



Measuring Effective Democracy

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Publication date:
2008

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Welzel, C., & Alexander, A. C. (2008). *Measuring Effective Democracy: The Human Empowerment Approach*. (pp. 1-34). (World Values Research; Vol. 1, No. 1). World Values Survey Association.
<http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSPublicationsPapers.jsp>

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World Values Research WVR

Volume 1 / Number 1 / 2008

Measuring Effective Democracy: The Human Empowerment Approach

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ABSTRACT

The core idea inspiring democracy is to empower people. To measure democracy in ways that capture its empowering nature one must focus on popular rights and take into account rule of law as a state quality that makes these rights effective. Based on this premise, we portray an index of "effective democracy" and test its qualities against six alternative indicators of democracy for some 150 states. We find the index of effective democracy to best represent the empowering nature of democracy because it most clearly captures democracy's embedding in empowering conditions in the wider society. Specifically, effective democracy is shown to be most firmly embedded in (a) empowering socioeconomic conditions that make people *capable* of practicing democracy and (b) in empowering sociocultural conditions that make them *willing* to do so. In light of these findings, people empowerment appears to be *a unity* of empowering societal conditions and empowering regime characteristics, the latter of which are best depicted by the index of effective democracy.

Key words: bounded vs. unbound autocracy, civic rights, effective vs. ineffective democracy, human empowerment, people power, rule of law.

Word count: 12,349 (version accepted August 31, 2008).

CITATION

Welzel, C. & A. Alexander (2008). "Measuring Effective Democracy: The Human Empowerment Approach." *World Values Research* 1(1):1-34

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Measuring Effective Democracy: The Human Empowerment Approach

INTRODUCTION

The explosive increase in the number of democracies following the Third and Fourth Waves of Democratization (Huntington 1991; McFaul 2005) has drawn much attention to the newly emerging democracies outside the Western world (Collier & Adcock 1999; Adcock & Collier 2001). After initial enthusiasm, however, scholars discovered quickly that the quality of most of the new democracies falls short of what is standard among long established Western democracies. Since then researchers hold that a new division between full democracy and partial democracy has become as important as the old division between democracy and autocracy (Rose 2001; Ottaway 2003; Zakaria 2003). In describing democracies with deficient qualities various typologies have emerged. Using terms like "illiberal" democracy, "deficient" democracy or "ineffective" democracy (Diamond 2002; O'Donnell 2003), scholars attribute a "diminishing adjective" to regimes in the hybrid zone between autocracy and fully effective democracy (Collier & Levitsky 1997).

Prominent authors claim that state failure in the enforcement of rule of law and control of corruption is a major factor separating effective from ineffective democracies (O'Donnell 2004; Warren 2006a; Rose 2009). Elaborating on this distinction, categorical approaches that dichotomize effective against deficient democracies prevail (Merkel 2004). But categorical approaches have their own problems. Implicitly they assume a bimodal distribution of state deficiencies, such that given countries either suffer or do not suffer from these deficiencies, even though these deficiencies in fact differ by degree. This establishes a continuum of state deficiency rather than a binary distinction. Yet, only one attempt has been made to use continuous data on state deficiencies to produce a fine-graded index of "effective democracy" (Welzel, Inglehart & Klingemann 2003:357). This index depreciates a given country's level of democracy to the extent that the state fails to establish rule of law, differentiating fully effective democracies at one polar end from autocracies and completely ineffective democracies at the opposite end, with many gradations in between (Inglehart & Welzel 2005:191-6).

However, the conceptual strength of the index of effective democracy has not been demonstrated in ways that satisfy the standards of proper concept formation, as outlined by Adcock and Collier (2001) or Goertz (2006). Nor has a systematic validity test been conducted to demonstrate the performance of the index in comparison to other established democracy indices. Thus, the merits of the concept of effective democracy have neither been laid out with sufficient theoretical clarity nor empirical validity. This is a serious shortcoming in an era in which the rise of deficient democracies makes it all the more important to differentiate democracies in their degree of effectiveness.

This article helps to fill this gap. We examine the conceptual foundation as well as the empirical validity of the index of effective democracy through analysis of democracy data for some 150 states. Part one of this study describes the theoretical rationales that inform the concept of effective democracy. The second part portrays the operationalization of the index of effective democracy. In part three, we analyze the empirical qualities of the index of effective democracy in comparison to six alternative indices of democracy.

CONCEPTUALIZING EFFECTIVE DEMOCRACY

People Power as the Core Meaning of Democracy

In its literal meaning, "government by the people," the ideal that ultimately inspires democracy is *to empower ordinary people to govern their lives* (Macpherson 1977; Holden 1992; Philpott 1995; Finer 1999; Sen 1999; Arblaster 2002; Canovan 2006; Warren 2006b). Democracy's specific contribution to the empowerment of people is of an *institutional* nature: it is limited to what can be achieved by crafting and enacting legal norms (Finer 1999). These legal norms include first and foremost entitlements that establish "democratic citizenship" (Kymlicka 1995), which makes people the beholders of rights (Saward 2006). Rights empower people insofar as they entitle them to practice personal freedoms in their private lives and political freedoms in public life (Dahl 2000:45; Held 2006:265).

It is without question that there are various meanings attached to the term democracy and many of these are contested (Held 2006:2). Yet, we hold that "people power" is the core meaning from which most other meanings take their justification. This claim can be substantiated from four key perspectives on the meaning of democracy: (a) the views of democracy that ordinary people hold around the world, (b) the views of democracy that are reflected in the goals for which democracy movements of the past and of today struggle, (c) the views of democracy that become manifest in constitutional priorities, and (d) the views of democracy that leading theorists of democracy champion.

To begin with the views of democracy held by people around the world, there is broad evidence from the Global Barometers Surveys and the World Values Surveys that what first comes to people's mind when they are confronted with the term democracy is the rights that make them masters of their own lives and give them a voice and a vote in shaping public life (Dalton, Shin & Jou 2007; Diamond 2008; Shin & Welzel 2009). Of course, these surveys also show that most people attach many other desirable things to democracy, such as prosperity and social justice. Yet, when one confronts people with the word democracy, be it in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Middle East or Europe, they emphasize, before anything else, the popular rights that empower people. Throughout the world, people power is the core meaning of democracy for most ordinary people.

Looking at the goals for which democracy movements of the past and of today struggle leads to a similar conclusion. Modern democracy originates in the liberal revolutions of the 18th century (Grayling 2007:6). These popular upheavals against tyranny became most significant through rights-setting acts of epochal importance. This is most obvious for the American *Declaration of Independence* in 1776 and the French *Déclaration des Droits de L'Homme et des Citoyens* in 1789 (Finer 1999; O'Donnell 2003; Donnelly 2006). These declarations entitled parts of the public to the practice of personal and political freedoms, empowering significant shares of the population to govern their private and public lives. This achievement established *partial* democracy in which a majority of the adult population was still excluded from suffrage. Nevertheless, establishing partial democracy was a decisive pre-stage to the achievement of full democracy: the empowerment of limited parts of the public encouraged further struggles of still disprivileged groups to also push for empowerment, until universal suffrage gave birth to full democracies early in the 20th century (Markoff 1996; McAdam, Tarrow & Tilly 2001). Since then people's struggles for democracy continued and expanded. Within established democracies, civil rights and equal opportunity movements fought and continue to fight to advance democracy's empowering qualities (Tarrow 2003). Beyond established democracies, people power movements pressured and continue to pressure to replace autocracy with democracy (Huntington 1991; Schock 2005; Thompson 2005). From the American Revolution to the people power movements of today, people's struggle for democracy aims at the rights that entitle people to govern their lives (Ackerman 1991, 1998; Markoff 1996; Foweraker & Landman 1997; Karatnycky & Ackerman 2005; Canovan 2006). The goals of democracy movements of the past and of today focus on people power.

Looking at the priorities that become evident in the order in which contemporary democratic constitutions are organized, it is obvious that the most prominent constitutions (those that have served as reference points for others) start with the rights of the people. Whether we consider the American or French constitution or the German Basic Law, all model constitutions of democracy begin with stipulating the rights of the people (Ackerman 1991; Canovan 2006; Donnelly 2006). If this ordering is indicative of a priority, it means that the basis of democracy is popular rights. This is just another way to say that the core meaning of democracy is people power.

In political theory, conceptions of democracy provide a wide range of variation, reaching from Schumpeter's (1948) minimalist understanding of "electoral democracy" to Barber's (1984) maximalist understanding of "strong democracy." Yet, each of these understandings includes at least some popular right as its central element. Even in the most minimalist understanding, electoral democracy, the basis of democracy is a popular right, in this case: every person's equal right to a free vote in regular and competitive elections to fill positions of decision making power. And as much as the various understandings of democracy differ in scope, all understandings have one thing in common: in the democratic condition people are more empowered than in the non-democratic condition (Held 2006:263). Thus, one can say that different conceptions of democracy oper-

ate with differently wide notions of what people power means; yet they all operate on a notion of people power as the core meaning of democracy.

In conclusion, five key perspectives on the meaning of democracy support the same conclusion: (1) the literal meaning of democracy, (2) the dominant popular understanding of democracy, (3) the goals of past and present democracy movements, (4) the priorities of order in model democratic constitutions and (5) the notions of democracy in political theory. Each consider "people power" the core function of democracy and consider "popular rights" the first-order tool to achieve this function. "People power through popular rights" is hence the most general definition of democracy.

Focusing the definition of democracy on the empowerment of people requires the contextualization of democracy in a wider theory of human empowerment, in which empowerment denotes the conditions under which people are agents in governing their own lives as well as public life (Sen 1999; Welzel, Inglehart & Klingemann 2003; Inglehart & Welzel 2005; Welzel & Inglehart 2008). In this context, democracy constitutes as an institutional component of empowerment that operates in the context of non-institutional components of empowerment. These non-institutional components can be of an economic or cultural nature. For concrete individuals, they may include such things as participatory resources or civic skills (Dahl 2000:69). Some important visionary elaborations of democracy, including Pateman's (1970) "participative democracy," Habermas's (1996) "deliberative democracy" and Held's (1993) "cosmopolitan democracy," discuss many of these non-institutional components of empowerment. In fact, each of these visions can be seen as a further elaboration of the principle of people power through specification of additional conditions that have to be fulfilled for this principle to work. Keeping our concept open for various further elaborations, we cannot take sides for anyone of them. Rather, we operate on a foundational understanding of democracy that may serve as a common starting point from which different further elaborations can take off.

Popular Rights as First-Order Tools of Democracy

From the viewpoint of "people power through popular rights," two types of democratic conceptions appear as misconceptions of democracy. We label these misconceptions "electoral reductionism" and "unordered eclecticism." *Electoral reductionism* is when scholars limit the meaning of democracy to upholding regular, competitive elections to vote government into and out of office. From the viewpoint of people power, this is a reductionism because elections are just one of many people power tools next to a whole variety of rights that entitle people to govern their private and public lives. From the viewpoint of people power, one would aim at a broader operationalization of democracy than one based on voting rights and competitive elections, encompassing all institutional tools that empower people.

Unordered eclecticism is when scholars define democracy by catalogues of institutional features observable among existing democracies, without ordering these fea-

tures by their instrumental value to the guiding idea of people power. For instance, popular rights are first-order instruments of democracy, for it is self-evident that they are directly instrumental towards the empowerment of people. Other institutional features of democracy, such as an independent judiciary, exist to protect the rights of the people. Existing for this purpose, such features are *indirectly* instrumental to people power. They are second-order instruments of democracy. From the viewpoint of people power, one would aim at a more focused operationalization of democracy that concentrates on first-order instruments rather than on mixes of instruments of different order. Understanding democracy as “people power through popular rights” favors an operationalization of democracy that is broader than electoral definitions but more focused than eclectic definitions.

The institutional feature most directly instrumental to the idea of people power is popular rights. It is the inherent purpose of rights to empower their beholders by entitling them to practice some form of freedom. To be empowered to govern their lives, people need two forms of freedom: the freedom to follow their *personal* preferences in governing their *private* lives and the freedom to make their *political* preferences count in governing *public* life (Beetham 1999; O'Donnell 2003; Saward 2006; Williams 2006). The first form of freedom is private freedom and is granted by personal rights; the second form is public freedom granted by political rights. This distinction is similar to Berlin's (2006 [1957]) differentiation between the “negative freedom from” external interventions into one's sphere of autonomy (private freedom) and the “positive freedom to” help shape the world outside one's sphere of autonomy (public freedom). To institutionalize people power, both freedoms must be granted.

Some might argue that democracy is first and foremost a political concept, in which case it is sufficiently established by political rights alone, with no need for personal rights. However, as two leading theorists of democracy outline (Dahl 2000:53; Held 2006:262), the democratic idea of popular participation in politics presumes a notion of “personal autonomy,” “self-determination,” and “human agency.” This notion requires the enactment of personal rights as much as that of political rights. Democracy would incompletely empower people if it did not institutionalize personal rights in addition to political rights.

From the viewpoint of people empowerment, popular rights, both personal and political, constitute the core definitional tool of democracy. Other institutional tools of democracy, such as political pluralism or an independent judiciary, are second-order instruments, existing to make a full set of popular rights operate. For instance, should the right of a citizen to have a free vote in elections be effective, it must be tolerated that candidates compete for votes with alternative policy programs. Thus, political pluralism and competition are instrumental to a genuinely free vote. Likewise, should the right of a citizen to be protected from abuses of executive power be operative, there must be an independent judiciary that citizens can appeal to, to litigate executive authorities. One can continue with other examples but the major point is clear: Each institutional feature of democracy is instrumental to the operation of at least some of the rights of the peo-

ple. Focusing on popular rights is thus an appropriate account of democracy's core meaning (Beetham 1999; Sen 1999; O'Donnell 2003; Williams 2006).

Democracy's Gradual Nature

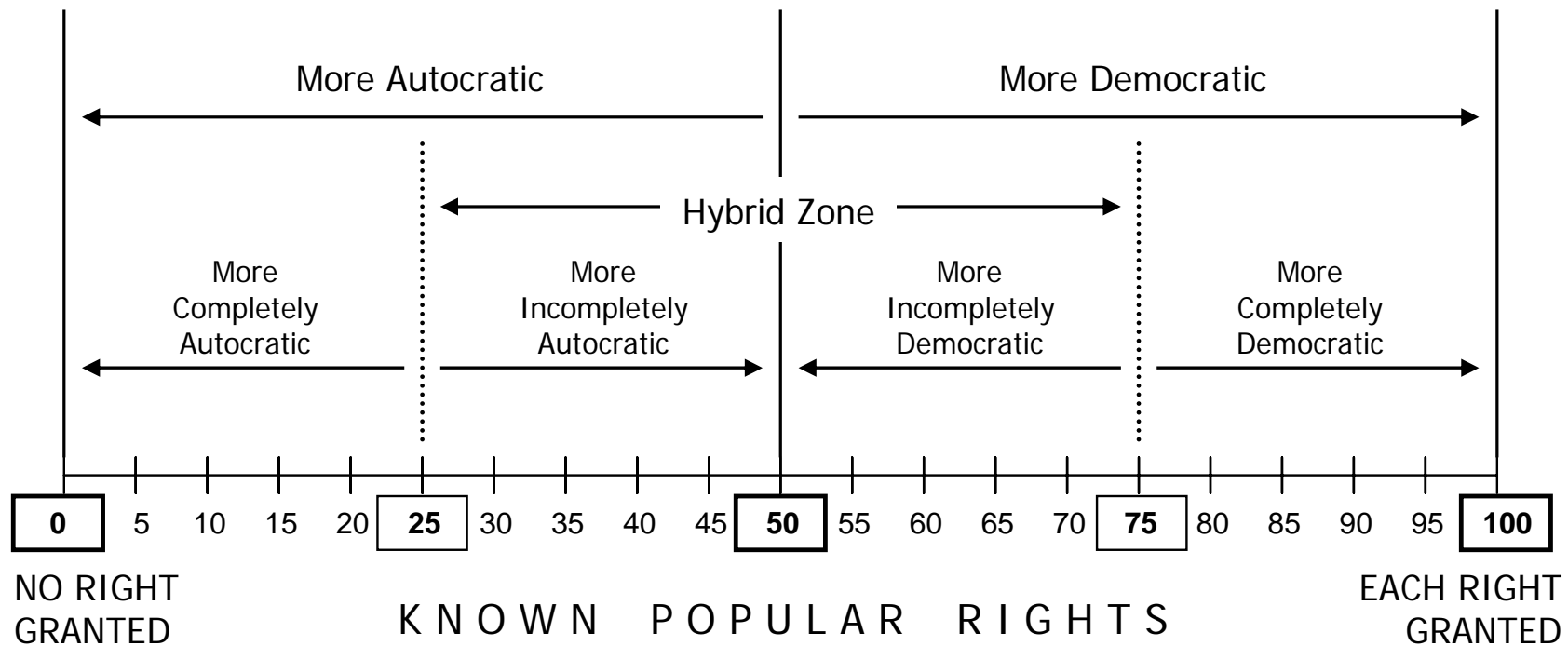
The institutionalization of people power is a gradual phenomenon, and so is democracy. This is easily illustrated by focusing on democracy's first-order definitional instrument: popular rights.

Assume the full list of known popular rights would include five personal rights and five political rights, each of which is of equal importance. The five personal rights could include the freedoms to choose (1) how to earn and spend one's money, (2) what to learn and which sources of information to access, (3) which religion and belief, if any, to practice, (4) where to live, and (5) with whom to live and how. The five political rights could include the freedoms (1) to express one's political preferences in public, (2) to campaign for one's preferences, mobilize support for them, and organize supporters, (3) to litigate political authorities for violations of one's rights, (4) to run for public office, and (5) to have a free vote, equal in weight to that of all others, in elections, initiatives, and referenda.

More rights could be added to this list or the list could be extended by subdividing some general rights into several more specific ones. However, the important point is this: as long as one can list a number of popular rights, democracy varies by degree. It varies by degree between the entire absence of people power when not a single right is granted and the full presence of people power when each known right is granted. These are absolute endpoints on a continuum that can be scaled in percentages of the known maximum of popular rights. This percentage scale has a natural minimum at 0 when no popular right is granted and a natural maximum at 100 when all popular rights are granted. The numerical value of these endpoints, and of all other scale points in between, is directly interpretable. Accordingly, there are a number of natural cut-off points as depicted in Figure 1.

On a scale of granted popular rights with a natural minimum at 0 and a natural maximum at 100, the 50 percent mark constitutes an intuitively meaningful cut-off point. Below this point, states ignore more rights than they enact, so they deny the people more power than they grant. Institutionalized people power being more absent than present classifies all states below the 50 percent mark as "autocracies." By contrast, all states above 50 points enact more rights than they deny, so they grant the people more power than they refuse. This classifies states above 50 percent as "democracies." The 25 and 75 percent marks provide equally meaningful cut off points. The 75 percent mark divides democracies into those closer to the democratic maximum (above 75 percent) and those closer to the neutral point (below 75 percent).

Figure 1. The Degree of Democracy as the Percentage of Popular Rights Granted in a Country



This classifies the former ones as “complete” democracies and the latter ones as “incomplete” democracies. Among autocracies, the 25 percent mark operates in similar fashion, separating “complete” autocracies (below 25 percent) from “incomplete” autocracies (above this mark).

People power differentiates *between* autocracy and democracy as much as it differentiates *within* these categories, accounting for how completely autocratic and democratic states are. Democracies are more completely democratic the closer they come to the maximum of granted popular rights. Autocracies are more completely autocratic the closer they come to the minimum of granted popular rights. The differences that separate autocracies from democracies and the differences that separate complete from incomplete versions of these regime categories are differences on the same underlying continuum: the scope of rights granted to the people. A proper categorization of regimes is only possible *after* one has identified their position on the continuum of granted popular rights. Contrary to Sartori’s (1984) suggestion, categorization follows grading, not the other way round.

According to this logic, even regimes that are autocratic in a categorical sense differ in the degree of democracy. This might seem like a semantic paradox but it is not when one recognizes that we derive the categorization of a regime as autocratic by locating it on a democracy scale. Autocracies in this sense are actually defined by their low degree of democracy. If a low degree of democracy is what defines autocracies, talking about an autocracy’s degree of democracy is not a paradox.

Rule of Law as the Effectiveness Factor of Popular Rights

There are features that define democracy and features that make the defining features effective. Popular rights are the central defining feature of democracy and for that matter establish nominal democracy. But even if they are granted to their full extent, in real practice given rights may not be effectively respected. The effective practice of these rights requires more than legally binding norms. What matters are institutional *practices* in the treatment of legal norms. With respect to rights, the essential practice is rule of law (O’Donnell 2003; Rose 2009). Consequently, there is a difference between democracy in nominal terms and effective democracy. The existence of popular rights establishes *nominal* democracy but rule of law is necessary to translate nominal into *effective* democracy.

Rule of law can be defined as government bound to legal standards as defined by laws (O’Donnell 2003; Warren 2006a). Rule of law in this sense is not an exclusive attribute of democracies. Government does not have to be democratic in order to be bound to the law. Rule of law in this understanding does not separate democratic from autocratic government. It separates unbound from bounded government. Since the era of “enlightened absolutism” in the 18th century, the focus of rule of law is on bounded government, not democratic government (Dworkin 1986; Finnis 1980; Fuller 1964; Holmes 2003).

In the republican tradition, rule of law is defined in ways that make it a component of democracy (Shklar 1998; Stimson 2006). Such definitions focus on the separation of powers, an independent judiciary, and the existence of civil rights. Indeed, if one chooses to define rule of law in this way, it is hardly different from an operational definition of democracy itself. The disadvantage of using the term rule of law in a specifically democratic sense is that it cannot be used to distinguish law-bound from lawless versions of autocracy. Nor can it be used to differentiate ineffective from effective democracy when it is part of what defines democracy. For this reason, we prefer to define rule of law in the broader sense of *rule bound to formal procedures as defined by laws*.

Effective Democracy: The Interaction of Popular Rights and Rule of Law

Popular rights and rule of law are conceptually distinct characteristics of political regimes. Still, the two features are inherently relevant to each other. Rule of law is relevant to popular rights because rights become increasingly meaningful, the more they are respected through law-bound institutional practices. Conversely, the meaning of rule of law becomes more substantive, as the domain of what falls under the rule of law widens with each additional right to which the law applies.

Popular rights and rule of law interact to produce *effective democracy*. Whether democracy is effective varies by degree and spans a wide continuum from not a single popular right being effective at all, at one end, to every popular right being fully effective, at the opposite end. Nominal democracy is just the scope of granted popular rights. Effective democracy is only that part of this scope of rights which is set into real effect by rule of law.

Rule of law saves people from two opposite versions of arbitrary power use: despotism and anarchy (Rose 2009). Thus, rule of law operates generally in people's favor but the extent by which it does varies between autocracies and democracies. Autocracies are in principle of a disempowering nature and rule of law does not offset this nature. Rule of law, however, reduces sheer despotism and by so doing, at the very least, it bounds autocracy's disempowering nature. Thus, we can distinguish "unbound autocracy" when rule of law is low from "bounded autocracy" when it is high. Among democracies, rule of law is a feature that sets into effect their empowering nature, separating "ineffective democracy" when rule of law is low from "effective democracy" when it is high. In general, rule of law tends to operate in favor of people empowerment but the margin by which it does multiplies with the extent of enacted popular rights.

It seems intuitively clear that unbound autocracy empowers people the least and effective democracy empowers them the most. It is less immediately clear, though, whether people are less empowered in bounded autocracies or in ineffective democracies. At first glance, it might appear that ineffective democracy is the lesser evil, because to arrive at effective democracy from this point is less of a distance to bridge. It requires only a change of the power holders' power practices but not a change of basic regime structures. By contrast, to get from bounded autocracy to effective democracy

requires a structural change of the regime. But, if one thinks a little longer, a change of power practices might be less easily achieved than a change of legal regime structures. Changing power practices is a cultural change of habits that is less easily susceptible to human engineering than the institutional remodeling of regime structures. Also, one can think of extreme cases in which an almost complete absence of rule of law renders democracy so ineffective that it leaves people just as disempowered as they are in some milder forms of autocracy. An index of effective democracy should thus be constructed in a way that allows for the possibility that—in extreme cases—a nominal democracy scores as low in effective people power as some autocracies.

MEASURING EFFECTIVE DEMOCRACY

The Logic of Interaction

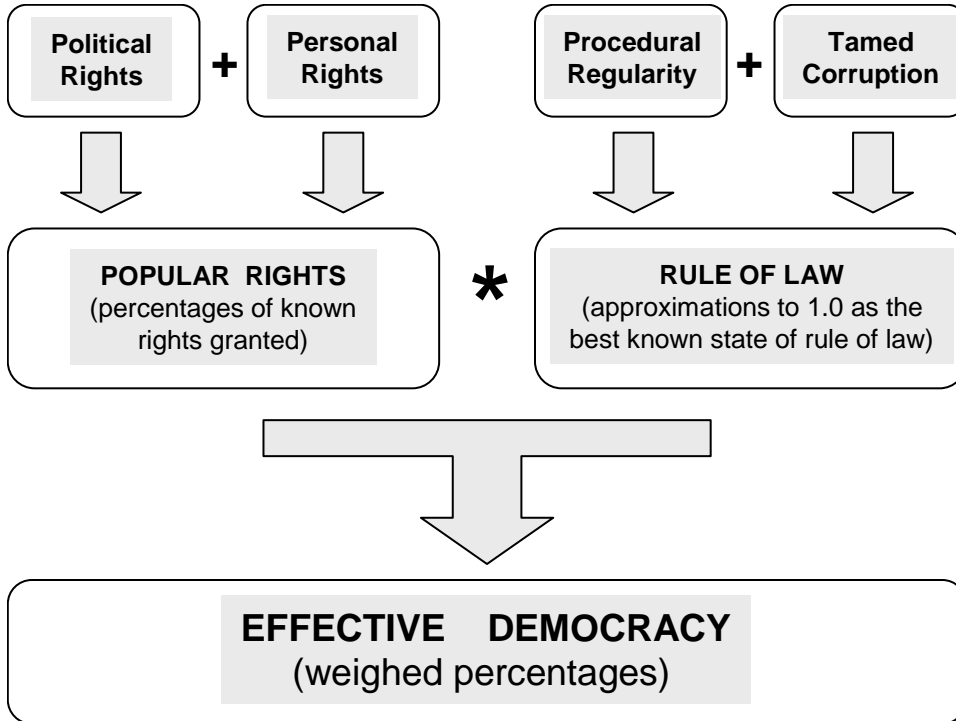
A state might have enacted the full set of popular rights known at a time, in which case we consider it 100-percent democratic. Yet, if rule of law is completely absent, even a fully enacted set of rights is rendered entirely ineffective. In such a case, the score for effective democracy should be at zero or close to it, even if the regime is nominally democratic, reflecting the absence of *effective* people power. Vice versa, power practices in a given state might be entirely governed by the law, in which case we consider the state as entirely law-bound. But, the state might have enacted no popular rights, so none of these rights can be effective, no matter how law-bound the respective state may be. In this case, too, the score for effective democracy should be at zero or close to it, again reflecting the absence of effective people power. As these cases demonstrate, there are two reasons why people are not effectively empowered: no popular rights are granted; or, they are granted but the absence of rule of law renders them meaningless.

Popular rights and rule of law interact to produce effective democracy. In doing so, both of these conditions are necessary, yet neither one is sufficient: weakness of only one of these conditions suffices to bring the product of the interaction to a low score. Modeling interaction with additive combinations is misleading because additive combinations allow weakness in one condition to be compensated by strength in the other. Additive combinations model the supplementation but not the interaction between components. Interaction can only be modeled by multiplication (Goertz 2006:7). Hence, we model the interaction that produces effective democracy by multiplying scores for popular rights by scores for rule of law, as shown in Figure 2.

The multiplicative combination implies that an ineffective democracy can, in the extreme case, end up with a score in effective democracy as low as that of an autocracy. Does this make sense? It does when *effective* people power is what is to be measured. Under this premise, both autocracies and ineffective democracies fail to empower the people. Ineffective democracies fail to do so because the lack of rule of law corrupts their empowering purpose. Autocracies fail to empower people because they do not have an empowering purpose. For which of the two reasons people are not empowered

does not matter for a measure of empowerment. What matters is the lack of empowerment.

Figure 2. Effective Democracy as the Interaction of Popular Rights and Rule of Law



Indicators and their Combination

Searching for indicators of popular rights, the freedom ratings by Freedom House are an obvious choice (Freedom House 2007). These ratings include two concepts roughly equivalent to the two sets of rights that are of interest to this study. Freedom House’s “civil liberties” cover mostly private freedoms. They are roughly equivalent to our concept of personal rights. The organization’s “political rights” cover public freedoms, coinciding with our notion of political rights. The two indicators correlate at $r=.94$ ($N=190$) and, as they supplement each other in generating popular rights, we add them up to obtain an overall index of popular rights.¹ The scale is transformed into a 0 to 100 range, yielding scores for nominal democracy. A score of 0 is indicative of regimes that

¹ Correlations as strong as this indicate *dimensional unity*, implying interchangeability between indicators. Under this condition, multiplicative combinations make no sense because multiplication models interaction, which in turn requires *dimensional independence* (no interchangeability between indicators). Under dimensional unity, additive combinations, such as simple summation or averages, make sense because they reduce random measurement error inherent in each single indicator.

fail to grant any popular right; a score of 100 is indicative of regimes that grant the complete set of popular rights at our time.

The most encompassing measure of rule of law is the World Bank's "rule of law" index (Kaufman, Kraay & Mastruzzi 2007:4). Using various data sources, including country risk assessments and population surveys, this index intends to measure how strictly government agents abide by the laws, based on the perceptions of country experts and the citizens. Strongly overlapping with rule of law is another indicator among the World Bank's "good governance" scores, labeled "control of corruption." Corruption is a directly inverse indicator of rule of law, for it involves the rule of exploitative power practices that violate laws (Warren 2006a). The "rule of law" and "control of corruption" scores correlate at $r = .95$ ($N = 188$) and so we average them to obtain an overall index of rule of law. Since this index is used as a factor to weight given popular rights for how effectively they are respected in the practice of power, we transform the scale into a range from 0 for the country with the lowest known level of rule of law, to 1.0 for the highest known level of rule of law. Scores for countries between these two extremes can be any fraction of 1.0.²

One might hold that the Freedom House ratings do include information on rule of law, making our efforts to weight the Freedom House ratings for rule of law superfluous. This assumption is mistaken because the way in which Freedom House includes rule of law information is both insufficient and inadequate. This can be substantiated in three points. First, only two points on Freedom House's 28-point checklist refer to rule of law, giving this aspect the weight of a fourteenth in the index construction. This proportion is as minor as it is arbitrary. Second, the combinatory logic is flawed. Rule of law is treated as a *supplementary* quality that adds to popular rights when in fact it is a *substantiating* quality that interacts with popular rights in making them effective. The adequate way to specify this substantiation is to weight popular rights for rule of law. Third, Freedom House does not include rule of law information in a controlled way using standardized data. For these reasons, Freedom House does not, as it exclaims, measure effectively respected rights.

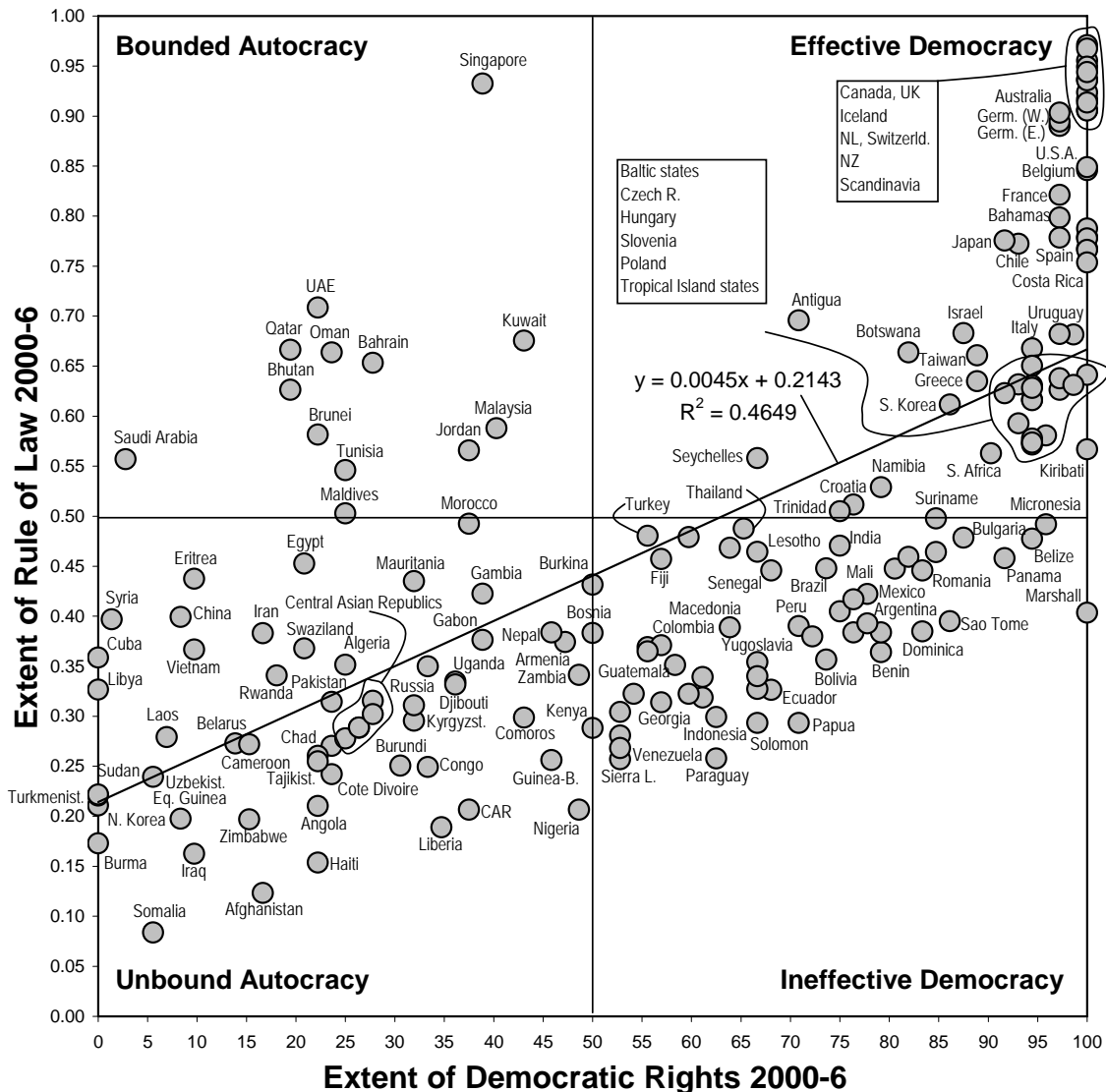
This can be demonstrated empirically. In addition to its fine-graded popular rights ratings, Freedom House classifies countries as "electoral democracies" and "non-democracies." This dichotomous classification is conducted on purely formal grounds, looking at whether countries regularly hold competitive elections or not. Yet, into which of these two categories a country falls, explains fully 77 percent of the variation in Freedom House's fine-graded popular rights ratings. The fact that such a high percentage of variance in the popular rights ratings is explained by a purely formal distinction suggests a strong bias towards formalism in the popular rights ratings. This underlines the inter-

² Unlike the zero-point in the democratic rights scale, the zero-point in the rule of law scale is not an *absolute* minimum that would indicate the complete absence of rule of law. Instead, it indicates the lowest ever observed level of rule of law. The absolute zero-point in rule of law is theoretically thinkable but empirically unknown. Not knowing the theoretical minimum, we standardize for the empirical minimum. Setting this minimum at zero means zero in the sense of being as close to zero as reality has ever come.

pretation of the Freedom House ratings as measuring *nominal* rather than *effective* rights.

Additional evidence supports this conclusion. If the Freedom House ratings indeed measured popular rights as they are effectively set into practice, these ratings must absorb most of the cross-national variation in rule of law, so that at each level of popular rights no or very little variation in rule of law is observed between countries. Obviously, as Figure 3 illustrates, this is not the case. Freedom House's popular rights ratings and the World Bank's rule of law scores have most of their variance (60 percent to be precise) unshared. Thus, popular rights data and rule of law data are by no means interchangeable. In fact, these data are so distinct that it indeed makes sense to qualify the popular rights ratings by the rule of law scores.

Figure 3. Popular Rights and Rule of Law



To obtain a measure of popular rights as they are set into effect by rule of law, we multiply the 0-100 scores for popular rights by the 0-1.0 scores for the rule of law, which yields weighted percentages for effective democratic rights.³

On each level of popular rights (except the zero-level), this index produces higher scores when a society's rule of law score is more favorable. This is true regardless of whether the popular rights level of a society is located in the autocratic or the democratic zone. This might be questioned because it is conceivable that stronger rule of law in the autocratic zone might worsen people's situation. The reason is simple: rule of law requires state capacities, and in autocracies, higher state capacities might simply mean more effective repression (Tilly 2007:19). In this case, the logic of our index construction would operate in the wrong direction where popular rights are largely absent. On the other hand, it is just as plausible that even under the absence of popular rights, stronger rule of law improves people's situation because it saves them from the worst excesses of despotism. At the level of theoretical plausibility, the question cannot be decided because it depends on whether rule of law is indicative of state repression or of tamed despotism where popular rights are largely absent.

This is an empirical question that can be decided by looking at how rule of law relates to measures of state repression, especially in the zone where we observe the absence of popular rights. Using Gibney et al.'s (2008) "political terror scale" as a measure of state repression, the answer cannot be clearer: among the 68 societies worldwide which fall into the autocratic zone of the popular rights scale, state repression correlates highly significantly and strongly negatively, at $r = -.65$, with rule of law. Among the 108 societies in the democratic zone of the popular rights scale the correlation is $r = -.61$. Thus, among both democratic and autocratic societies, rule of law is indicative of the absence, not the presence, of state repression.

Two cases in point are North Korea and Singapore. North Korea is a repressive autocracy and very effective in this regard, and so its score in the political terror scale is high, at .73 for the years 2000-06. If rule of law in autocracies is indicative of high levels of state repression, North Korea's rule of law score should reflect its high score in political terror. Yet, this is not the case; the rule of law score for 2000-06 is low, at .21. Singapore is an autocratic example in the opposite direction. Its rule of law score is very favorable, indeed one of the highest in the world, at .94. If such a high rule of law score in an autocracy is indicative of state repression, Singapore's score in political terror should be high. But it is low, at .23. This is far below the scoring of some established democracies, including India whose political terror score is at .68. Treating rule of law as

³ Hadenius and Teorell (2005) criticize this combinatory logic while Welzel and Inglehart (2006) rebut their criticism. In their rejoinder, Hadenius and Teorell (2006) repeat their criticism: one should not interact things whose change patterns differ. To substantiate this view, they show that popular rights and rule of law change differently over time. Doing so misses the central point of Welzel and Inglehart's rebuttal: interactive combinations are not proven meaningless by proving their components to differ. In fact, the whole logic of interaction presupposes that the interacting components differ.

a factor that improves the situation of people in both the autocratic and the democratic zone of popular rights seems fully justified in light of these results.

EXAMINING EFFECTIVE DEMOCRACY

Distributional Characteristics

If one cuts the rule of law and popular rights scales in half, one obtains four quadrants as shown in Figure 3. The split on the popular rights scale divides regimes into rather autocratic ones (below 50 points) and rather democratic ones (above 50 points). The split on the rule of law scale divides regimes into rather unlawful ones (below .5) and rather lawful ones (above .5).

In combination, unlawfulness and autocracy constitute “unbounded autocracies” in the lower left quadrant of Figure 3. Most examples of this regime type are found in Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East but also in South and Central Asia. Lawfulness and autocracy combine to create “bounded autocracies” in the upper left quadrant. Apart from Singapore, an outstanding example of this regime type, bounded autocracies are mostly found among the oil-exporting monarchies of the Middle East.

Unlawfulness and democracy combine to create “ineffective democracies” in the lower right quadrant of Figure 3. This is where many of the younger democracies are located, including most of the democracies in Latin America, Eastern Europe, and Africa. When their level of economic development is low, long established democracies, such as India, are also found in the quadrant of ineffective democracies. Lawfulness and democracy merge into “effective democracies” in the upper right quadrant of Figure 3. Here we find all of the long established democracies in economically advanced societies. We also find young democracies here, if they are economically advanced. Examples are Taiwan, South Korea, Chile or Uruguay.⁴

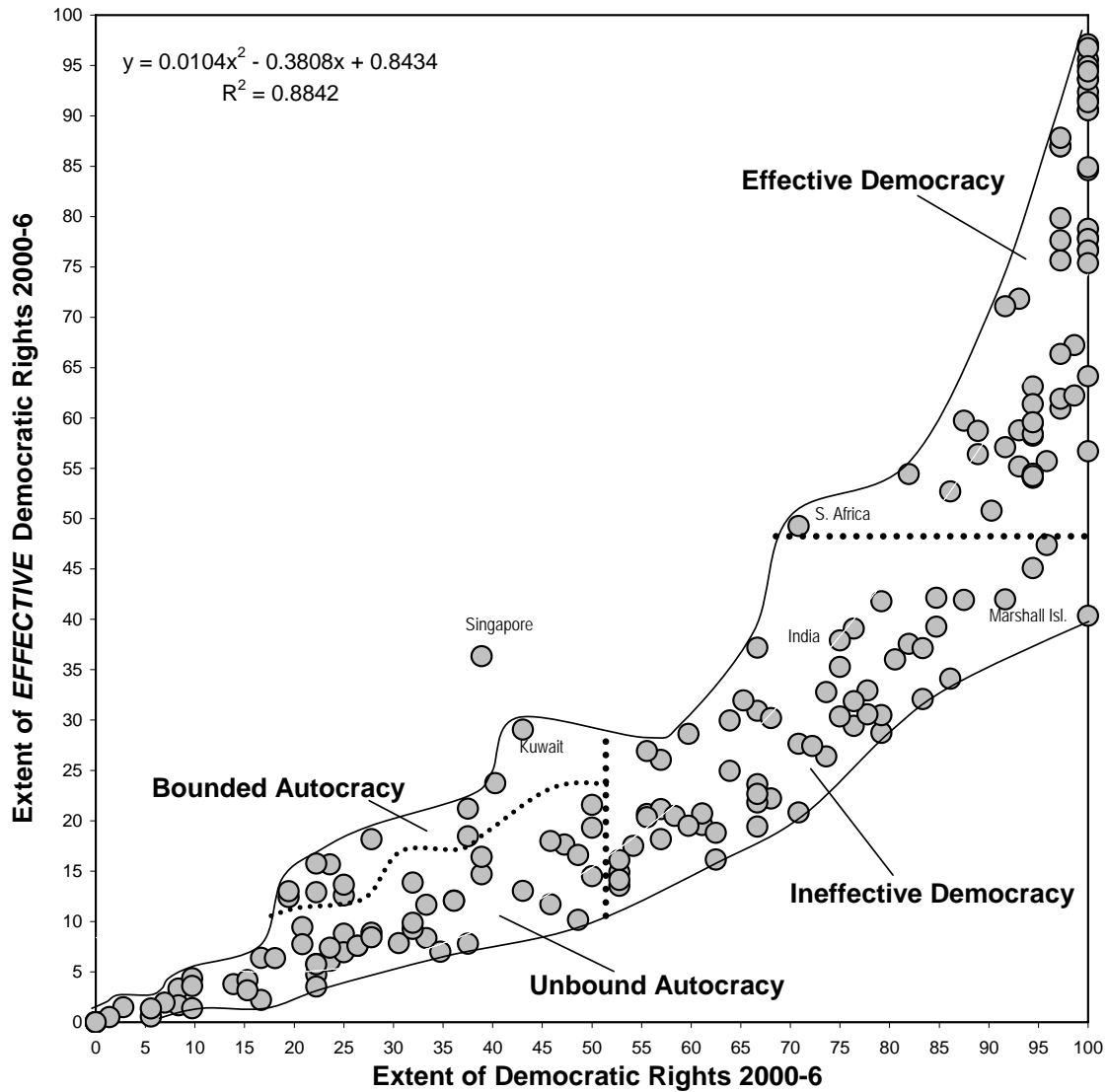
Figure 3 suggests that rule of law tends to improve as the scope of popular rights widens. But this tendency is far from being unavoidable. Most of the variance in rule of law (60%) is unrelated to popular rights. To be sure, most autocracies are found in the lower half of the rule of law scale, making bounded autocracy an exceptional regime type (covering 13 of the 71 autocracies worldwide). But democracies are split by half on the rule of law scale, yielding an almost equal number of ineffective democracies (N=52) and effective democracies (N=59).

Figure 4 shows how differences in rule of law translate nominal popular rights into effective ones. The translation is strongly curvilinear and highly heteroskedastic, separating two distinct zones: (a) in the zone from 0 to 70 percent, great variation in nominal rights produces little variation in effective rights, from 0 to 35 percent; (b) in the zone from 70 to 100 percent, small variation in nominal rights generates great varia-

⁴ Still another distinctive group of states to be found among effective democracies are small tropical island states, such as Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent, Barbados or the Bahamas.

tion in effective rights, from 20 to 95 percent. This pattern reflects that nominal rights are a necessary but by no means sufficient condition to generate effective rights.

Figure 4. Distributional Changes from Democratic Rights to Effective Democratic Rights



Ineffective democracies are characterized by a low level of effective rights. In some cases, their level is as low as that of some autocracies. This does not mean that ineffective democracies have fewer popular rights than autocracies. The fact that they are categorized as democracies tells us exactly the contrary. But lacking rule of law corrupts these rights so much in some cases that, in effective terms, people are left as disempowered as in some autocracies.

Two extreme cases, Singapore and India, are illustrative. In terms of nominal rights, India falls in the democratic zone of the scale, scoring at 75 percent points. Sin-

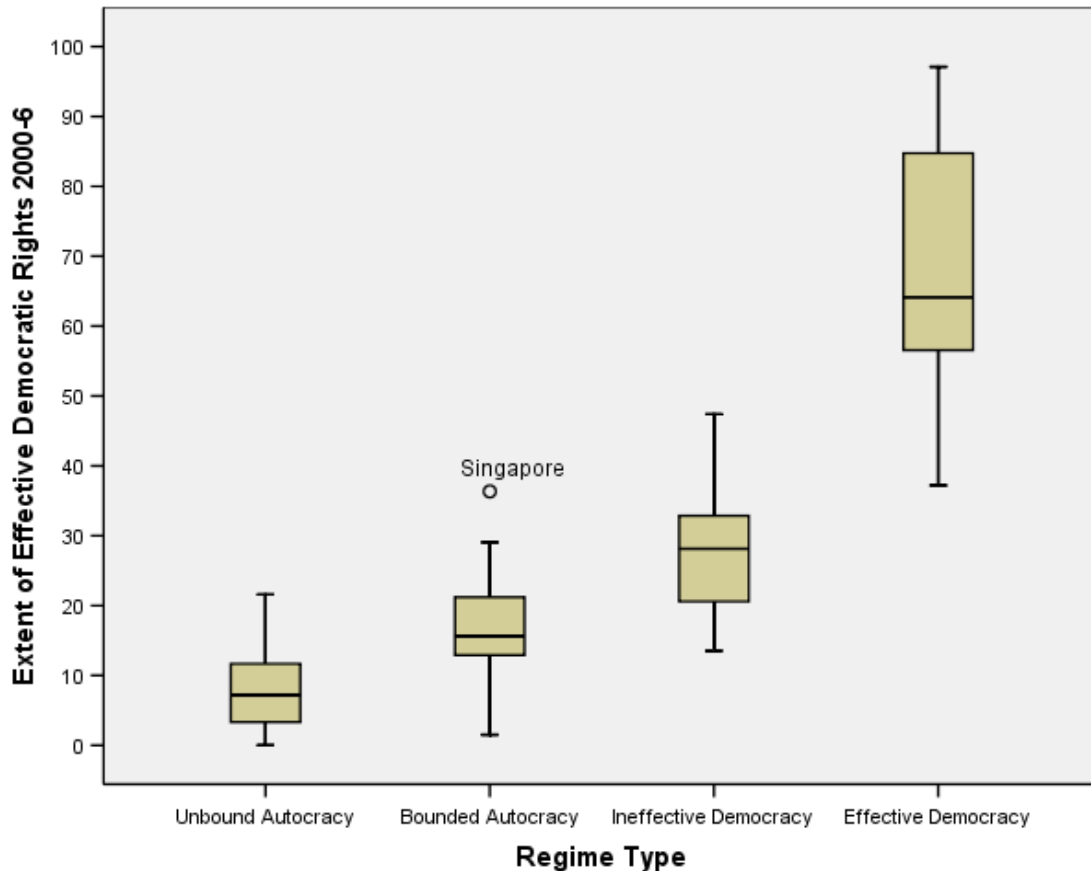
gapore, by contrast, is on the upper edge of the autocratic zone in nominal rights, scoring at 40 percent. At 40 percent of nominal rights, Singapore is an “incomplete autocracy” according to the classification of Figure 1, and Freedom House considers it as “partly free.” What makes Singapore exceptional in this regime category is its very high score in rule of law (.94). This high score makes the city-state’s 40 percent score in nominal rights almost fully effective: the score for effective rights is 37 points. India, for its part, scores poor in rule of law (.46), rendering its 75 percent score in nominal rights largely ineffective. The resulting score in effective rights is 35, two points below Singapore.

It might seem strange that a country, which is rather democratic in nominal terms, ends up with a score in effective democracy as low as a country that is rather autocratic. But when one focuses on people’s *effective* empowerment, it is perfectly possible that lacking rule of law corrupts the practice of popular rights to an extent that leaves people as disempowered as in an autocracy. There is no doubt that in nominal terms Indians have more popular rights than Singaporeans. However, it seems that Singaporeans can use their few rights more effectively than the Indians can use their wider range of rights. In terms of effective power, the two populations are equally (dis)empowered. Different combinations of regime characteristics can have the same outcome in terms of effective people power.

To be sure, Indians have voted unpopular governments out of office while Singaporeans did not have a realistic chance to do so. But India has a much worse record in protecting people from political violence, political imprisonment, torture and discrimination. This is documented in a political terror score that is much higher for India than for Singapore (.68 compared to .23, see above). Massive violations of popular rights and rampant political corruption, including the systematic buying of votes in the countryside, reduce the extent to which elections in India genuinely empower the people to govern their lives (Vittal 2003). Violations in one set of popular rights directly counteract the empowering effects in another set of rights, including the right to vote. People empowerment goes beyond the right to vote and this is reflected in our scores for effective democracy.

The boxplot in Figure 5 shows to what extent the four regime types generated in Figure 3 differ in their scoring in effective popular rights. As one would expect, unbound autocracies score on the bottom of effective people power, with an average score of 7.6. The bounded autocracies follow ten points higher up at a mean of 17.4. The ineffective democracies follow another ten points above at a mean of 27.8. Thus, ineffective democracies perform significantly better in effective people power than bounded autocracies. They overlap only in exceptional cases such as Singapore and India. Apart from that, the most salient feature of Figure 5 is how far off the effective democracies are located from the other three regime types: Their mean score in effective people power is 69.3. This is 40 points (!) above ineffective democracies. The differences among the three other regime types, though clearly recognizable, are minor compared to the empowerment gap that separates effective democracies from everything else.

Figure 5. Differentiating Regime Types on the Effective Democracy Scale



In our measurement perspective, the empowerment gap between ineffective democracy and autocracy is not nearly as large as the empowerment gap between effective democracy and everything else. How valid a depiction of societal reality is this measurement perspective?

VALIDATING EFFECTIVE DEMOCRACY

How validly a measurement captures social reality is a matter of how indicative the measurement is of other relevant aspects of social reality--aspects that are not themselves part of the measurement but are conceptually linked to it. This is the approach taken in construct validity, often also called criterion validity or nomological validity (Adcock & Collier 2001; Elkins 2000; Goertz 2006; Denton 2008).

Democracy is about people power, so human empowerment is its conceptual link to other aspects of reality. In the logic of criterion validity, then, effective democracy is a valid measure of people power to the extent that it is indicative of *other* aspects of human empowerment. In this context, the framework of human empowerment proposed

by Welzel and Inglehart (2008) offers a suitable reference point to test the capacity of various democracy indices to measure democracy's core meaning, people power. In this scenario, among various democracy indices, the one showing the closest link to aspects of human empowerment other than democracy itself is the most valid one in measuring democracy's empowering nature.

Democracy's Embedding in an Empowering Environment

There is a long tradition in democratic theory from Lipset (1959) to Dahl (1971) to Putnam (1993) suggesting that the prevalence of democracy depends on a set of fundamental social conditions. This tradition goes as far back as Aristotle (1984 [350 BC]) who claimed in Book IV of *Politics* that democracies are to be found in relatively egalitarian, middle-class centered societies whose citizens are inspired by civic values. In this understanding, democracy is a socially "embedded" phenomenon (Merkel 2004). Since then scholars have identified various socioeconomic and sociocultural conditions as embedding factors of democracy, four of which are particularly prominent in the literature.

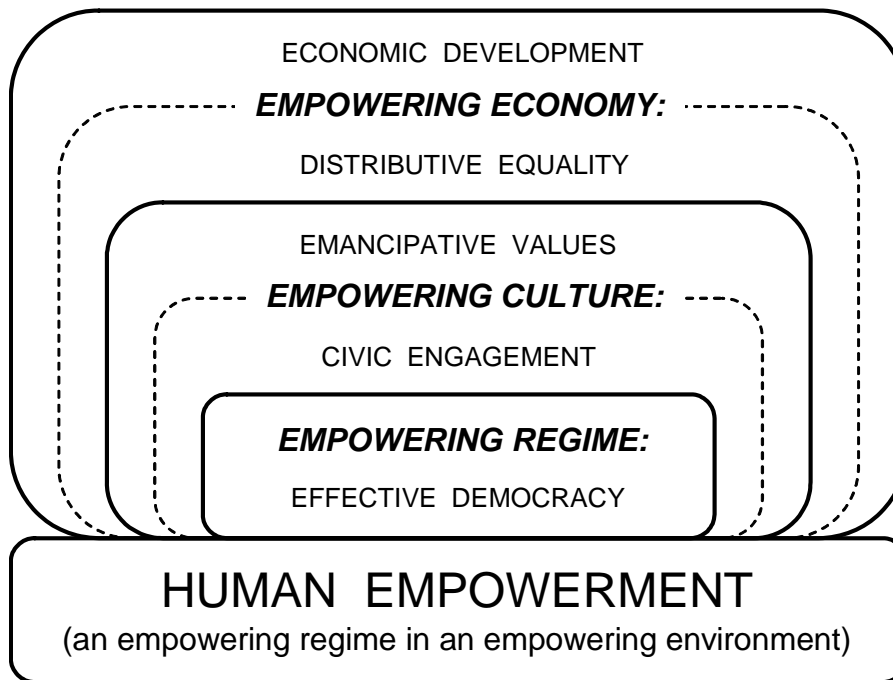
Among the socioeconomic conditions, a high level of *economic development* is most widely discussed as an embedding factor of democracy (Lipset 1959; Bollen & Jackman 1985; Burkhart & Lewis-Beck 1994; Boix & Stokes 2003). But *distributional equality* in basic human resources is also emphasized as an embedding factor of democracy (Acemoglu & Robinson 2006; Dahl 1971; Boix 2003; Vanhanen 2003). Among the sociocultural conditions, a civic culture that emphasizes *emancipative values* is claimed to be an embedding factor of democracy (Almond & Verba 1963; Putnam 1993; Inglehart 1997; Welzel Inglehart & Klingemann 2003; Inglehart & Welzel 2005; Welzel 2007). Closely related to this, assertive forms of non-violent *civic engagement* are seen as an indication of a vibrant civil society which fosters powerful popular pressures that make state authorities accountable (Foweraker & Landman 1997; Anheier et al. 2001; McAdam, Tarrow & Tilly 2001; Karatnycky & Ackerman 2005; Welzel 2007; Bernhard & Karakoc 2008).

These four embedding factors of democracy are not mutually exclusive. In fact, it is likely that they re-enforce each other in establishing *an entire embedding environment* of democracy, as suggested by Welzel and Inglehart (2008). Accordingly, Figure 6 integrates the four embedding factors and their core, democracy, into a *single framework* that highlights human empowerment as the underlying theme.

Effective democracy constitutes the centerpiece in the human empowerment framework. Effective democracy is an empowering type of regime that entitles people to practice personal and political rights. But an effective democratic regime is not the only contribution to the empowerment of people. People power does not depend only on legal entitlements. People might have abundant entitlements but if they lack the resources that make them capable to practice these entitlements, or if they lack the values that make them willing to practice them, people still lack empowerment. Thus, empowerment not only has an institutional dimension that works on the level of entitlements. It

also has a socioeconomic dimension that works on the level of capabilities. And it has a sociocultural dimension that works on the level of values and habits. There is a socio-economic and a sociocultural empowerment context, in the center of which we place an empowering regime, that is, democracy.

Figure 6. Effective Democracy in a Human Empowerment Framework



An empowering socioeconomic context manifests itself in high levels of economic development. Higher levels of economic development increase people's participatory resources, such as their incomes and skills, making them more capable of practicing popular rights. We measure economic development using World Bank data of a country's per capita income (GDP/capita) in thousands of US-Dollars at purchasing power parities as of 1998. But we adjust these figures for oil and gas rents, using Ross's (2008:121) data to subtract a country's per capita oil and gas rent (in thousands of US-Dollars) from its per capita income as measured in GDP.⁵ This is done to account for the fact that oil-generated incomes strengthen autocratic power structures, thus disempowering the people (Ross 2000).

It is not only the aggregate stock of participatory resources that is important, resource *dispersion* is important as well: more widely dispersed resources empower a wider circle of people. Also, participatory resources not only rely on economic means, they also consist of intellectual skills and social opportunities. To capture the distributive

⁵ We are grateful to Michael L. Ross for providing us his data on a country's per capita oil and gas rent.

aspect of resources, and to cover resources in an encompassing way that goes beyond mere economic means, we use Vanhanen's (2003) index of "power resources" as of 1998. This index combines (a) indicators of land distribution and the deconcentration of economic power to measure the dispersal of material means, (b) indicators of literacy and enrollment in tertiary education to measure the dispersal of intellectual skills, and (c) indicators of urbanization and the size of the non-agricultural work force to measure social opportunities. The index of power resources summarizes these three types of participatory resources into an index from 0 to 100. Vanhanen (1997:42-63) provides a detailed description of the index construction.

An empowering sociocultural context consists of certain values and habits. Values have the potential to empower people motivation-wise. Values fulfill this potential when they have an emancipative impetus, that is, when they make people believe in their own efficacy, in the desirability of people power, in the acceptability of non-conformity and in the trustworthiness of people in general (Lasswell 1951; Inglehart & Welzel 2005). To measure how strongly these values are anchored in national populations, we use Welzel's (2007) index of "emancipative values" based on survey data from the World Values Surveys. To create this index, one calculates for each surveyed country: (1) how strongly people on average believe in personal efficacy (using a question on how much control they feel to have in shaping their lives), (2) how strongly people believe in the desirability of people power (using questions on how important it is that ordinary people have a say in national government and community affairs), (3) how strongly people believe in the acceptability of non-conform lifestyle choices (using a question on the acceptability of homosexuality), and (4) how strongly people believe in the trustworthiness of other people (using a question on generalized trust of people).

As Welzel's factor analyses demonstrate, cross-national variation over these four beliefs is uni-dimensional, reflecting just one underlying factor. Hence, there is a common theme intersecting all four beliefs and this common theme can be characterized as an emancipative belief in the freedoms of people. This justifies summarizing the four component beliefs into an overall index of "emancipative values," ranging from 0 in the case that no person in a country holds any of these four beliefs, to 100 for the case that every person holds all of these beliefs. Welzel (2007:403) provides a detailed description of scale construction and indicators used.

Habits are behavioral manifestations of values and for this reason constitute another aspect of culture. In an empowerment perspective, habits are important as an indication of the extent to which people exert agency, express their concerns, and behave assertively in relation to authorities. To the extent people do so, they have internalized empowering habits. The frequency of assertive forms of civic engagement indicates the social radius of empowering habits in this sense. To measure the level of assertive civic engagement, we use World Values Survey data, calculating per country the percentage of respondents reporting to have participated in such non-violent actions as petitions, boycotts and demonstrations. Details on questionnaire, methods, and fieldwork of the World Values Surveys can be obtained at: www.worldvaluessurvey.org.

Values empower people on the level of mentalities while resources empower people on the level of capabilities. These empowering sociocultural and socioeconomic conditions are closely intertwined, indicating that *human empowerment is an experiential unity of empowering mentalities and empowering capabilities*. The factor analyses in Table 1 support this claim, evidencing that all four aspects of an empowering social context represent just one over-arching factor of human empowerment.

A democratic *regime* is just an empowering set of rights. But a democratic *society* is more than just an empowering regime. It is *an empowering regime in the context of an empowering environment*. Democracy should be deeply anchored in an empowering social environment, for popular rights will not be effectively practiced, unless people are able and willing to practice them. This conception integrates socioeconomic and sociocultural explanations of democracy into a coherent framework, emphasizing the underlying theme of human empowerment.

Nominal democracy can be imposed by domestic elites or foreign powers fully irrespective of empowering conditions in the wider society. Effective democracy, however, should depend on exactly these empowering conditions. If a public has the resources that make it capable of practicing democracy and if it has the values that make it willing to do so, it also has the power to raise popular pressure on elites so that they effectively respect the people's rights. Evidence for this pattern across a sample of some 70 nations is provided by Welzel (2007:417). Hence, measures of effective democracy should show a closer connection with empowering socioeconomic and sociocultural conditions in comparison to other measures of democracy.

Our test question is which measure of democracy is most strongly indicative of conditions of empowerment *other* than democracy itself. This question is solved by showing which measure of democracy is most closely associated with the social conditions of empowerment and involves no assumption of what is cause and effect. What is cause and what is effect in this association is strictly speaking irrelevant to the validity test. To make the point that democracy is *indicative* of social conditions of empowerment, it suffices to demonstrate that democracy is significantly correlated with empowering social conditions.

However, we recognize that since Lipset (1959) most of the literature on the societal prerequisites of democracy sees democracy as the product rather than the precondition of social conditions of empowerment, assuming these conditions to predate democracy. To represent this dominant assumption in the work on societal prerequisites of democracy, we measure democracy over the most recent period in time and relate it to social conditions of empowerment that *predate* it.

The Evidence

We have four indicators covering different aspects of an empowering social environment: economic development, distributional equality, emancipative values and civic engagement. Figure 7 uses these four indicators separately and three different combin-

Table 1. The Unidimensionality of Empowering Societal Conditions

Indicators:	Loadings on first and single principal component: Empowering Societal Conditions		
	Analyses 1: Socioeconomic Empowerment	Analysis 2: Sociocultural Empowerment	Analysis 3: Overall Societal Empowerment
Economic Development 1998	.947		.948
Distributive Equality 1998	.947		.926
Emancipative Values 1995-99		.910	.950
Civic Engagement 1995-99		.910	.863
KMO-Index	.500	.500	.822
Explained Variance	89.7%	82.7%	85.1%
Number of Nations	161	74	74

ations of them, each covering a broader set of empowering conditions, including an empowering socioeconomic context (economic development and distributional equality), an empowering sociocultural context (emancipative values and civic engagement), as well as the entire empowering context (all four indicators). These summary indices represent averages over normalized scale versions of the included component indices. As the factor analyses in Table 1 have shown, these conceptual summaries are empirically justified as there is one underlying dimension of empowering social conditions: empowering capabilities go together with empowering mentalities.

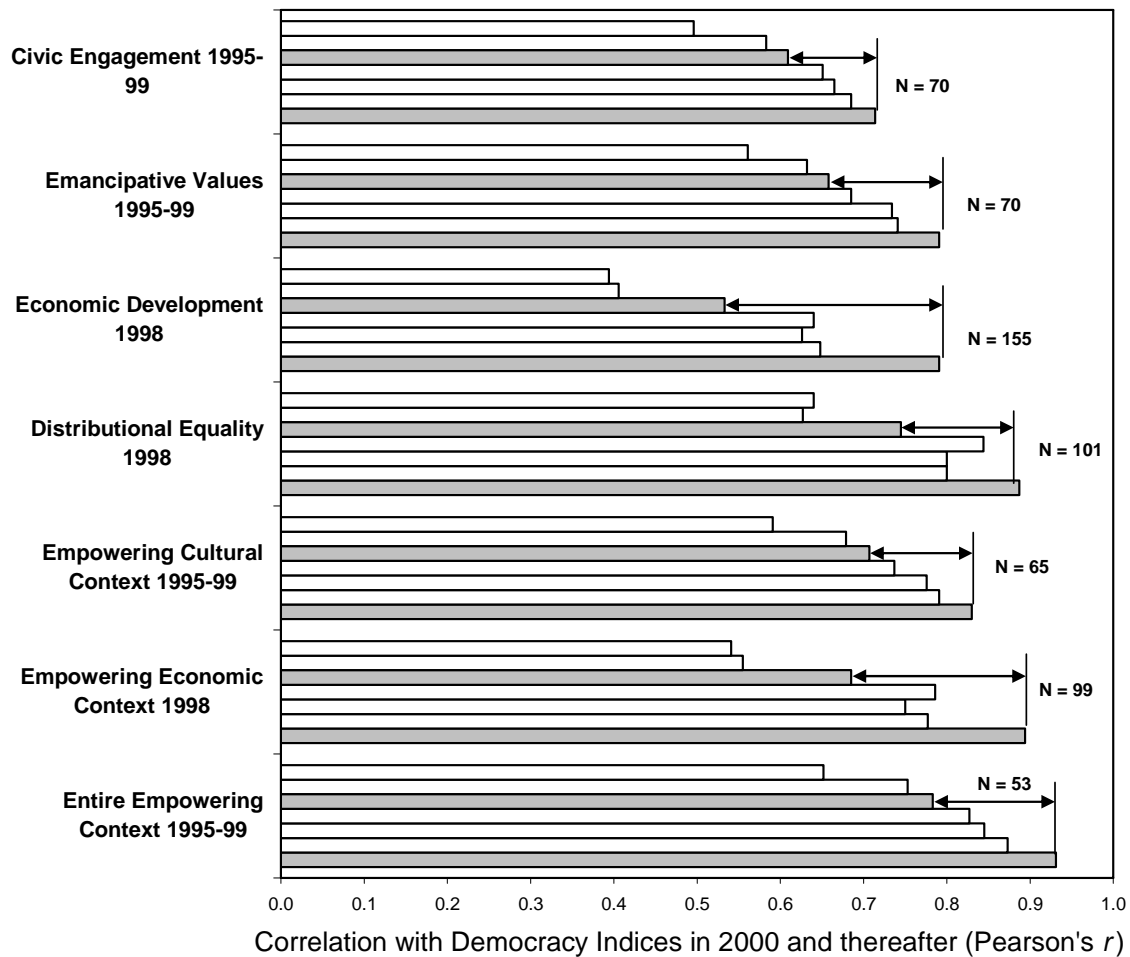
Figure 7 correlates each of the seven measures of empowering social conditions with seven different measures of democracy, including our index of effective democracy. The other six democracy measures include (in descending order of the bars in Figure 7): the Polity "autocracy-democracy" scores as of 2000-3 (Marshall & Jaggers 2004); the CIRI "empowerment rights" measure as of 2000-3 (Cingranelli & Richards 2004); the Freedom House (2007) popular rights ratings as of 2000-6; the "index of democratization" as of 2001 (Vanhanen 2003); the Economist intelligence unit's "democracy index" as of 2006 (Economist 2007); and the World Bank's "voice and accountability" measure as of 2000-6 (Kaufman, Kraay & Mastruzzi 2007). The bottom bar in each of the seven sets of bars represents our index of effective democracy as of 2000-6. For each democracy index, data are averaged over the time period from 2000 to the most recent year for which data are available, as indicated.

The length of each bar in Figure 7 indicates how strongly the democracy measure represented by this bar correlates with the respective aspect of contextual empowerment, as labeled on the vertical axis. For instance, the length of the bottom bar in the bottom set of bars indicates that our measure of effective democracy correlates at $r=.93$ with the measure of a society's entire empowering context.

The pattern depicted in Figure 7 provides some clear lessons. Regardless which measure of an empowering social context one uses, all democracy measures are always highly significantly and positively correlated with the empowering conditions in the wider society. Among the seven democracy indices, the Polity autocracy-democracy scores always show the weakest correlation and the CIRI empowerment rights measure always shows the second-weakest correlation with the empowering contexts. The Freedom House popular rights ratings usually show the third-weakest correlation among the seven democracy indicators. As regards the second-strongest correlate, the World Bank voice and accountability measure, the Economist democracy index, and the Vanhanen index of democratization are usually very close.

However, the World Bank and Economist democracy measures are unusual contenders. These organizations stretch the boundary beyond democracy's definitional limitation to institutions, including features that are part of the social context of democracy but not part of democracy itself. For instance, the Economist includes civic activity data from the WVS and this creates a tautological correlation with civic engagement as one aspect of an empowering context. Thus, the World Bank and Economist democracy measures are closely correlated with empowering social contexts partly because of tautology. For the completeness of the picture, they are nevertheless included.

Figure 7. The Embedding of Democracy in an Empowering Environment



Key: In order from top to bottom, bars represent various democracy indices as follows:
 Bar 1: Polity Democracy Score 2000-3
 Bar 2: CIRI Empowerment Rights Scale 2000-4
 Bar 3: Freedom House Democratic Rights 2000-6 (gray shaded)
 Bar 4: Vanhanen Democracy Index 2001
 Bar 5: Economist Democracy Index 2006
 Bar 6: World Bank “Voice and Accountability Index” 2000-6
 Bar 7: Effective Democratic Rights 2000-6 (gray shaded)

By contrast, the index of effective democracy remains within the limits of an institutional definition of democracy and has no tautologically inbuilt correlation with democracy's empowering contexts. And yet, it is the index of effective democracy that shows the strongest correlation with *each* measure of an empowering context, among *all* seven measures of democracy. It is particularly noteworthy how much the index of effective democracy outperforms the Freedom House popular rights ratings, which is one of its

Table 2. The Dependence of Democracy on Empowering Conditions in Society

<i>Predictors</i> (mid 1990s):	<i>Dependent Variables:</i>							
	Extent of Democratic Rights 2000-6				Extent of Effective Democratic Rights 2000-6			
	M 1	M 2	M 3	M 4	M 5	M 6	M 7	M 8
Socioeconomic empowering context	.77*** (11.39)	.14* (2.59)* *			.93*** (24.42)	.30*** (4.66)		
Entire empowering context			.80*** (9.45)	.21* (2.05)			.93*** (18.57)	.35*** (4.23)
Lagged dependent variable 1996		.83*** (15.29)		.72*** (6.90)		.68*** (10.55)		.64*** (7.65)
Adj. R ²	.57	.87	.63	.81	.86	.94	.87	.94
N	99	99	53	53	99	99	53	53

Notes: Entries are standardized regression coefficients with T-ratios in parentheses. Significance levels: * p<.05 ** p<.01 *** p<.001

components. Hence, our refinement of the Freedom House data with the rule of law data does bring democracy's embedding in empowering social conditions clearer to the surface, and it does so quite strongly.

These findings suggest that more than any other measure of democracy, *the index of effective democracy is indicative of empowering qualities in democracy's wider social context*. In an empowerment perspective, then, the index of effective democracy appears to be the most valid measure of democracy.

One interpretation of this finding is that, more than other versions of democracy, effective democracy depends on empowering conditions in the wider society. The regression analyses in Table 2 seem to confirm this suggestion. Variation in nominal democracy is explained to 57 to 63 percent by variation in empowering social conditions (see Models 1 and 3), while variation in effective democracy is explained to 86 or 87 percent by variation in empowering social conditions (see Models 5 and 7).

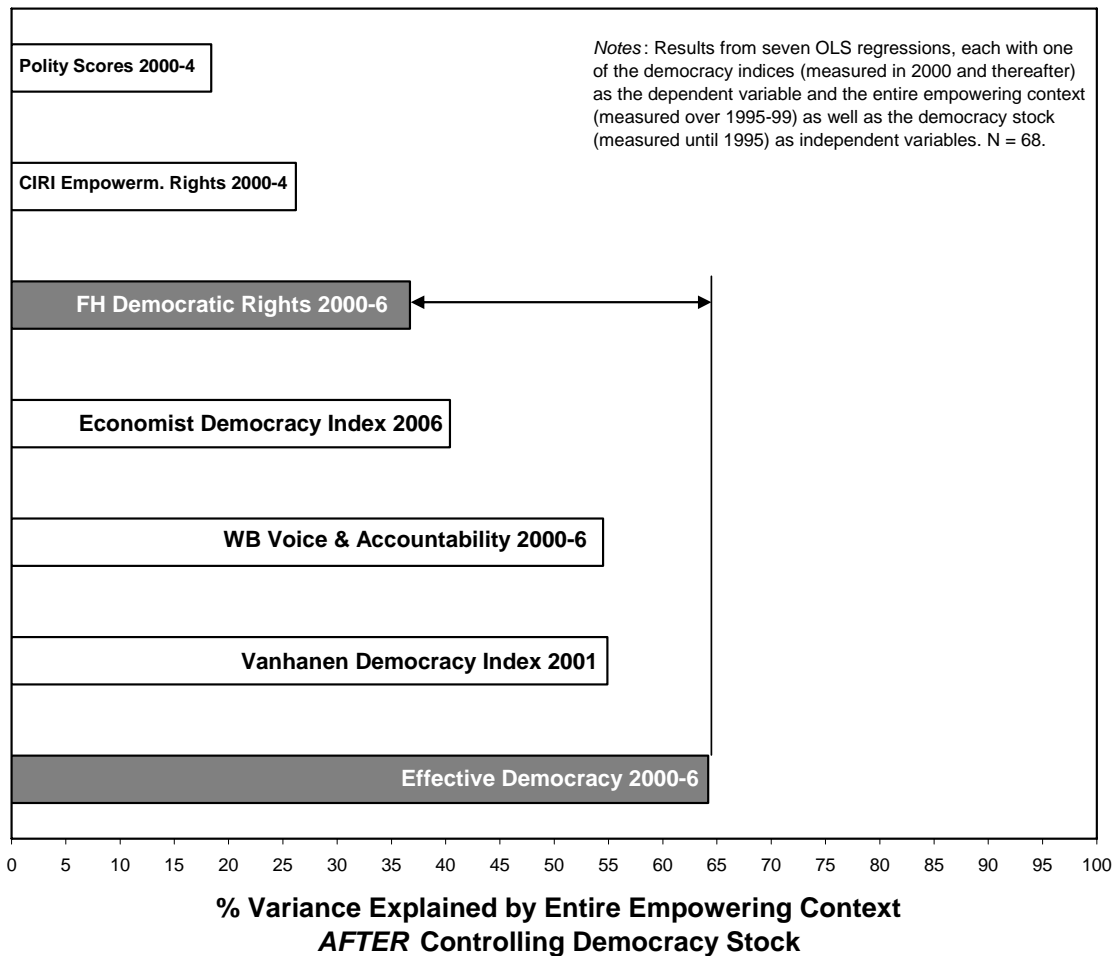
What happens, however, when one considers reverse causality, taking into account the extent to which empowering social conditions are themselves shaped by the level of democracy of the prior period? This is tested by including a lagged version of the dependent variable, nominal democracy and effective democracy, measured at the beginning of the period over which the empowering social conditions are measured. Doing so indicates how strongly the empowering social conditions shape the level of democracy of the subsequent period, *after* one has isolated that part of these conditions that is independent of the level of democracy of the preceding period. To the extent that empowering conditions continue to show an effect on subsequent democracy after this control, this effect is genuinely independent and, as far as one can say, of causal quality.

With effective democracy, the impact of empowering social conditions diminishes as one includes the lagged dependent variable (see Models 4 and 6). This indicates recursive causality. The effect of empowering social conditions on the level of effective democracy of the subsequent period diminishes because parts of this effect are captured by the lagged dependent variable. This is so because the level of effective democracy of the preceding period partly accounts for empowering social conditions.

However, this is not entirely but only partly the case, and so the causal arrow points also in the opposite direction, as recursivity implies. Thus, even taking into account how much the level of effective democracy of the preceding period shapes empowering social conditions, these conditions retain a highly significant and strongly positive impact on effective democracy of the subsequent period. Empowering social conditions do have an effect of their own on effective democracy.

For nominal democracy the pattern is different (see Models 2 and 4). After controlling for the lagged dependent variable, the impact of empowering social conditions drops drastically and becomes almost insignificant. Evidently, nominal democracy is much less a function of empowering social conditions than is effective democracy. Results of seven multivariate regressions, one for each of the seven democracy measures as the dependent variable, confirm the previous result from a slightly different angle of model specification. This is obvious from Figure 8.

Figure 8. The Predictive Power of an Empowering Societal Context for Various Measures of Democracy, Controlling for Democracy's Endurance



To take into account the extent to which empowering conditions are themselves shaped by prior democracy, this time we do not include the lagged dependent variable but Gerring et al.'s (2005) "democracy stock" variable, as of 1995. This variable measures the number of years a country has spent under democracy⁶ and is supposed to capture the long-term effect of democracy on empowering social conditions.

In Figure 8, a post-2000 measure of each indicator of democracy is regressed on our measure of the entire empowering context before 2000 and on the democracy stock accumulated until the earliest point of the period over which the empowering context is measured, i.e. 1995. The bars in Figure 8 show for each of these seven regressions the percent of variance in the respective democracy index explained by the empowering social context, after isolating the extent to which the empowering context is independent

⁶ In fact, the measure is a bit more sophisticated, depreciating the count of each democratic year by one percent for each year it fades to the past from the baseline of 1995. We are grateful to John Gerring for providing us the data on this index.

of enduring democracy. As one can see, whereas variation in nominal democracy (see the bar for the Freedom House ratings) is explained to only 35 percent by empowering social conditions, variation in effective democracy is explained to 65 percent by empowering social conditions, accounting for these conditions' dependence on enduring democracy. Again, effective democracy best depicts democracy's embedding in empowering social conditions and therefore appears to be the measure most clearly capturing democracy's core meaning: people power.

CONCLUSION

We argue that the root idea inspiring democracy is to empower people and that to measure democracy in ways that capture its empowering nature one needs to take into account rule of law as a state quality that makes democracy effective. By itself rule of law does not make a country democratic but it does make nominal democracy effective. Following these rationales, we created an index of "effective democracy" in that we weighed scores for nominal democracy by scores for rule of law, depreciating democracy to the extent rule of law is lacking.

Inspecting the distributional features of the index of effective democracy, it is obvious that lack of rule of law depreciates the scoring of many nominally democratic countries. Sometimes this depreciation goes so far that a nominal democracy scores lower in effective democracy than even some autocracies. Under recognition of democracy's purpose to empower people, we found this perfectly appropriate. Democracies that lack rule of law fail to set popular rights into effect, and so they do as little to empower people effectively as do some milder versions of autocracy.

The internal logic of a measurement concept is one criterion of its quality. Another quality criterion is a concept's external validity, that is, its relation to other aspects of reality--aspects that are theoretically linked to the concept but not a definitional part of it. Democracy is about people power, so empowerment is democracy's theoretical link to other aspects of reality. Other such aspects of reality, which are not themselves part of democracy but empower people, include socioeconomic conditions that make people capable of practicing democracy, and sociocultural conditions that make them willing to practice it. Evaluated in this human empowerment framework, the most valid index of democracy is the one that shows the closest association with empowering socioeconomic conditions and empowering sociocultural conditions. This is at the same time the index measuring the empowering nature--and thus the core--of democracy the best.

In all statistical tests with seven different measures of democracy, the index of effective democracy always turned out to be the one that was most strongly associated with empowering conditions in the wider society among some 150 states. Further tests of the direction of these associations suggested that the relation between effective democracy and empowering social conditions is recursive. Accordingly, effective democracy depends on empowering social conditions as much as it helps to create them. This result makes sense. As a regime designed to empower people, democracy should be intimately

related to the empowering qualities in its wider societal context. In conclusion, human empowerment is a unity of empowering social conditions and empowering regime characteristics, the latter of which are best depicted by the index of effective democracy.

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