter behavior, start with the assumption of the rational choosing voter, who is very informed about politics, coalition, opposition etc. To our experience this kind of voter is only a small segment of the electorate. Most of the voters do not have sufficient information to evaluate efficiently government politics. . . . Research questions and hypothesis formulation will have to take this into account."

Marta Lagos (CERC, Chile) makes a similar point: "The first question that arises reading your paper is the level of information that the elector really has about their political system, and how much information is needed to take part in an informed election. Newer democracies have such problems, and high tech communication systems and electoral technology can take a large amount of voters to decide on minimum information."

4.3. Communication and the Mass Media: Ljiljana Ba evi (University of Belgrade, Serbia) suggests that communication and the mass media should be an important part of any electoral study, particularly one with a comparative electoral study design. "The mediating function of communication and the mass media in politics is axiomatic one. . . . There is almost no question posed in the [stimulus paper] which could be answered without study of normative, institutional, structural, economic, cultural and textual dimensions of media systems." Ba evi urges us to attend to the concepts of political communication and agenda setting.

4.4. Party Elites: Several colleagues suggest that data should also be gathered on party elites. As Ian McAllister (Australian Defense Force Academy) puts it: "National election studies invariably focus just on citizens -- and rightly so, since they elect governments. However, this is just one side the equation: it is parties and, more specifically, party elites, who determine the choices that voters are offered. Our national election studies have demonstrated that it is both easy and comparatively cheap to undertake a parallel study of major party election candidates to examine a range of themes, ranging from elite recruitment through mass-elite linkages and representation. In our three national surveys we have included all major party candidates. They have been surveyed using a self-completion questionnaire (the same methodology we use for the voters' surveys). With the co-operation of the major political parties, we have achieved response rates of 70 percent plus. By matching mass and elite data, we have been able to address a significantly wider range of theoretical and empirical questions than has been hitherto been possible using a mass survey only. Moreover, the cost component in the overall budget has been marginal (about 20 percent of the total survey cost) and the response rate [has been] excellent."

Herbert Kitschelt (Duke University, USA; and Humboldt University, Germany) makes a similar argument: "Once data over a sufficient number of time points have been collected, the elite judgements of party positions on party salience, preferably on the same issues that voters were asked to rate in the mass surveys, may help us cast light on wide range of questions among which the following may be particularly interesting: (1) To what extent are political leaders 'representative' of the positions articulated by their electorates? (2) In light of the voters' preference distribution, how "rational" were the politicians' issue appeals in light of a given set of explanatory, but also prescriptive, theories of party competition, such as Downsian spatial models? (3) Are politicians able to change the preference distribution in the electorate over time and create new divisions ('issue leadership')? Answers to these questions would be vital to shed more light on the accuracy or inaccuracy of Downsian theories of party competition and their more recent competitors (salience and directional theories of competition)."

Kitschelt reviews several alternative measurement strategies: "One way to measure the 'issue leadership' of political parties has been chosen by the European manifestos project. . . . Another way would be to pursue Laver and Schofield's pioneer study asking political scientists in all countries covered by the project to rate the relevant parties in their own country on a number of issue dimensions (position of party leaders, activists, voters; salience of an issue) that are identical with the issue items in the mass surveys of the national elections studies. To modify the research design a little, in addition to political scientists (10-20 per county per time point), samples of politicians themselves (20 to 50 per party) could be asked to rate their own parties and their competitors on the various issue dimensions. By comparing the ratings of politicians across parties, one would also gain interesting insights into the congruence of political perceptions that the parties have of each other."

4.5. Images of Leaders: "A really innovative topic would be to explore leadership images cross-nationally. Very little has been done, and there are greatly conflicting images of the role of leaders and the native of candidate images in comparative perspective. Talk of candidate-centered politics is now common in European systems, as is a general erosion in deference to elites" (Russell Dalton, University of California, Irvine, USA).

4.6. Political Participation and Abstention: "One comparative theme that perhaps merits more attention at an early stage of the process is that of 'abstention.' As a casual observer of elections in a variety of countries, I believe that abstention has a different meaning (maybe strategic in some places, nonstrategic in other) in different contexts. (As I recall from reading electoral commentary in Spain, abstention is treated as a strong political statement; in American commentary, it is treated as an anti-political statement). How abstention undermines confidence in democracy in some contexts, but may play a supportive role in other contexts, seems worthy of comparative analysis" (David D. Laitin University of Chicago, USA).

Robert Tardos (Research Group for Communication Sciences, Hungary) argues that the institutional arrangements that govern elections (two vs. multiparty systems, districting arrangements, and thresholds, for example) may have profound effects not only on party strategy and vote choice, but on patterns of mobilization and turnout as well .

4.7. Differing Notions of Politics: The notion of politics in different cultural and institutional contexts (Danica Fink Hafner, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia).

4.8. Incorporating the Dynamics of Real Life into the Study of Politics: It is an open question how to incorporate dynamics of real life into our research. This is especially important in countries which are faced with deep, rapid changes in society and in politics (Danica Fink Hafner, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia).

4.9. Political Culture: "Political culture," writes Ian McAllister (Australian Defense Force Academy), "has experienced something of a renaissance in the past decade. Given that many of the political differences between countries are not attributable solely to institutional or party system differences, but to differences in way in which citizens and elites view politics and the political process, this would appear to be a fruitful area of study. It is now thirty years since the Civic Culture was published. Now may be the time to explore some of these themes once again, using more refined measures, wider cross national coverage, and inter-linking the themes covered to political parties and institutions, as well as popular opinion."

Marta Lagos (CERC, Chile) makes a similar point: "A comparative study like this one should, in addition, maybe take into account main traits that underlay the behavior of regional cultural prototype (i.e. Latin America). 'How much do you trust your fellow countrymen?' is essentially different in Latin America than in Europe."

4.10. Evaluation of Political Institutions: "There should be questions tapping citizens' assessments of electoral institutions (parliamentarism, presidentialism, the electoral system) as well as general evaluations of electoral democracy. It is important to know how citizens themselves rate these institutions" (André Blais, Université de Montréal, Canada).

"How does the population evaluate the functionality of the new, democratic institutions - the political parties, the unions, the parliament, the presidency, the government, the opposition, the media, the local authorities, etc.? Deficient electoral systems produce deficient legitimacy of the political institutions, leaders, and authorities" (Pavel Campeanu, The Independent Center for Social Studies, Rumania).

"The theme of political support is of continuing relevance in advanced industrial democracies, and is of even greater importance in emerging democracies. The recent political crises in Italy and Japan only highlight a skepticism of politics and politicians that now seems commonplace" (Russell Dalton, University of California, Irvine, USA).

"The most pressing need are for studies of the relationship between public opinion and democratic stability. . . . Under what conditions will democratic rule [in Latin America] become consolidated and how likely is it that we are merely seeing another cycle in the long history of the swing between democracy and authoritarian rule? In my view, a central problem in the region is the lack of legitimacy of regimes in Latin America" (Mitchell A. Seligson, University of Pittsburgh, USA).

"Theoretical models of democracy and arguments about the best institutional structures are full of assertions about the needs and behavior of voters. However, we rarely ask voters how they feel about the central structures which shape their participation or about the ways they see the system working. Views on the workings and accountability of one party or coalition governments would add greatly to the literature. This seems to be one area where there is much rhetoric but little evidence referring to voter opinion. . . . I would like to see questions relating to the impact of electoral laws on voters widened beyond the consideration of strategic polling. By asking voters to react to a series of fundamental ideas about the role of elections we can begin to understand how voters view the system and democracy in general" (Helena Catt, The University of Auckland, New Zealand).



4.11. State-as-Parasite: "It seems to be that in many of the countries I'm familiar with, the issue of the state-as-parasite is very large. Many people benefit from government jobs, either directly or in the parastatal sector. Other people are cognizant of the privileges of these people and of politicians themselves. I would like to see some attention to issues of state vs. citizenry" (Barry Ames, Washington University, USA).

4.12. The Distributive Economic Dimension of Political Divisions: Herbert Kitschelt (Duke University, USA; and Humboldt University, Germany) recommends better issue items "to measure the distributive economic dimension of political divisions. Traditionally, questions of property rights (national of industry, etc.) and of direct economic redistribution (taxes versus spending, etc.) play an inordinate role in such surveys. In addition, however, we need more sophisticated instruments to capture citizens' allegiance to the core institutions of the welfare state, such as pension systems, health care, and unemployment insurance."

4.13. The Bureaucracy: "What struck us the most about the discussion in the paper was the omission of a role of bureaucracy in governmental function. Being interested in the effects of the electoral systems, our primary target of investigation naturally is the elected officials. The role of elected officials, whether be a president of legislators, in policy process, however, cannot be fully understood without adequate assessment of role of unelected governmental agencies, i.e. bureaucracies. . . . We need to be sensitive to voters' perception of diverse possibilities of means to politics to achieve certain goals. To control for the differences of the role of non-elective officials, we need: 1) some kind of measurement to assess the strength of bureaucracy and other branches of the government at an aggregate level and 2) another set of measurements to assess perceived role of different governmental agencies at an individual voters' level" (Japanese Election Studies).

4.14. International Political Impact on Domestic Political System: (especially international determinant of democratization in post-socialist countries e.g. the role of the European Union, internationally organized party families, etc.) (Danica Fink Hafner, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia).

4.15. Relationship Between Interest Groups and Political Parties: interest groups as limiting factors for parties - actual problems from this point of view, especially in postsocialist countries where parties are dominant political actors in circumstances of a very weak interest group system (Danica Fink Hafner, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia).

## 5.0. Study Design and Implementation (pp. 11-12)

Colleagues raise several issues concerning study design and implementation:

### 5.1. Timing of Interviewing Relative to the Election

5.1.1. Should the common core of questions be asked in a campaign or a post-election survey? (Andre Blais, Universit  de Montreal, Canada).

5.1.2. For purposes of comparability, what should be the timing of the field work relative to the election? As Oscar Hernandez (Universidad de Costa Rica) points out, "during electoral campaigns electors normally have more information and show patterns of behavior that may differ in certain ways to those shown during non-electoral periods." And as Richard Johnston (The University of British Columbia, Canada) argues, "As fieldwork stretches out . . . , a study which is nominally about the previous election becomes instead a record of current opinion. If the government enjoys a honeymoon, this is reflected in the election-study's data structures; it ceases to be essentially a cross-section. Speed is of the essence for post-election fieldwork everywhere."

5.1.3. If the common module of survey questions are asked in a post-election survey, it is likely that some collaborators will only field a post-election study while others will employ a pre- / post-election panel design in which the same respondents are interviewed both before and after the election. Are there problems of comparability when surveys in some polities ask questions of a freshly drawn, post-election cross-sample, while others ask questions in a post-election wave of a two wave, pre- /post-election study?

5.1.4. If there is a pre- as well as a post-election interview, the timing of the pre-election interviews also becomes an issue. As Richard Johnston suggests, "the possibility of using the ICORE process to initiate a comparative study of campaigns should not be lost. . . . Where and under what circumstances campaigns matter are empirical questions. And these questions are most economically addressed with a rolling-cross-section design" in which there is a controlled, gradual release of the pre-election sample over the course of the campaign."

## 5.2. Comparability in Comparative Survey Research

Anne-Marie Aish-Van Vaerenberg (Université Catholique de Louvain, Belgium) offers the following observations: "I think about the comparability problem at the different stages of the research process: at the conceptualization and operationalisation stage, at the question wording stage, at the translation and measurement instruments stage, at the sampling design stage at the data collecting stage and the data analysis stage. The requirements for comparability are generally expressed in terms of equivalence: conceptual equivalence, measurement equivalence, instrumentation equivalence etc. . . . I believe that we should consider these different types equivalence and decide on their relevance within our comparative project."

"Thinking about measurement in particular, we should discuss the problems of inferred measurement versus direct measurement because the problem of comparability is particularly important with respect to the former type of measurement. Should we use standardized questions across countries i.e. common indicators or would we also consider system-specific indicators? I believe that the latter might be necessary if we compare countries which are culturally very different. I would also suggest to discuss the different techniques for establishing the validity of measurement instruments, their cross-national or cross-cultural equivalence. I believe it is important that we use the same techniques (but several) because the type of technique used will affect are evaluations."

David D. Laitin (University of Chicago, USA) makes the following suggestion: "The call for valid and reliable measures cross-nationally on p. 13 had me smiling about the feasibility of such a goal. But then I wondered whether it was (in the extreme) desirable. The very difficulties of achieving validity crossculturally, it seems to me, is an invitation for understanding differences that may reveal answers to questions the research was designed to answer. This led to a small idea: why not hire a team of applied anthropologists to observe early ICORE meetings, to observe the national teams that constitute ICORE, and to observe the actual polling in the different countries. This anthropological team would be asked to observe the ecology of the surveys to find the deeper concerns that are motivating the questions of the various country-teams, the degree to which country-teams seek continuity in questions as opposed to desiring to capture new opportunities, and the social relationship between pollsters and citizens. The reports that would come out of this anthropological research may help understand the sources and consequences of the non-validity cross-nationally of perfectly translated questions."

## 5.3. Quality of Survey Data

Standards for sample design and field procedures will need to be set. As Mitchell A. Seligson (University of Pittsburgh, USA) warns, "Many surveys are truly 'seat-of-the-pants' operations that discredit serious efforts. Other problems relate to lack of up-to-date census data and census maps."

## 6.0. Survey Instrumentation (pp. 12-13)

Although it is way too early in our deliberations to discuss the specific instrumentation that should appear in the module of common content, several colleagues (Olga Shvetsova, California Institute of Technology, USA; Robert Tardos, Research Group for Communication Sciences, Hungary; André Blais, Université de Montréal, Canada) have begun to suggest instrumentation:

- Perceptions of the political parties including their policy positions and the groups they represent
- Evaluations of the political parties
- Identification with the parties
- Perceptions of the electoral viability of the each political party
- Perceptions of the extent to which parties can influence actual political outcomes
- Voter's concern over his party's electoral fate

- Opinion on the benefits and costs of having more or fewer parties
- Opinion on whether there are too many or too few parties
- The interactions between constituents and their representatives
- Perceptions of the alternative governments that are likely to form following an election
- Vote choice
- Vote choice in the previous election
- Turnout and other forms of electoral participation
- Retrospective evaluations of the performance of incumbent government
- Assignment of credit or blame to participants in a coalition government
- Opinion on the pros and cons of coalition government
- Information about participants in coalition government

## 7.0. Macro-Level Data (p. 13)

Many colleagues concur with the stimulus paper's argument that the power of the comparative study design stems on our ability to wed macro-level data (on political institutions, political and social contexts) to the micro-level data to be gathered through surveys (Arend Lijphart, University of California, San Diego, USA). These macro-data will also facilitate the elaboration of contextual / ecological models (Jim Alt, Harvard University, USA). Richard G. Niemi (The University of Rochester, USA) urges us to "consider putting 'system' information on files that are produced explicitly with comparative analysis in mind. As researchers try to do ever broader studies, even such elementary information as when the last election was held (and results) and when the next one is scheduled (or the last date by which it must be held) are things that one might not always be at one's fingertips."

A number of concrete suggestions for macro-level variables emerge:

7.1. District-Level Election Results for all Parties "Districtlevel (or in countries with large-magnitude districts, even lower-level) data are essential to most types of relationships mentioned in the project summary. Data disaggregated in this way are very hard to find in most countries, and are available in machine-readable form in even fewer countries" (Matthew Shugart, University of California, San Diego, USA; Jim Alt, Harvard University, USA; Arend Lijphart, University of California, San Diego, USA; Gary Cox, University of California, San Diego, USA). Rein Taagepera (Tartu University, Estonia) urges data on the effective number of parties and electoral deviation from PR.

7.2. Electoral Results for Upper Houses (Matthew Shugart, University of California, San Diego, USA).

7.3. Details of Election Laws (Arend Lijphart, University of California, San Diego, USA) including seat allocation rules (Rein Taagepera, Tartu University, Estonia).

7.4. Data on National Legislatures -- particularly data on the partisan and gender composition of the legislatures (Benjamin Radcliff, University of Notre Dame, USA).

7.5. Measures of constitutional and real (fiscal) centralization or federalization of political systems. Herbert Kitschelt (Duke University, USA; and Humboldt University, Germany) writes: "My logic derives from Duverger's and Riker's observation that plurality voting systems do not necessarily rule out multiparty formats, provided that there are only two major parties running in any particular constituency. In federal systems, where regional governments are an important prize worth fighting for, it is more attractive for third parties to mobilize than in highly centralized systems. More generally, across electoral systems, the federalization of government and the ensuing proliferation of 'secondary elections' that are of immediate importance reduces the barriers to entry into party competition and may facilitate a proliferation of new parties."

7.6. Aggregate, Historical Data on Turnout (Benjamin Radcliff, University of Notre Dame, USA).

7.7. Public Policy Outputs Adam Przeworski (University of Chicago, USA) urges us to "pay some attention to causality running from electoral result to policy outcomes. You take economic change as well as ethnic and

racial conflict as exogenous. But presumably voters decide something in elections, and to that extent they are endogenous. Moreover, political and electoral institutions probably do affect the structure and intensity of conflicts." "How do differences in institutional arrangements affect the distribution of winners and losers?" (Guillermo O'Donnell, University of Notre Dame, USA). This implies that we may want to collect macro-level data on "public policy outputs which voters face in every day life and which they are in some sense responsible for. The most obvious examples are spending terms such as welfare, education, housing, defense, and so on. There are innumerable others -- to name just a few examples, some index of the progressivity of taxation, the length of the workweek (which is legislatively mandated in almost all countries), the minimum wage, laws regulating reproductive and sexual freedom, and so on" (Benjamin Radcliff, University of Notre Dame, USA).

## 8.0. Data Dissemination

We need to establish norms for the timely release of data and standards for the coding of variables and the organization of data files. As one colleague puts it: "The conference should also insure that all participants of ICORE are committed to the principle of making their data publicly available through their national archive as soon as it is ready" (Ian McAllister, Australian Defense Force Academy).

## 9.0. Funding

Several colleagues express concern over the cost of implementing election studies in poorer countries. Oscar Hernandez (Universidad de Costa Rica) argues: "Strong support is needed from ICORE so that social scientists within each country have access to international agencies in securing funds for the survey. Local funding will be difficult to find in many countries." Barry Ames (Washington University, USA) put it this way, "I don't see any sign that the ICORE project envisions any sort of financial help for people in poor countries. They are all supposed to arrange financing on their own. You want to impose first-world standards on poor countries, but with no assistance. This will sound in many places like imposing burdens on scholars in poor countries so that data can be supplied to first-world scholars." Marta Lagos (CERC, Chile) suggests "some kind of centralized support in order to present the project in different foundations."