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LORe at University of Gothenburg

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Introduction

The purpose of this working paper is to introduce the work of the Laboratory of Opinion Research (LORe). The paper is structured as follows: We begin with a short summarizing presentation of the laboratory and of the most important part of the data collection performed within LORe, i.e. the electronic citizen panels. We also present MOD (the Multidisciplinary Opinion and Democracy Research Group), which is the research group responsible for initiating LORe. The rest of the document is a concrete description of the “dos and don’ts” of LORe. We want the reader to be able to closely (sometimes even in tedious detail) follow how we work. The document is work in progress in the sense that there tend to come up new questions as the project goes along. Internet based surveys evolves together with the research focusing on the usefulness of the same. We therefore appreciate comments and questions that help us make the document clearer (please send to Stefan.Dahlberg@pol.gu.se). This particular paper is written to be presented at the LORe workshop at Böttö 8 of September 2011 and serves as a basic description of our routines.

LORe is the result of a wide teamwork. Many people are involved and deserve credit for the work. The authors of this document are the initiators of LORe (Henrik Oscarsson and Stefan Dahlberg), involved project leaders from the MOD-group (Peter Esaiasson and Elin Naurin) and the employed research assistants of LORe (Lisa Kareliusson, Elina Lindgren, Sebastian Lundmark and Rebecka Åsbrink). The research assistants are responsible for the everyday work of the laboratory (recruitment, practical details etc) and have therefore contributed with most of the text concerning this.

Summary presentation of MOD and LORe Citizen Panels

LORe is an undertaking by the MOD (Multidisciplinary Opinion and Democracy) research group at University of Gothenburg (http://www.mod.gu.se/). MOD is a part of a strategic initiative at the University of Gothenburg in order to ensure top-quality research. The aim of MOD is to create a multidisciplinary research environment focused on the role of citizens’ opinions in sustainable democratic development.1

The research is structured around three broad research themes: off-election democracy, crisis democracy, and changing political minds, attitudes and behavior.

There is a wealth of data that can be used in order to highlight MOD’s area of interest. At the same time, however, there is a need to continually gather new data. Not least important is to gather longitudinal data and develop process tracking methodologies which can be employed to connect attitudes and behaviors, specific events with political outcomes etc.

For this purpose, the Laboratory for Opinion Research (LORe) has been created by MOD. The aim of LORe is also to develop data collection strategies that can generate data quickly and follow events closely in real time as they unfold.

LORe is located at the Department of Political Science at University of Gothenburg and financed by grants from University of Gothenburg and from the Social Science Faculty at University of Gothenburg. Currently it is open for scholars from the University of Gothenburg along with

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1 For more information, see Wängnerud et al. A Plan for Consolidation and Development of Opinion and Democracy Research.
scholars in their personal network, who participates free at charge subject to a review process. There are plans for a more inclusive process where LORe is made a national resource.

At core of the LORe-approach to opinion and democracy research is an internet based standing citizen panel (N = 8,000) which is surveyed regularly (currently at the pace of three times per year) and irregularly in connection to exogenously imposed events. To keep costs down, the panel is self-recruited and participants receive no material benefit for their time. The primary source of recruitment is the home pages of cooperating news media organizations. (Specifically, pop-up banners direct potential participants to a recruitment survey.) Participants are invited to stay in the panel permanently, but the panel is also continuously refreshed. Respondents in a survey are thus either veteran participants of one or more preceding surveys (the larger group), or newcomers to the panel. Because some cooperating news media are regional, the sample is geographically skewed. As explicated below, this feature adds analytical leverage.

Regular citizen panel surveys contain two sections. The first, which is put to all participants, contains a) a set of standing questions and b) questions mapping attitudes towards current events and issues. The standing questions pertain to legitimacy beliefs (institutional, political and social trust, and normative views on democracy); political involvement (participation, interest in politics, and media exposure), party preferences and risk perceptions. The second section is devoted to stand-alone survey embedded experiments addressing questions on opinion and democracy broadly defined. Each experiment is assigned a randomly selected subsample of participants who are exposed to randomly distributed treatments. Currently each regular survey houses 5 to 10 different experimental studies. Basic background information on participants (subjects) is collected at the recruitment phase. However, occasionally a third section is added to the survey containing questions on additional background factors.

Irregular citizen panel surveys, which are undertaken in connection to exogenously imposed events at the national and local level, contains the set of standing questions along with questions designed specifically for the event which motivated the survey. The mix of regular and irregular surveys of a large-N self-selected citizen panel allows for three types of studies:

1. Stand-alone survey embedded experiments which are usually cross-sectional but may also be dynamically designed. The software allows for a variety of experimental stimuli including sound image- and movie-files (however, at the present stage we cannot easily offer subjects real money for incentives).

2. Multi-stage panel analyses of stability, change and accuracy with regard to the questions which are included in the standing section of the survey. For this type of analyses, cooperation with the SOM-surveys (a yearly high quality mail survey with representative samples of Swedish residents, which are conducted by the SOM-Institute at University of Gothenburg, see http://www.som.gu.se), and with the Swedish National Election Study (see http://www.valforskning.pol.gu.se/) offers possibilities to make accurate point estimates of relevant indicators.

3. Natural experiments on the consequences of exogenously imposed events for, primarily, the set of standing indicators on citizens’ relationship to their democratic government (i.e. legitimacy beliefs, political involvement, party preferences and risk perceptions).
Events which are experienced nationwide and by all categories of citizens (for example a sudden slur in the economy or a national political scandal), are studied by means of a panel before-after design without control group. Eventually, as the number of surveys accumulates, the data will allow for the use of statistical techniques for longitudinal data analysis.

Local events, and experiences which are exclusive to subgroups of citizens, may be studied through more elaborated designs involving control groups. To exemplify: Imagine that politicians in a region from which a substantial number of participants in the LORe-panel have been recruited are planning for cutbacks in welfare state provisions (e.g., the closing down of a school). The LORe-approach makes it possible to survey participants in the affected geographical unit (typically a commune) pre- and post-decision, and to conduct corresponding surveys among participants in neighbor communes who are not directly affected by the decision. Furthermore, an additional citizen panel may be recruited among the eventual group of activists who choose to publicly protest the planned decision.

LORe has developed from an initiative by Henrik Oscarsson together with Staffan Kumlin and Stefan Dahlberg. In connection to the 2002 Swedish parliamentary election they organized a multi-staged “E-panel” with a large sample of self-recruited participants with the dual purpose to monitor attitudinal developments in a campaign environment, and to allow for survey embedded experiments and for natural experiments on critical events during the campaign. This design was repeated at subsequent referenda on EMU-membership in 2003, the European parliamentary elections in 2009, and parliamentary elections in 2006 and 2010 (e.g. Dahlberg, Oscarsson and Kumlin 2006, E-panelen 2006. Metodrapport). Following the 2010 parliamentary election, the E-panel was transformed into the citizen panel described above. The bulk of participants in the current citizen panel are recruited from the 2010 E-panel.

The LORe-approach described here is low cost, flexible and provides for a systematic approach to natural experiments on the consequences of exogenously imposed events on citizens’ relationship to their democratic institutions. Furthermore, the approach can be used for corresponding studies involving other key actors in democracies such as politicians (a self-recruited panel of local and national politicians is in the pipeline), journalists and civil servants. Acknowledging the benefits of the approach, it is equally important to critically evaluate its merits. From an analytical perspective it is crucial to get a better understanding of the extent to which the non-random sampling procedure for recruitment of participants affects findings. From a practical perspective a major challenge is to motivate participants to stay in the panel, and to find ways to secure a continuous inflow of new participants.

As will be mentioned in this paper, LORe is also responsible for other kinds of data collection, most notably surveys to Swedish politicians. There are also plans for surveys to journalists and civil servants.
Web questionnaires 2010-2011, an overview

The Laboratory for Opinion Research was launched in April 1 2010. Here follows a short introduction of the data collection initiatives that have been taken so far.

The Internet Campaign Panels

Since 2002, the Swedish National Election Studies Program (SNES) at University of Gothenburg have conducted web based studies during election campaigning. The four previous studies – the 2002 and 2006 national elections, the 2004 referendum on the euro, and the 2009 European Election – are all successful studies but have at the same time been quite small both in scope and number of respondents (Dahlberg, Kumlin & Oscarsson 2006).

The 2010 Internet Campaign Panels

Because of increased funding, under the auspice of the Multidisciplinary Opinion and Democracy Research Group (MOD) it was possible to design a larger campaign study for the 2010 Swedish general election. The 2010 Internet Campaign Panel Study became the first data collection in the new Laboratory of Opinion Research, LORe (Dahlberg et al 2011).

The first web questionnaires were sent out in connection to the Swedish general election in September 2010. During five weeks from August 23 to October 3 2010, data was collected. Four pre-election questionnaires and one post-election questionnaire containing more than 180 sets of questions were sent out to 14 434 respondents (the respondents had been previously recruited to participate in the study). The four pre-election surveys had a response rate of 44, 1 (w.34) 52, 1 (w.35) 56, 7 (w.36) and 54, 1 (w.37) 61, 2 (w.38) respondents respectively (in percent). The post-election survey was answered by 72 percent.

In the end of the post-election questionnaire, the remaining participants were asked to be a part of a future citizen panel. 7971 respondents out of 8726 (52, 5 percent) said yes and became the first members of the MOD Citizen Panel.

Riksdag Survey 2010

After the Swedish general election in September 2010, the Department of Political Science at the University of Gothenburg sent a postal survey - Riksdagenskät 2010 - to all 349 members of the Swedish parliament (Riksdagen).

Riksdag Survey is a part of a research project at the Department of Political Science in Gothenburg. The main purpose of the project is to study the position of the elected parliament in a representative

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democracy with general elections as the vantage point. The Election Study Program in Gothenburg has previously conducted eight studies with members of the Riksdag (1969, 1985, 1988, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2002 and 2006). These constitute today the world’s longest time series on attitudes and behaviors of parliamentarians. All of them have succeeded in getting a response rate exceeding 90 percent.

During five months, from November 15 2010 to April 25 2011, surveys and twelve reminders (letters, e-mail, postcards, Christmas cards and phone calls) were sent out to the MPs. The survey ended up with 310 responded questionnaires (89 percent).

LORe have been involved during the whole process from creating the questionnaire, to send-outs, reminders, collection of data, creation of the dataset, encoding, making a codebook and writing a documentation of the field work.

Citizen Panel I 2010

The field period for the first Citizen Panel was December 15 2010 to January 15 2011.

The Crisis Democracy Project

One unique capacity of LORe is to be able to follow events closely in real time and to quickly generate data. This strength has for example been used when politicians in a Swedish municipality were about to decide whether or not the local school should close-down. At short notice we were able to send out web surveys to politicians and concerned citizens together with members of the Citizen Panel living in concerned municipality and the five surrounding municipalities.

Surveys were sent out both before and after the decision were made. Politicians without e-mail received postal surveys instead. The pre-decision survey was sent out January 24 2011 to February 6 2011. The post-decision survey was sent out March 9 2011 to April 3 2011.

Citizen Panel II 2011

In the beginning of spring 2011 the second Citizen Panel was sent out. The field period started on March 28 2011 and ended on April 13 2011. The Citizen Panel II was sent to 7256 respondents and 5820 people (80, 21 percent) answered.

The 2011 Internet Re-election Campaign Panel

Because of flaws in handling of ballots during the Swedish general election in 2010, The Electoral Review Board decided to call out for a re-election to the Västra Götaland county council assembly and to the municipal assembly in Örebro’s northeast constituency. The re-election was held on May 15 2011.

The re-election in Västra Götaland concerned 1, 3 million voters and accordingly well-suited for a survey. One week before the re-election, a pre-election questionnaire was sent out to the 3657 members of the Citizen Panel living in Västra Götaland. 2402 people answered (65, 7 percent).

The day after the re-election the past-election questionnaire was sent to the 2402 respondents answering the pre-election survey. Over 90 percent (2171 persons) answered the past-election survey.
Collaboration with the SOM institute at University of Gothenburg means that we will be able to compare the results of the 2011 Re-election Panel with a standard representative sample.

**Candidate Study 2010**

The Candidate Study 2010 is a part of an international research project on election campaigns: Comparative Candidate Survey (CCS).

**Part I:** From December 9 2010 to March 31 2011, all parliamentary candidates in the Swedish general election 2010 (4000 persons) were contacted by e-mail and asked to participate in a web-based survey. 1300 candidates completed their questionnaire which gives a response rate of 32.5 percent.

**Part II:** All the 349 selected members of parliament are asked to participate in the Candidate survey. The survey started in June 2011 (currently running). At present, the response rate is at 52 percent (183 responses out of 349).

**Recruitment to the Panel of Politicians**

During spring 2011 politicians have been recruited to a Panel of Politicians. The Candidate Survey mentioned above included a question regarding interest in participating in a standing Panel of Politicians. The work with this panel begins autumn 2011 and will be described elsewhere by Patrik Öhberg (patrik.ohberg@pol.gu.se). In summary: 800 of 1300 (61.5 percent) respondents in the Candidate survey have accepted to participate in the Panel of Politicians. As many as 177 (more than 50 percent!) of the Swedish Members of Parliament have also accepted to participate in the panel. We will also include politicians at the local and regional level of Sweden. At present, 2211 local and regional politicians have agreed to participate.

**Citizen Panel III 2011**

Planned field period: 17 October – 31 October 2011
Making a web questionnaire: Application period

Call for proposals

Four months before a panel starts, scholars are invited to participate with surveys in the forthcoming panel. Call for proposals are advertised by project manager of MOD and LORe at www.mod.gu.se and distributed via e-mail to gu-mod@listserv.gu.se, alla@samfak.gu.se and others who might be interested. See Appendix I for the complete “Invitation for research collaboration”.

In the invitation, you find a link to a web-based formula where proposals should be submitted. The proposal should describe the research background, purpose of the project, a description of the publications that will result from the project and the questions that are proposed to be included in the survey.

This is the information written in distributed e-mails before Citizen Panel II 2011:

MOD and LORe invite scholars to participate with survey questions in the Citizen Panel II 2011.

At present, MOD and LORe invite scholars to participate with their own survey questions in the next citizen panel, Citizen Panel II 2011. Read more about the citizen panel, what is required to participate and how to submit a proposal under the link “Invitation for research collaboration”. Follow the link “Application to the Citizen Panel III 2011” to register your interest and your survey questions.

Reminder

Two months before a panel starts, a reminder about proposals is sent out (by project manager of MOD and LORe).

Deadline

Deadline for proposals is six weeks before panel start.

Acceptance or denials of proposals

One month before the panel starts the steering committee of MOD is sitting down to discuss the proposals. LORe staff is involved by giving advice about suitable questions, length and design of questionnaires.

Acceptance or denials of proposals are distributed via e-mail to applicants by MOD’s project manager.
Making a web questionnaire: Field-period

Programming of the web surveys

The programming of the web surveys and the administration of the field work is made with the Textalk product Websurvey (https://websurvey.textalk.se)

One month before the panel starts, LORe staff work on the web design of the questions. After the first week, a sketch for feedback from the scholars should be made. Remaining weeks are dedicated for feedback, adjustments, modification, tests and remake.

It is important that scholars who participate in the panel are prepared to immediately react to the suggestions made by the LORe staff during this period.

It is also important to take notes on every mistake, trouble and solution (hopefully) during the field period. For this reason – we always start writing the damage report on the first day of programming.

On Monday, one week before the actual panel starts, send-outs to concerned scholars (testutskick) should be done to make sure that all settings are correct. We would really like to stress the importance of planning and being well in advance. There is always little time.

The respondent list should also be done during the last week (for further information see chapter Data Management).

Everything should be ready for send-out (on Monday morning at 7 am) on Friday afternoon.

Survey Design

We have used different methods with one large survey including all the different experiments and then condition the different questions to different respondents.

We have administered used one survey per experiment where we first make different respondent lists where one respondent is assigned one survey rather than different questions in a large survey.

We all have a shared account with most of the surveys.

Programming of the send-outs

The surveys are programmed to be sent from the e-mail account henrik.e.oscarsson@pol.gu.se.

Each respondent receive an e-mail with a subject telling Göteborgs universitet: XXX (name of the current panel) and an informational text with a link to the web-based questionnaire (Se next page for the information in distributed e-mails during the Citizen Panel II 2011)
Subject: Göteborgs universitet: M-p@nelen 2011

Message: Välkommen till M-p@nelen 2011!


M-panelen används för bland annat metodutveckling och experiment och är ett viktigt komplement till de stora riksrepresentativa undersökningar av svenska medborgare som pågått vid Göteborgs Universitet sedan 1950-talet. Genom att delta i undersökningen bidrar Du till att stärka svensk demokratiforskning.

Slumpen avgör hur just din enkät kommer att se ut. Det innebär att frågenerumringarna kommer att variera.

Du kommer till webbenkäten genom att klicka på nedanstående länk.

http://websurvey.textalk.se/start.php?ID=XXXXX&usr=$NAME&pwd=$PASS

Efter att du har svarat använder vi kryptering för att inte längre kunna koppla samman enkätsvaren med din e-postadress. Ingen som använder materialet kan därför se från vilken e-postadress enkätsvaren har skickats.

Analyser av resultaten publiceras så småningom i artiklar, uppsatser, böcker och avhandlingar från Göteborgs Universitet. Vi kommer så snart som möjligt även att lägga ut delar av resultaten från M-panelen på vår hemsida (www.mod.gu.se).

Tack för Din medverkan!

Med vänliga hälsningar,

Stefan Dahlberg och Henrik Oscarsson

Om du har frågor kan du nå oss via e-post
Henrik.E.Oscarsson@pol.gu.se

Om du inte kan använda länken ovan, logga in på: XXXX

Användarnamn: XXXX
Lösenord: XXXX

Om du vill avanmäla dig från M-panelen, skicka ett mail till henrik.e.oscarsson@pol.gu.se och skriv "Avanmälning" i ämnesraden.
Panel starts

According to the percentage of respondents during The 2010 Internet Campaign Panel, Mondays appeared to be the best day of the week to send out questionnaires. Both considering quick responses as well as a high response rate (Dahlberg et al 2011:17)³.

For that reason, we have decided to program the panels to start at Monday morning 7 am.

It is of great importance to cover the e-mail account henrik.e.oscarsson@pol.gu.se from the very beginning (at 7 am). Normally the staff at LORe share the first days and have responsibility for the e-mail account two hours at a time each. The members of the Citizen Panel are great observers and use to tell us immediately by e-mail if they find errors in the questionnaires. The faster the problems can be detected and fixed, the better.

Reminders

Response rates on previous panels have proved that the first reminder should be sent 48 hours after the first send-out. The second reminder is sent one week after panels start.

The first letter and the remind letter is identical apart from the word Påminnelse (Reminder) in parentheses in the beginning of the subject and the informational text in the reminding letter.

Field Period

During Field period, LORe staff is focused on adjustments (if needed) changing e-mail addresses, unsubscribing users and reply all kinds of questions from the respondents. It is very important to unsubscribe users before next reminder is sent out (for further information see chapter Data Management).

Every e-mail possible to answer should have a personal response from one of us working in the laboratory. LORe staff answers technical questions about the survey. Research-related questions are forwarded to concerned scholar. E-mails should be answered as soon as possible. Templates exist for polite answers to the most frequently asked questions.

Panel ends

We usually close-down the panel at Sunday 12 pm.

Length of the field period varies and can be both extended and shortened if desired. One of the great advantages is that we work close to the scholars. Responsible scholars are involved from selection of proposals to processing of data. This gives us flexibility. LORe has great opportunities to adapt the work after prevailing circumstances.

³ All Mondays had more than 70 percent respondents and the first Monday (August 23) was the most successful one, with 74 percent respondents. None of the other weekdays reached 70 percent respondent. With exception to week 36 the percentage of respondents during the first 24 hours was the highest during Mondays. Thus it seems as if Mondays represents the best way to send out surveys if you want both quick responses as well as a high frequency of respondents. Another conclusion to be made is that after the first day after receiving the survey the response rate is rather low and thus, if you want a high response rate, the surveys should be sent out in the beginning of the week, since that in general tends to give higher response rates during the first 24 hours of the survey (Dahlberg et al 2011:17).
Data Management

Secrecy

A lot of the data and information that LORe deals with is of a sensitive character with contact information to the respondents and theoretical possibilities to link the different respondents to their respective answers. Therefore, all who work within LORe have to sign a confidentiality agreement that binds the employee to make sure:

- That it will not, in any form of presentation, appear what an individual respondent has answered.
- That information and data about respondents are handled with confidentiality throughout all of the data management.
- That all presentations of the material are handled in a responsible way.
- That the data is not spread to a third party without consent from the Laboratory of Opinion Research (LORe) or the MOD-steering committee.

LORe satisfies the confidentiality criterion set up by the Swedish Research Council should be fulfilled (Vetenskapsrådet 2002, 12).

Debriefing

Among many things, the Citizen Panel is used for methodological experiments. Respondents are informed of this in all surveys. However, the involved scholars decide whether the information to the respondents will be placed before or after the survey questions.

A good example of debriefing was in connection to an experiment about priority decisions in health care. The respondents were divided into several groups. Each group was assigned one unique text about a priority decision. Afterwards they answered some questions about their thoughts and feelings about the decision. Since the different cases could be perceived as real, the responsible scholar (Jenny de Fine Licht) decided to inform the respondents at the end of the survey that the texts were fictions. After having read the information, the respondents could not go back and change their answers.

HÅLSO- OCH SJUKVÅRD

Vi vill påstå att beskrivningen av prioriteringsbeslutet är fiktiv och inte har någon omedelbar förlopa i verkligheten. Beskrivningarna av hur prioriteringsbeslutet gick till finns i flera varianter och vi är intresserade av hur de uppfattas av medborgare.

The information read: We would like to emphasize that the description of the priory decision is fictitious and has not happened in reality. The description of the priority decision is written in several versions and we are interested in how they are perceived by citizens.
**Respondent list**

Before a new panel-step a respondent list is created based on the updated Identification key with the updated e-mails. Before anything is sent out it is made sure that all the panel participants who have unsubscribed are filtered out and should thus not receive a new survey.

**Changed e-mails**

When respondents notify us that they have changed e-mails we answer them and tell them that we have changed their e-mails in our lists. All the changed e-mails are then written down in a document and after each panel-step we create an updated Identification key where the key-code is consistent with the same respondent but where the changed e-mails are inserted. This is done in order to circumvent misunderstandings and malfunctioning of previous data-sets and syntaxes used for previous panels since many of them (due to a late introduction of the identification key) uses e-mails in order to add the Identification key and other variables to the data-set.

**Unsubscription to the panel.**

On every send-out all respondents are given the opportunity to unsubscribe to the panel by sending an e-mail with the topic “Unsubscribe” (Avanmälan) to our shared e-mail account henrik.e.oscarsson@pol.gu.se. When someone unsubscribe to the panel we first make a note of that respondent and send him/her an e-mail thanking for their participation and giving them the option to register to the panel again if they someday change their minds and want to participate again. After each panel-step a variable called unsubscription_[prefix_for_that_panel_step] is made where 1 means that they have unsubscribed to the panel.

By giving every respondent the possibility to opt-out from participation in the panel, our surveys fulfil the consent criterion proposed by the Swedish Research Council.

**After a conducted survey**

On the last day of the collection of responses for a survey we close down the ability to answer the survey in Websurvey and export the answers to an Excel document. Websurvey transforms the answers automatically to an Excel 2003-2007 document but since the old version of excel (files ending with .xls) only can contain a low number of columns, large surveys are divided into different spread sheets within the file. This must therefore be manually taken care of by saving the document as an Excel 2010 document which can hold more columns and thus more variables as well as cases. In that new file (a file ending with .xlsx) one copies all the answers into the same spread sheet. This document is later opened in SPSS and a SPSS-syntax for the handling of the document should be created so that all the changes done to the file are documented and can be traced back in case something ends up wrong.

**Websurvey report**

Directly after each panel-step a report is created which includes frequency tables of the panel-questions, total response rate and response rate for every specific experiment. This report is in turn e-mailed to the different scholars who have experiments included in the survey. This is done to give them a brief overview and evaluation of how well their experiment was received and what kind of n-number they can expect on their respective questions.
Identification key

In order to be able to de-identify the data-sets but still make it possible for the users to merge different panel-steps with each other, an Identification code has been created that replaces the e-mail address. The list on which respondent corresponds to which number is stored in a data-set that is only available at the LORe and at the external back-up hard drive.

Weird cases

If someone register to the panel at multiple times (for example answer the same recruitment survey twice) we have chosen to destroy the latest registrations since then we avoid the possibility of the respondent being affected by seeing the same questions at an earlier state, which the other respondents to the recruitment survey has not done.

If someone has registered multiple times we make a note of this and add 1 to the variable r_multiple_registrations meaning that they have registered multiple times.

Code book

After each new panel-step a code book is created which includes a one-page presentation of the panel and for what aim the panel has been recruited. Every codebook also includes a summary of that particular panel-step with descriptive statistics of the composition in terms of gender, age and party preference of this particular step. In the code book every survey question is also presented with its original scale and exact wording. The questions prefix and name in the data-set is also included as well as the different response alternatives values counterparts in the data-set. A code book for data-set that only includes the different standard questions which are asked every panel-step is also created.

Distribution of data

Before any data is distributed the database manager de-identifies the data-set by removing the Email-variable as well as going through all of the open answers for every respondent to make sure that no e-mail addresses are mentioned in those questions. If any form of contact information is mentioned in an open question, that part of the respondents answer will be deleted before passing the data on. As a routine before any distribution of data is made two employees check the data to see that it has been correctly de-identified, one of the employees that checks the data should not have been working on the creation of the data-set in order to increase the chances to find variables containing sensitive information.

After the data-set has been created and properly de-identified a mail is sent out to all the concerned scholars who have participated with questions or experiments in the panel telling them that they can collect their data on a USB flash drive during office hours at the LORe office. The data is not generally sent out on e-mail due to it often becoming too large for most e-mail servers to be sent or received.

When the data-set is ready and de-identified (roughly four weeks after the field period has ended) it also becomes available for the general public. The data is published on the MOD web page together with a codebook.
Recruitment

The panel consists of self-recruited respondents. The respondents themselves have chosen to register to be a part of the Citizens Panel by filling in a recruitment-survey (see Appendix II). The recruitment survey contains questions about the respondent’s e-mail address together with a number of socio-economic background questions which gives us important information in later analyses. Since the participation relies on a voluntary ground, all members of the panel can choose to leave the panel whenever they wish to. All they need to do is to send an e-mail with the topic “Unsubscribe” to our shared e-mail account henrik.e.oscarsson@pol.gu.se.

The participants in the panel receive one web-based survey every six months; unless unexpected events occur that need special attention. It is important to maintain a high number of participants to allow for the implementation of as many projects as possible. For this reason LORe is continuously recruiting more participants to ensure that the amount of participants remains high and growing.

The goal for LORe is to reach at least a number of 10 000 respondents in the Citizen Panel. It is important to admit that it is a challenge to recruit new respondents. Since we cannot offer any compensation we are entirely dependent on people’s interest and benevolence. Just to capture people’s attention is hard today when everyone constantly meets commercials and ads in their everyday life.

One purpose of the panel is to do methodological tests and try new questions and issues in our research and questionnaires. In this experimental work the development of new strategies in recruiting panelist is an essential part. This includes exploring different strategies and channels of recruiting and evaluating the results of the strategies. We here aim to explain the process of recruitment of citizens. How and where we do it, difficulties and important lessons learnt will be in focus.

The first attempts

The Citizen Panel started in September 2010. To begin with, the panel consisted of earlier participants of the 2010 Internet Campaign Panel. The recruitment for The 2010 Internet Campaign Panel (E-panelen 2010) therefore constituted the first recruitment process of the large standing Citizen Panel (M-panelen). It started with an ad on the Department of Political Science website (www.pol.gu.se).

The web-based ad was linked to the recruitment survey that all new panel participants have to fill in in order to register. The recruitment process using advertisers was then extended to the Multidisciplinary Research Opinion and Democracy Research Group website (www.mod.gu.se) and the Elections Study program at the Department of Political science. The ad was at this time posted in both fixed static format as well as in pop-up form, all linking to the recruitment survey. A pop-up ad for recruitment to the panel was also provided in 2010 by the Society Opinion and Media institute website (www.som.gu.se).

Except from ads on web sites connected to the institution and MOD other platforms were also tested. During the summer and autumn 2010 editors for Swedish local newspapers were contacted via mail. They were offered reports of the results from local panel participants in exchange for placing recruitment add on their website. 11 out of 49 of the contacted newspapers accepted the offer. The ads where sent to the newspapers together with a link to our recruitment survey and a link to a pop-up advertiser.
The newspapers that allowed us to advertise at their websites where the following: Wermlands Nya Tidning, Piteå Tidningen, Borås Tidning, Sundsvalls Tidning, Hallandsposten, Bohuslännningen, Helsingborgs Dagblad, HD Nya Medier, TTELA.se, DalaDemokraten and GöteborgsPosten.

Most of the corresponding newspapers accepted to include the fixed ads on their website. Only one newspaper, Borås Tidning, also included the pop-up ad. However, our evaluation afterwards showed that fixed ads were ineffective for recruiting respondents whereas pop-up’s seemed to be 60 per cent more efficient, based on the response rate. In addition to this, the fixed ads were online for several weeks whereas the pop-up ads only run for a couple of days up to two weeks. This was still, the best way of recruiting respondents to the panel.

Another channel for recruitment was the two web-based party sympathy simulators, which were constructed by the staff at LORe. These party sympathy simulators were based on multinomial logistic regression analyses of Swedish citizens lifestyle characteristics, demographics and opinions. The database used for this purpose was the SOM Institute’s annual nationally representative surveys “West-SOM” and the national survey from 2009. Based on the information provided from these simulators, the application calculated the distribution of party sympathies among people who had the same lifestyle patterns/demographic profile or opinions as oneself. The party simulators were thus applications that could inform users about how party preferences are distributed among different populations groups. After finishing the simulator the ads for The 2010 Internet Campaign Panel including the link to the recruitment survey, was shown together on with the results from the party sympathy simulator. The simulators were displayed on Facebook and the Radio Sweden website (www.sr.se). 834 out of the 1215 respondents that clicked on the Facebook ad was recruited, which gives a recruitment rate of 81 percent.

A regular fixed ad was also placed on Facebook which generated 198 clicks out of 3 401 690 198 impressions, which resulted in 17 recruited respondents. The average cost per click was thus 10.42 SEK. The total cost for the Facebook ad was 2064, 03 SEK, which divided on 17 gives a total cost of 121, 41 SEK per recruited respondent.

An overview of the amount of recruited respondents from each source and different forms of advertising will later be presented. Now we will describe what results other ways of recruiting gave and what we have learnt from the experiences.

The continued efforts to recruit

As described above, different ways of recruiting has been tried, some more successful than others. We evaluated our ways of recruiting panel members after the first period and used the experiences in the quest to increase the number of participants in the second round.

Since pop-up-ads on newspapers websites turned out to be a successful way of recruiting, LORe repeated the strategy and contacted the local newspapers during spring 2011. Around 50 newspapers were contacted but only a handful responded positively. This resulted in pop-up ads on Borås Tidning and Bohuslännningen’s websites which resulted in 120 newly recruited. Fixed advertisers on Göteborgs Posten, Kirunatidningen and Mölndalsposten were also published but only resulted in about 27 new members. After the second round of ads in newspapers we came to the conclusion that there were more people showing interest the first time around, in autumn 2010, than the second time. This may be due to the election and the temporary increasing interest for politics and social issues during that time.

4 For more information see the SOM Institute web page www.som.gu.se
Finding other ways of recruiting

There is always a challenge to recruit new members and therefore it is important to find new platforms to advertise and inform about the project and its aims. Different ideas have been tried out during the second recruitment round in 2011, some more successful than others. We here intend to describe the various sources and the results we achieved.

Face to face

In an effort to recruit other groups of people LORe have been running recruitment campaigns on social events. On one occasion representatives visited Vetenskapsfestivalen (Science Fair) to talk about the Citizen Panel and call for people to register. In connection to the presentation we handed out one paged recruitment surveys. At the bottom of the survey, people were asked to write their e-mail address. Those who did got an e-mail with an invitation to the extended recruitment survey. Unfortunately, this only resulted in six new recruits. This may depend on many factors. Many of those who filled in the one-page formula forgot to fill in their e-mail address. The routines have now been changed and we only ask for e-mail addresses. This makes the face-to-face recruitment much easier and more effective since we do not have to ask for more than just a few seconds of their time. The individuals that have been recruited this way tend to have other background than the ones we find via e-mailing students and pop-up ads etc. Since LORe constantly discusses the possibility of eventually achieving a representative sample of citizens, those participants are interesting.

Blogs and social media

As mentioned, the panel, as it looks today, is not representative of the population. To reach larger groups of people, LORe also contacted serious bloggers with many followers to provide an ad on their page. Only one blogger accepted the offer. It was one of the biggest blogs within finance, economy and environment which has around 10-15 000 readers every week. In April 2011 the blog author wrote an article about the Citizen Panel (M-panelen) on his blog and he also published a link to the recruitment survey with a call for people to register. This resulted in around 90 new panel participators in two days. The cost for this was 6, 95 SEK per recruited respondent. This turned out to be one of the most effective ways of recruiting new panel members given the time and work effort.

Henrik Oscarsson also published an article on his research blog with an invitation to join the panel, which resulted in another 20 new panel members without any cost. The Citizen Panel has also been featured on Facebook through a joint public event where all representatives from LORe invited all our contacts to join the Citizen Panel by following the link to the recruitment survey and to spread the link. Overall, this generated 65 new members to the Citizen Panel and gave us more new recruits than the advertiser in Facebook did, for free.

E-mails and spreading the link

In order to try new ways of recruiting and find ways to reach large numbers of people at the same time we have also tried to get access to e-mail lists. In May 2011 we received e-mail addresses to all students at Gothenburg University to whom we sent an e-mail invitation with a link to the recruitment survey. This gave us the opportunity to reach around 30 000 students without much

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1 http://cornucopia.cornubot.se/
effort. This gave us around 510 new panel participants. At present a similar attempt is planned at Stockholm University in the end of August when the students are back after the summer.

Frequently visited websites and large companies have been contacted in the purpose to spread the link to the recruitment-survey but unfortunately all of them turned down the offer. We thus had the opportunity to write a post in a forum on a page called Familjeliv which is one of the most well-known family internet sites in Sweden. This post only resulted in two new recruits.

**How to measure the achievements**

To be able to successfully monitor the day-by-day development, every recruitment source has its own unique link to a recruitment survey to enable identification of the different sources. In this manner, it is possible to measure the effects of specific ways of recruiting.

To create a continuous flow of new recruits and to create measurable goals LORe has set a goal to recruit about 80 people a week or 320 a month. However, it has not been possible to reach these numbers every week, but over a five month period the goal is almost achieved. With these measurable goals it becomes easier to evaluate the work and efforts done.

**Obstacles and difficulties along the way**

It is a real challenge to find new collaborators since many companies have hard restrictions on giving e-mail addresses. The reason given for this is that they have to save the patience of their customers or visitors for their own campaigns. Therefore it has been hard to find collaborators who can help us with e-mail lists.

Other difficulties we have met on the way are technical problems which delayed our work. Mostly it had to do with the pop-up ads which are a problem we now have overcome which means that it will be much easier in the future.

**The best platforms for recruitment**

One purpose of the panel is to do methodological tests and try new questions and issues in our research and questionnaires. In this experimental work the development of new strategies in recruiting panelist is an essential part and therefore it is important to evaluate the results. As mentioned earlier pop-up ads on newspaper websites and internet links in email invitations are effective ways of recruiting. As the figure below illustrates, most of the newly recruited people comes from these two sources. It is the easiest way of reaching a large group of potential interested people and it is an easy way for them to register since they get relocated directly through the link.
Recruitment period: March 2011 – July 2011

As illustrated in the table above, blogs and events on Facebook were also two good platforms to recruit people and the results indicates that it is a strategy that could be used and developed in our future work. It seems like the best strategies is connected to internet activities and it seems that the possibility to be sent directly to the recruitment survey is essential. The results of the recruitment efforts indicate that the best strategies for recruiting are those who demand as little effort as possible for people. Furthermore, it appears that few people actively choose to go in and register if there is no clickable link.

Recruitment strategies

LORe puts a lot of energy in formulating strategies for contacting newspapers, bloggers, organizations etc. When contacting potential collaborators it is important to convey our message in an effective and reassuring way. In this aim LORe usually takes contact by sending a carefully worded letter with the researcher’s signatures in order to increase the credibility and recognition feature. This can be done both by mail or e-mail. Previous experiences indicate that it is often difficult to get in touch over the phone why mail has been considered to be the best way. The power of networking is obvious. Most opportunities to market the Citizens panel have come up thanks to researchers’ personal contact. The inclusion of party simulators and ads in newspapers are two examples of this.
Lessons learned: Planning is everything

Experience from past recruitment efforts show that there are certain occasions when it seems particularly effective to recruit new panel members. Especially many new registrations were received in connection to the 2010 election, when we, in collaboration with both newspapers and radio made a series of party preference simulators. As this proved to be successful, it is important to be well in advance when there are major events upcoming. It may include Almedalsveckan in July, political events and other major events where many people gather.

It is important to take advantage of these special occasions and be well prepared when it comes to planning and accommodating events or advertisers. This means contacting newspapers or other actors well in advance. Printed flyers, business cards, brochures or digital simulators are prepared in case opportunities arise. When these things are in place it is much easier to attend social events, festivals or sports contexts where many people gather on short notice.

Upcoming recruitment attempts

As mentioned earlier, it appears that the most effective way to recruit new panel members is by spreading links in various ways. To get the opportunity to spread the link through newsletters and the like, a series of e-mail campaigns and collaborations with companies and organizations are planned before future panel surveys, but this is still just in the planning phase. Additional focus will be on reaching groups not represented in the panel today. We are investigating the possibilities of contacting specific immigrant organization (Bosnian, Chilean, Somali etc organizations).

We will also participate on the Book Fair in Gothenburg in September 2011, where the party simulators will be used to recruit more people to the Citizen Panel. Although the face-to-face efforts have had little result so far, some additional efforts will also be made at the Gothenburg Central Station.

Since the party sympathy simulators turned out to be so effective, LORe is planning to develop this way of recruiting further. One idea is to design quizzes on various topics that attract different groups to make people interested. A first step in this process was taken spring 2011 when a range of magazines, including travel magazines, cooking magazines and family websites were contacted with an offer to provide quizzes on their websites. Unfortunately, all of the contacted magazines turned down the offer with the explanation that they had a series of campaigns on their own. New attempts will be made during the fall 2011.

As mentioned before, our research is dependent on a large number of participators in the Citizen Panel. Except from trying to increase the number of participants it is also important to “take care” of the participants already tied to the panel. Since we do not have the possibility to provide compensation for their efforts, it is all about how we treat the panel members. This may involve a humble way of answering their mail, not asking disturbing questions in the questionnaire and not make too long and time-consuming questionnaires.
Who we reach

Since the second round of recruitment started in Mars 2011 we have recruited 905 new participants. According to earlier analysis of the composition of the panel in the election survey 2010 the panel was biased in terms of gender, political interest and age (Dahlberg et al 2011). For that reason it is relevant to illustrate both the composition of the new panel members as well as of the old. As the figure below illustrates, the new panel members consist of more men than women and the mean age is lower than in the Swedish population in general. In comparison to the old composition of the panel LORe has managed to attract more women than before. The mean age of the newly recruited is much lower than men mean age of the original panel (2010).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Women %</th>
<th>Men %</th>
<th>Age (mean)</th>
<th>University degree %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New recruits in the Citizens Panel</td>
<td>45,6</td>
<td>54,4</td>
<td>33,8</td>
<td>41,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The panel in October 2010</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOM</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>50,1</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When it comes to the composition of the newly recruited the following figures illustrates party sympathies, job status and education level among the respondents.

The figure above illustrates how the newly recruited panelists voted in the election in 2010 in proportion to the election results. It here becomes clear that the new panelists choices of party does not reflect the Swedish people in general. Most obvious is the differences in the percentage of Social democrats, Green party sympathizers and individuals sympathizing with the Moderate party.

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Since LORe invited all students at Gothenburg University to the panel recently, the number of people having a university degree is much higher than among Swedish citizens in general which is illustrated in the figure below.

As the first figure illustrates the panel mostly consists of two groups, employed and students which also could partly be explained by the invitation to all the students.
A brief analysis of the composition of the panel shows that we have mainly reached younger people with a higher education. When it comes to party sympathies the panel consists of more supporters of the Left Party and the Green Party and less supporters of the Moderate Party and the Christian Democrats compared to the result from the Swedish general election in 2010). For future recruitment campaigns it is therefore a challenge to reach new groups which are not represented in the panel. New ways and new arenas have to be explored.

The ads used during 2011 were the following:
The website

On the MOD website (www.mod.gu.se) you should find:

* **On the start page:** An ad linked to a recruitment-survey for the Citizen Panel.

* **On the news page and the research page for the Citizen Panel:** Call for applications - invitation for scholars to participate with their own survey questions in the MOD Citizen Panels.

* **On the news page:** Announcement about a new field period.

* **On the news page:** A page for each study where you can find information about the study, field period, sample, response rate, FAQ, codebook, contact information and information about how to get access to data.
References


Appendix

In this appendix you find invitation for research collaboration (Appendix I) and the recruitment survey (Appendix II).

Appendix I
Invitation for research collaboration

Invitation for research collaboration
Participation in MOD Citizen Panel II 2011

The Multidisciplinary Opinion and Democracy Research Group (MOD) at the University of Gothenburg initiates innovative and top-quality research focused on the role of citizens’ opinions in sustainable democratic development. We integrate research on citizens’ attitudes and values, political processes, and actual behavior. The research is structured around three broad research themes: Off-election democracy, Crisis democracy and Changing political minds, attitudes and behavior.

For this purpose, MOD has established a Laboratory for Opinion Research (LORe). The aim of LORe is to develop data collection strategies that can generate data quickly and follow events closely in real time as they unfold. LORe also strives to be the national leading instrument for web-based experiments using internet panels of citizens. The scholars behind LORe were among the first in the world to initiate web-based panel surveys in election campaigns when they started their work in 2002. In 2010 we initiated the recruitment of respondents to a number of large standing panels with citizens. The main purpose of the panels is to develop our research on democracy, public opinion and political behavior but also to develop new methods for at short notice conduct intensive data collections.

MOD and LORe now invite scholars to participate with their own survey questions in the next citizen panel, Citizen Panel II 2011. Participation with survey questions in the MOD Citizen Panel is free.

CITIZEN PANEL II 2011

The Citizen Panel II 2011 will consist of around 10 000 Swedish citizens. The survey is specifically interesting for three kinds of projects: experimental studies based on a non representative sample of citizens, panel studies that make use of earlier citizen panels done by LORe, and methodological studies (testing new/old instruments). The Citizen panel has a permanent set of questions asked in all panel waves.
INSTRUCTIONS FOR PROPOSALS

Proposals are submitted through www.mod.gu.se. The proposal should describe the research background and purpose of the project. The proposal should also include a description of the publications that will result from the project. Furthermore, it is important that it formulates, in detail, the questions that are proposed to be included in the survey. We encourage interested scholars to take contact with us before the deadline of proposals if they have any questions regarding the proposals. In general, it is also a good idea to let colleagues comment on the proposal before submitting it. MOD’s steering committee (consisting of scholars from six departments of the University of Gothenburg: Economics, Media and Communication, IT-technology, Political Science, Psychology and Sociology) assesses each proposal and decides the content of the final panel based on the quality of the proposals and the interest areas of MOD.

TIME FRAME

- **15 June 2011** Call for proposals
- **1 September 2011** Deadline for proposals via www.mod.gu.se
- **12 September 2011** Decision by steering committee of MOD. Acceptance or denials of proposals are distributed via e-mail to applicants.
- **12 September – 7 October 2011** LORe staff work on the web design of the questions. It is crucial that the scholars that are accepted to participate in the panel are prepared to immediately react to the suggestions made by the LORe staff during this period.
- **17 October 2011** Panel starts
- **31 October 2011** Panel ends
- **21 November 2011** Data is distributed

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Appendix II

Recruitment survey

M-p@nelen är en vetenskaplig och opartisk undersökning som läpande genomförs av forskare verksamma vid Göteborgs universitet. Syftet är att utveckla svensk demokratiforskning om opinionsbildning och väljarteckende.


Dina svar är viktiga för oss! Svaren kommer att ligga till grund för analyser i vetenskapliga rapporter, uppsatser och avhandlingar. Resultaten presenteras i form av tabeller och figurer. Svaren är anonyma och det framgår aldrig vad någon enskild person har svarat. I samband med undersökningarna kommer du även att erbjuda möjligheten att ta del av avsven från M-p@nelen i form av interaktiva rapporter.

1. För att anmälta Dig till undersökningen behöver Du fylla i Din personliga e-postadress i svarsutan nedan!

Uppgifter om din e-postadress kommer inte att spridas till någon tredje part. Med hjälp av krypteringsteknik gör vi det oömtligt att koppla din e-postadress till dina enkätsvar. Deltagande i undersökningen är frivilligt. Du kan när som helst avannala dig från M-p@nelen.

Min e-postadress är: [blank]

Nästa >>

Angra
2. Är Du kvinna eller man?

- Kvinna
- Man

3. Vilket år är du född?

- Inget svar--

4. Vilket län bor Du i?

- Inget svar--

5. Vilken kommun bor Du i?

- Inget svar--

6. Vilken skolutbildning har Du?
Markera det svar som Du anser bäst stämmer in på dig. Om du ännu inte avslutat Din utbildning, markera då den typ av skola Du går i just nu.

- Ej fullgjort grundskola
- Examen från gymnasium, folkhögskola eller motsvarande
- Examen från högskola/universitet
- Grundskola
- Eftergymnasial utbildning, ej högskola
- Examen från forskarutbildning
- Studier vid gymnasium, folkhögskola eller motsvarande
- Studier vid högskola/universitet

7. Vilken av de här gruppena tillhör Du för närvarande?

- Förvärvsarbetsande (även sjuksviknin, föräldraledig)
- Genomgår arbetsmarknadsutbildning
- Ålderspensionär/avtalspensionär
- Studerande
- Har arbete i arbetsmarknadspolitiska åtgärder
- Arbetskort
- Förtidspensionär/sjukpensionär

<< Foregående Nasta >>

Angra
9. Man brukar ibland tala om att politiska äsikter kan placeras in på en vänster-högerskala. Var någonstans skulle Du placera in Dig själv på en sådan vänster-högerskala?

- [ ] 1
- [ ] 2
- [ ] 3
- [ ] 4
- [ ] 5
- [ ] 6
- [ ] 7
- [ ] 8
- [ ] 9
- [ ] 10

10. Hur tycker Du att Regeringen har skött sig sedan riksdagsvalet 2010?

- [ ] mycket dåligt
- [ ] -5
- [ ] -4
- [ ] -3
- [ ] -2
- [ ] -1
- [ ] 0
- [ ] +1
- [ ] +2
- [ ] +3
- [ ] +4
- [ ] +5

11. Allmänt sett, hur stort förtroende har Du för svenska politiker?

- [ ] mycket lågt förtroende
- [ ] 1
- [ ] 2
- [ ] 3
- [ ] 4
- [ ] 5
- [ ] 6
- [ ] 7
- [ ] mycket högt förtroende

<< Föregående >>

Nästa >>
12. Vilket parti skulle Du rösta på om det var riksdagsval idag?

- Vänsterpartiet
- Centerpartiet
- Moderaterna
- Miljöpartiet
- Piratpartiet
- Jumillistan
- Skulle inte rösta
- Vet ej
- Annat parti


Tack för dina svar och tack för att Du valt att vara med i M-p@nelen!

Det är tack vare dig och alla andra som är med i M-p@nelen som Göteborgs universitet, genom experiment, opinionsundersökningar och enkäter, kan bidraga till framstående forskning inom val, opinion- och demokrati.

Vill Du ha mer detaljerad information om M-p@nelen kan Du läsa mer på undersöknings hemsida. Adressen är:
http://www.mod.gu.se/unders%C3%B6kningar/MOD_Medborgarpalvelun/

Du kan också kontakta de forskare vid Göteborgs universitet som är ansvariga för undersökningen:
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