



The Multidisciplinary  
Opinion & Democracy Research Group

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**MOD Research Group**  
**A Plan for Consolidation and  
Development of Opinion and  
Democracy Research**

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GÖTEBORGS UNIVERSITET



UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG

MOD Research Group

Multidisciplinary Opinion and Democracy Research

## A Plan for Consolidation and Development of Opinion and Democracy Research

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Lena Wängnerud,<sup>1)</sup> Monika Djerf-Pierre,<sup>2)</sup> Peter Esaiasson,<sup>1)</sup> Mikael Gilljam,<sup>1)</sup> Björn Halleröd,<sup>3)</sup> Olof Johansson Stenman,<sup>4)</sup> Henrik Oscarsson,<sup>1)</sup> and Agneta Ranerup<sup>5)</sup>

<sup>1)</sup> Department of Political Science, <sup>2)</sup> Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, <sup>3)</sup> Department of Sociology, <sup>4)</sup> Department of Economics, <sup>5)</sup> Department of Applied Information Technology

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## 1. THE VISION

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The Multidisciplinary Opinion and Democracy (MOD) research group will initiate innovative research focused on the role of citizens' opinions in sustainable democratic development. Initially, we have selected three broad research themes enabling cross-fertilization and theoretical development: *off-election democracy*, *crisis democracy*, and *changing political minds, attitudes and behavior*. The MOD research group will also work towards the establishment of a Centre for Opinion Research (CORE) at the University of Gothenburg (UoG) that will connect a variety of centers and secretariats dealing with opinion research.

Our vision is to secure top-quality opinion research at UoG, regardless of topic or research theme. CORE will serve as a node facilitating co-operation and efficient use of resources in this regard. CORE will also serve as a platform for developing new techniques through the establishment of an opinion laboratory (LORE). At the heart of this plan is a commitment to *process-tracking* methodologies—new forms of data collection techniques that make it possible to study crucial events in real time as they develop.

The more substantial vision is to develop theories and generate new knowledge on the interaction between citizens' opinions and democratic decision-making in the broader sense. This research investment is needed because representative democracies operate in a different environment today than only 25-30 years ago. Our preliminary hypothesis is that electoral democracy remains a key source of legitimacy. However, what happens between elections (the off-election theme) and in times of crisis (the crisis theme) is probably more important than ever in processes generating core democratic values such as responsiveness and accountability. We will study the formation of opinions and how opinions change, under the pre-conditions that follow from three transformative processes: *changes in democratic institutional arrangements* (a shift from government to governance), *mediatization and the introduction of new information technology* (e-democracy), and *individualization*. We will also scrutinize the link between opinions and political behavior, and contribute to the understanding of citizens' opinions as a driving force for the transformation of modern democratic states (the research theme of changing political minds, attitudes and behavior).

This is a formative moment. The MOD research group seeks to build an infrastructure for the future. While the Social Science Faculty at UoG has a strong historical record in the field of opinion and democracy research, there is at present a need for strategic action to develop this research environment. To do this, financial support is required. Even more importantly, we require the support of a group of people that are willing to commit themselves to renewal and a smooth generational change. We plan to rejuvenate the field through a multidisciplinary approach that incorporates a wide set of disciplines. Process-tracking methodologies are also of great importance here. In the following sections we will describe the flexibility of LORE, which will enable the study of short- and long-term changes in new ways. We plan to establish a large standing citizens' panel, as well as standing elite group panels made up of national and local parliamentarians, bureaucrats, and journalists. We also plan to automate the analyses of media content in order to make concerted analysis possible.

The MOD research group will combine old and new techniques to answer “old” and “new” research questions. The basic idea is to inform opinion and democracy research through the creative “exploitation” of theories within disciplines outside political science, and through the study of the effects of citizen opinions on processes and events outside the traditional sphere of electoral democracy.

## 2. FEATURES OF REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY

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Representative democracy is one of humanity's great inventions. The idea that citizens can delegate the right to make collectively binding decisions to elected representatives makes it possible to govern populous, large-scale nation-states in accordance with democratic principles (Dahl 1989). Representative democracy, however, is a complicated form of government, which political theorists argue is both elitist and egalitarian (Pitkin 1967; Manin 1997; Urbinati 2006). It is egalitarian in that the power of the representatives stems from a process in which each citizen contributes equally. It is elitist in that elected representatives have the formal right to make decisions on behalf of citizens between elections, and because elections are an elitist selection process. Adding further complexity, the decisions made by the institutions of electoral democracy—often referred to as the “input side” of politics in political science—are supplemented by administrative and legal institutions ensuring the implementation of the decisions that are made. Research tells us that many of the decisions made on this “output side” of politics have little connection with what happens on the input side. Indeed, the link between the input and output sides of politics has been called “a black hole of democracy” (Rothstein 2005).

The research that has made opinion and democracy research an area of excellence at UoG has traditionally focused on elections, voters, elected representatives, and mass media (e.g., Westerståhl and Särilvik 1956; Särilvik and Petersson 1973; Holmberg 1974, 1981; Asp 1986; Esaiasson 1990; Gilljam and Holmberg 1990; Esaiasson and Holmberg 1996; Wängnerud 1998; Oscarsson and Holmberg 2008). However, this does not mean that other areas have been neglected. This plan should be interpreted as an investment that would contribute to an even more comprehensive picture of several processes in different areas of democratic society. Theoretically, we aim to update our understandings of causal mechanisms.

Citizens' opinions, their causes and their consequences lie at the center of our interest in sustainable democracies. The role of citizen opinion has been a complex issue throughout the history of representative democracies. A key area of contention is whether citizen opinion can be considered an exogenous factor in politics. In other words, is there really a public will to be realized? Although this question has a long history, several major social transformations have made it necessary to deal with new methods and perspectives. Democratic decision-making is today a multi-level affair, and more anonymous and less transparent than it used to be. Furthermore, opinion-forming conditions are being radically reshaped by rapidly changing information and communication technologies.

We are convinced that new challenges call for new, multidisciplinary collaboration. The academic disciplines involved in the preparation of this plan have different perspectives on issues of opinion and democracy. Political scientists tend to look at democracy from a procedural perspective, and consider the organization of electoral, representative, and decision-implementation institutions as key. Media and information technology researchers usually have a broader concept of democracy, seeing it more as a way of life and a general condition for freedom of opinion. Economists and sociologists, wishing primarily to explain human behavior and preferences, respectively, assign no main role to democracy. Set beside each other, these quite different ways of thinking are likely to generate new perspectives in the proposed research area. Thus, the rationale for establishing a multidisciplinary research group is twofold. First, we need expertise from various disciplines to develop a comprehensive understanding of major transformations that have occurred in recent decades.

Second, and more importantly, we wish to obtain synergies that will allow new theories to evolve and transcend traditional disciplinary boundaries.

### 3. POINT OF DEPARTURE

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Our plan takes as its departure point the three previously mentioned social transformations: *changes in democratic institutional arrangements* (a shift from government to governance), *mediatization and the introduction of new information technology* (e-democracy), and *individualization*. These are transformations that condition the working of representative democracy in contemporary societies.

First, new challenges to representative democracy are posed by the development of multi-level governance, new public management, new collaborative strategies (such as network governance and public-private partnership), new forms of democratic input and popular involvement (such as customer-choice models of public services), EU membership (supranational legislation), and the globalization of politics. These developments have implications for implementing and assessing the traditional core values of democracy such as accountability, responsiveness, and legitimacy (Pierre and Peters 2000, 2006). The ideologies of new public management currently permeating a more market-oriented public sector, as well as the growth of political marketing, have produced a new role for citizens. With the focus on the citizen as client, political trust and democratic support are supposedly linked to citizen evaluations of public sector performance, assuming that the political and bureaucratic system is responsive to citizen needs. The causal mechanisms that bolster or weaken positive evaluations of government performance are, however, not yet settled and the influence of new media, which creates a more interactive relationship between core actors, provides an interesting area for future research in that context.

Secondly, challenges are posed by the mediatization of society. A key feature of a mediatized society is that the media play a decisive role in forming public opinion. Citizens' political perceptions are influenced by media images of the public sector and of the performance of political institutions. Mediatization can be defined as the dual processes by which the media become integrated into the operations of other social institutions while acquiring the status of social institutions in their own right. This leads to actors in many different sectors having to adapt their behavior to accommodate the media logic (Asp 1986; Hjarvard 2008). In the political process, the media serve as both an independent actor (operating by the media logic, assuming the role of the fourth estate) and an arena for public debate where other actors propose their views, priorities, and criticisms. The accommodation of the media logic also applies to the everyday practices of political and administrative elites. The mediatization of society has created a situation where the struggle for public attention and the need to control public image has promoted the expansion of political and governmental public relations. The "rules of the game" imposed by the media logic, however, are challenged by new communications technologies, fragmenting the public sphere and making it harder for individual actors to dominate or control it. Ultimately, the condition for the exercise of political power has changed, making the context of political decision-making complex and unpredictable. Still, how mediatization affects the everyday practices of political and administrative elites and how it influences the interactions between citizens and political decision-makers are still under-researched questions.

It should be added that “individual modernization” has made citizens more efficacious, more skeptical of authorities, and less collectivistic in relation to politics (Fuchs and Klingemann 1995; Pharr and Putnam 2000; Thomassen 2005). Individualization is thus a third great transformation that is relevant to opinion formation. However, we know very little about how individualization is linked to the processes mentioned above, and how these transformations together affect micro-processes relevant to representative democracy.

Sweden will, at least initially, be our major case for study. The principal argument for this is that most indicators show that Sweden, from a comparative perspective, is a remarkably well-functioning society. This leads to the research question focused on which mechanisms allow democracies to successfully adapt to changing circumstances, such as the ones described above. Moreover, Sweden is ahead of most countries with regard to the degree of individualization, use of the Internet, and the development of new media. Through intense studies of Sweden, we will learn not only about the Swedish case but about general mechanisms with implications for sustainable democratic development. Knowledge on problematic aspects, detected in the Swedish context, will also be useful in other settings. Details will be scrutinized and we will evaluate the “success story” of Swedish democracy—is the “rosy” picture generated by rather superficial international indicators justified?

The more pragmatic argument for studying Sweden is that innovative, systematic, and repeated quantitative data collection has long been a backbone of the research that has made UoG a center of excellence on opinion and democracy studies. The Swedish National Election Studies Program, dating back to the 1950s, is one of the oldest such programs in the world. The SOM (Society Opinion Media) Institute has, since the 1980s, served as a parallel organization in broadening research to arenas outside elections. Because of this, the MOD research group will be grounded in a research milieu that hosts excellent data—probably one of the best sets of data in the world—for tracing long-term developments regarding the interplay between citizen opinion, political decision-making, and media. We have a unique opportunity to empirically test—not just describe—the impact of transformations such as the government-governance shift, mediatization, and individualization.

The MOD research group will target the collection of data on interactions between core actors of representative democracy. Our aim is to design *dynamic* and *process-oriented* studies. Considering the recent rapid development of standardized cross-country comparisons, we believe this approach will be of general interest to scholars in the field. Notably, we will be able to contribute to better understandings of causal mechanisms. It is, however, important to note that we conduct this research in a context strongly committed to comparative studies. In recent years, the Quality of Government (QoG) Institute has successfully developed platforms for cross-country comparison at the Faculty of Social Sciences. In the near future, platforms for cross-country comparison will be further developed by UoG’s decision to host the Secretariat of the World Value Survey (WVS). We would also like to highlight the kind of personal networks for cross-country comparative studies found in our research group: when needed, we can draw on data from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES), the International Social Survey Program (ISSP), the European Social Survey (ESS), and the Citizens, Involvement, and Democracy (CID) research program. We are thus able to combine long-term studies in a national setting with new research on micro-processes and cross-country comparative research.

## 4. MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH THEMES

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Our identified themes for research highlight different aspects of today's democracy at work: opinion formation processes outside the intense periods of election campaigns and elections (off-election democracy); opinion formation processes when a democracy faces unexpected and unwelcome events (crisis democracy); and the role that opinions play in processes changing democratic societies (changing political minds, attitudes and behavior). Knowledge generated from studies of electoral democracy will be the natural reference point of our research; indeed "electoral democracy" can be seen as a fourth research theme even though this plan focuses on the three new themes.

Although the different themes overlap, the off-election research theme will focus on times of "normalcy" whereas the crisis democracy theme will focus on more extreme or exceptional times. The off-election research theme is also characterized by a focus on *responsiveness* as a core democratic value, while the crisis democracy theme is focused on *legitimacy* (although a plurality of democratic values will come to the foreground in all research themes). The research theme of changing political minds, attitudes and behavior will focus on the *link* between attitudes and behavior. Citizen opinion is the concept that binds all of the themes together.

### Theme I: Off-Election Democracy

According to Hanna Pitkin's influential definition, representative democracy functions well to the extent that elected representatives act "in the interest of the represented, in a manner responsive to them" (Pitkin 1967:209–10). Representative democracy should thus be conceived as a process in which representatives *continuously* react to citizens' wishes and demands; elections are simply checkpoints in the process. This is the background to the proposed research theme of *off-election democracy*. We intend to renew the traditional emphasis on elections and election campaigns by also studying the continuation of the representative process after election day. The core democratic value to be considered here is responsiveness.

*Off-election democracy* refers to contacts and information transformation between citizens, their elected representatives and the political system between elections. How does this interaction currently work, and how has it changed along with the broad transformative processes of interest to us? By studying interactions between citizens and the representative system from a dynamic perspective (i.e., system responsiveness), we should be able to see connections between phenomena usually studied in isolation from each other. The study of political participation and output legitimacy in political science, of political protest in sociology, of strategic frames in media research, and of principal-agent theory in economics all, in one way or another, deal with relationships between citizens and representatives. Empirically, we will study the processes both from the bottom up (i.e., the citizens' perspective) and from the top down (i.e., the representatives' and political systems' perspective).

As we know from experience, normative philosophy regarding the proper functioning of democracy is a fertile starting point for empirical work (Benhabib 1996; Gilljam and Hermansson 2003; Fung 2007; Rothstein and Teorell 2008). As for the electoral part of democracy, "good" citizens should, for example, turn out to vote, be well-informed when voting, and vote as demanded by the common good (e.g., Berelson 1952; Berelson et al. 1954), while "good" representatives should make it possible for voters to hold them

responsible on election day (Manin, Przeworski and Stokes 1999). Our challenge is to develop corresponding normative criteria for processes in *off-election democracy*. The results of this theorizing will then, as is done in traditional electoral democracy research, be used in asking partially new research questions. Most normative accounts of representative democracy actually focus on dynamic processes—theories on responsiveness being a typical example—however most empirical research fails to design studies that can successfully trace the suggested interactions.

Turning to our proposed empirical work, we assert that the *off-election democracy* theme will shed new light on important problems hitherto only rarely addressed in the social sciences. Starting with the “bottom-up” perspective, one little-explored research field is citizen protest. Under what conditions do citizens form protest groups, and how effective are different types of protest at influencing political decisions? Here, our strategy is to identify and sample critical events likely to trigger protests, such as decisions to close social welfare institutions or decisions on the localization of offensive activities. We will then consider the conditions under which such events trigger overt protest. How important, for example, is the media’s manner of covering an event (cf. Solevid 2009)? In this area, we see possibilities for theoretical cross-fertilization between traditional political participation research on protest activities (Norris 2002) and sociological protest movement research (Rucht, Koopmans and Neidhardt 1999; Rucht 2007). An additional key factor is that much of the interaction between citizens and decision-makers occurs via public authorities, who themselves are often forced to navigate between media attention and scrutiny, legal obligations, political interests, and public opinion. For example, police must always consider the fact that police action often has political consequences, particularly when force is used in situations resulting from unsettled political and/or economic conflict, such as demonstrations and occupations.

Another line of research will start from the distinction between input- and output-side politics. According to QoG theory, it is crucial for citizen support of democratic regimes that the institutions exercising government authority act impartially; indeed, impartiality can be seen as a basic requirement for high-quality government (Rothstein 2009; Rothstein, Teorell and Samani 2009). We will explore the micro-foundations of this idea by looking specifically at the demands of citizens in an established democracy: in their contacts with government authorities, do citizens expect both a fair outcome and impartial treatment, either a fair outcome or impartial treatment, or mainly impartial treatment? The data needed to answer these questions will be collected using the new rapid data collection techniques to be presented in the section on the Laboratory of Opinion Research. A further problem, overlooked by prior research, concerns the citizens’ choice of arguments when communicating with decision-makers. When do citizens stress the factual aspects of a subject, and when do they cite public opinion about it? Our preliminary hypothesis is that minorities—whether real or perceived—choose the “factual aspect” strategy, whereas majorities instead argue in terms of prevailing opinion, the people’s will, and so forth. Again, the new data collection techniques will be crucial for our empirical studies in the field.

Turning to a “top-down” perspective, an important aspect of a system’s responsiveness relates to the contacts that representatives have with citizens. We will find out which citizens representatives think they should be in contact with, and which ones they actually are in contact with (cf. Fenno 1973). While identifying these groups at this stage of research remains an open question, they might reasonably include members of the representatives’ own parties, citizens in the representatives’ own constituencies, and groups representing discontented or special interests of various kinds, and, of course, various expressions of the will of the whole



constituency. For these analyses, we will be able to rely on the unique parliamentary surveys, both national and local, generated by previous research in the field. However, we will also make use of our new elite panels. A crucial question in this context concerns the representatives' intentions when communicating with citizens between elections. Are they actively trying to inform and win the citizens over, or are they passively letting the citizens inform and, perhaps, influence them? Are they doing both or perhaps something in between, such as seeking a mandate, legitimacy, or reliable support (cf. Teorell 1998)? In cases where the passivity alternative seems valid, the next question is whether the representatives, according to themselves, should focus on the citizens' factual arguments, or instead consider citizens' views as valuable information about prevailing opinions.

In conclusion, we will initiate three separate but closely inter-related types of studies to deal with the research questions on *off-election democracy*: citizen studies, studies on political representatives and bureaucrats, and protest studies. The citizen studies (off-election democracy from the bottom up) include existing and forthcoming election studies and SOM studies, as well as our new standing citizen panel. The studies on representatives and bureaucrats (off-election democracy from the top down) incorporate the aforementioned and ongoing unique series of national and local parliamentary surveys, as well as our new standing panel with elite groups. Focus will be placed on identifying interactions and process-tracking methodologies that need to be developed. Finally, the protest studies (with political decisions potentially causing citizen protests as a unit of analysis) contains both new series of studies over longer time periods and more in-depth studies comparing pairs of "twin protest" in different municipalities or districts within municipalities. Citizen protests as they unfold are good cases for confronting theories of basic democratic principles such as equality, equal treatment and the realization of public will.

## Theme II: Crisis Democracy

Crises are structural features of modern societies. A core feature of a crisis is that it involves events that cause major disruptions of the political or social order: a crisis represents a threat to the basic structures or fundamental values and norms of a political system that, under the pressure of time and highly uncertain circumstances, necessitates making crucial decisions (Boin et al. 2005; Boin and t'Hart 2007). As such, crises are catalytic moments for modern democracies. We argue that the study of crisis democracy is particularly relevant to understanding the complex processes that sustain, foster, and mitigate political and social trust, legitimacy, and citizens' democratic support. Communication plays a crucial role in these processes, which means that the study of the democratic implications of crises also necessitates a study of political communication (Raboy and Dagenais 1992; Boin et al. 2005).

To date, there is a vast body of literature and extant research on societal crises, involving disciplines such as psychology, anthropology, sociology, political communication, and media and communication research. The research theme outlined here advances previous research by focusing on the *democratic ramifications* of crisis communication at the level of individual citizens. The research will involve studies on how citizens continuously interpret and react to transformative crisis events, the sources and causes of these reactions (personal experience, interpersonal communication and mediated communication), as well as studies of the short- and long-term consequences of citizens' crises perceptions. Legitimacy can be perceived of as an umbrella concept capturing the multitude of consequences we are looking for.

A key theoretical point of departure for this research proposal is, as previously outlined, the transformative processes of individualization, mediatization and changes in governance

institutions. These theories bring new research questions to the fore and highlight the need for developing new methods for analyzing the democratic implications of crisis events. The defining feature of crises facing modern societies is that they are often human-induced and caused by the failure of government in dealing with an unwanted side effect of modernity, such as concomitant military, financial, industrial and technological risks (Beck 1992, 1999). They are global in scope and often transcend and thus challenge the representative institutions of the political systems of nation states. The global financial crisis that erupted in 2008 is a case in point.

Consequently, we argue that globalization provides a new context for the public understanding of crises that highlights the limits and potential of (national) political institutions with regard to solving or mitigating social problems. While global conflicts and crises are to an increasing extent mediatized (Cottle 2006, 2009), the media that reports on the events tend to be “national”, both in terms of reach/audiences and the reporting/framing of events. The journalistic news media that play a crucial role in providing information, analyses, and commentaries on crises tend to report events through a national prism, such that global events are “domesticated” to appeal to a national audience (Gripsrud 2007, de Vreese and Boomgaarden 2009, Semetko and Valkenburg 2000, Riegert 1998). How the media frames crises where causes and consequences are transnational in scope and reach, and how citizens interpret and react to crisis events that have various consequences at the individual, regional and global levels are key questions to be investigated. Furthermore, the context and conditions of political communication processes that facilitate public understanding of crises have changed rapidly during the last decade, mainly through the advent and expansion of new communication technologies. The Internet is facilitating new arenas for political communication, consisting of a multitude of genres and forms such as blogs, Internet forums, and social networking sites. The intensification of the global flow of information can trigger transnational media events resulting in political crises spreading rapidly and on a global scale, as had happened after the publication of the Mohammad cartoons in Denmark (Eide et al. 2008). At the same time, these “new” media often coexist with and thrive on interaction with “old” media, and this interplay is accentuated during critical events (Fearn-Banks 2007, Allan 2006). The role of “new” and “old” media in shaping public opinion in crises situations provides an area for innovative research, with opportunities to further our understanding of, for example, the agenda-setting, framing, and indexing effects of the media in the new media landscape (Bennet and Iyengar 2008; Weaver 2007; Reese 2007; van Gorp 2007).

A key feature of a crisis is that the assessments of the situation and reactions to what is happening develop and change as the crisis progresses through various stages (Seeger, Sellnow and Ulmer 2003). Even when a crisis has reached operational closure, political closure often remains unresolved. Crises are transformative events, even at the level of individual citizens. As such, crises may transform the political outlooks and attitudes of cohorts and generations of people. In a recent study on the long-term effects of the Vietnam War, Erikson and Stoker (2009) show how the experience of being exposed to the draft lottery, implemented in the United States in 1969, affects political attitudes. Crises affect some people more than others, and what Erikson and Stoker highlight is that the most vulnerable group—the young men that were most likely to be drafted into military service through the lottery—continue to have different opinions on the Vietnam War from other comparable groups. The effect is not only evident in attitudes towards the crisis itself (the Vietnam War) but also in general ideological beliefs and preferences for political candidates. The effect is also evident among those who, in the end, never had to go to war. The suggested causal mechanism is vulnerability, and this line of reasoning can be applied to other contexts and cases. This calls

for research on the long-term effects of crises on political and social trust, legitimacy, and citizen democratic support, linking theories of intersectionality—how aspects like class, gender, age and ethnicity are connected to each other—to the study of crisis phenomena.

We agree with Gilley (2009) when he suggests that legitimacy is a result of “an ongoing historical process of performance and feedback, not of a sudden delivery or failure of public goods”, and that it is better to speak of processes of legitimation (and delegitimation) that put dynamic explanatory factors in focus. Vulnerability is a dynamic and useful concept because it allows for studies that go beyond the “political effects of being affected” by critical events. People might be influenced by the sheer threat of being hit. Moreover, the consequences might depend on how the media is portraying the event, such as by categorizing people as winners or losers, or initiating campaigns directed at politicians or other core actors.

The research agenda outlined above creates opportunities for a multitude of studies. Our plan is to initiate one comprehensive case study in which all of the key processes and features mentioned come into play. The specific case must be selected in a way that provides a transformative process that has the potential to deeply affect individuals as well as society at large. During the MOD project period, we believe that we may find such a case in the economic crises and industrial restructuring in the wake of the current global financial upheaval, which has caused large-scale redundancies in Sweden and many other countries (other cases are also possible, however). Even though an economic crisis and large-scale redundancies are less dramatic than the Vietnam War, the suggested focus involves the sociological and psychological mechanisms that explain citizens’ cognitive and affective perceptions and reactions to crisis events, including changes in political trust, in attitudes to democratic government, and in the role of “new” and “old” media in forming public opinions. This research will follow a number of steps: re-analysis of previously collected data (the SOM surveys will be crucial here) from the viewpoint of large-scale redundancies (possibly providing longitudinal data on crises perceptions relating to economic crises and large-scale industrial restructuring); intense data collection when a crisis occurs; and experimental studies pin-pointing causal mechanisms. We are particularly interested in building an infrastructure for longitudinal studies following carefully selected cohorts over a time period of at least 12 years (three terms/mandates in the Swedish political system).

### Theme III: Changing Political Minds, Attitudes and Behavior

In today’s individualized society, citizens are not only expected to participate in political processes, they also increasingly face situations where they are supposed to make choices in order to implement public policies. On the one hand, new approaches, often labeled as new public management, are used to establish targets and performance measures for agencies responsible for delivering public goods. On the other hand, citizens are assumed to be active service users, making informed choices between service producers. What we have seen in Sweden during recent decades are marketization reforms that include a plethora of general and local arrangements (Osborne and Gaebler 1992; Newman 2007; Taylor-Gooby 2008). Indeed, democratic decision-making has become less transparent; actual output is more than ever a result of a myriad of processes and there is an urgent need to develop understandings of citizens’ opinions as a driving force in the transformation of modern democratic states.

The case we want to make is that the marketization agenda assigns a new role for individuals, placing them at the crossroads of being a *citizen* (with all that that entails) and being a *consumer*. With increased decision-making enforced at the individual citizen’s level, it is

important to bear in mind that it is far from certain that all individuals are actually capable of making the required decisions. We all have limited cognitive capacities in some way, and we may face “self-control problems”—meaning that we do not always do what is in our own interest even when we understand what we ought to do (O’Donoghue and Rabin 1999). The matter is further complicated by the fact that individuals do not necessarily seek to maximize one value in taking a decision, but may trade off multiple objectives (Taylor-Gooby 2008). Numerous studies of decision-making also find that factors such as social framing, expectations and accountability may decisively affect individual decision-making and actions (Heinrich et al. 2004; Rothstein 2005). Moreover, not all people can access the media by which the required information is disseminated; in addition, some people may distrust the media due to reasons such as an assumed hidden agenda on the part of the information provider. Recent healthcare research reveals insufficient support in the form of information and, even more notably, inadequate knowledge of how people perceive the provided information (Greener 2007; Winblad-Spångberg 2006). The link between citizens’ opinions and behavior becomes further complicated by the fact that in some areas, the government may want to go even further and provide better opportunities for individuals to make informed decisions for themselves, according to a classical liberal perspective. For example, various regulations related to parental leave are designed to create incentives that explicitly promote gender equality. Clearly, there are several reasons why people may not behave as the government hopes in this case; in addition to the explanations mentioned above, gender stereotypes and social norms come into play in this particular case.

The research initiated under the theme *changing political minds, attitudes and behavior* will initially make use of three recent reforms implemented within the welfare sector in Sweden: healthcare reform, which includes the right for individuals to choose their provider for primary and secondary healthcare; pension system reform, which relies on the individual’s capacity to take decisions on both direct pension issues and the associated lifecycle work pattern; and free-choice reform in the school sector, which has dramatically increased parental choice around schools for their children.

Combining data from the Survey of Living Conditions (which includes a battery of attitudinal questions) with available register data, we will analyze the relationship between parents’ attitudes towards the welfare state at large and the organization of the educational system in particular, and their choice of school for their children. Using data from the Panel Survey of Ageing and the Elderly, we will also analyze whether and to what degree peoples’ preferences about retirement have an impact on their actual retirement decisions. Then, using data provided by the new Laboratory of Opinion Research, we will proceed to test hypotheses on causal mechanisms more thoroughly. Analyzing the link between individual opinions/preferences and actual behavior is an important research issue in itself. More interestingly, however, we will test whether people who, for example, have chosen private schools for their children *subsequently* change their attitudes related to questions on whether individual school choice should be further supported or restricted, and on broader issues of equality and expected voting behavior. Similar hypotheses can be formed with respect to retirement decisions and choice of pension investment: a major motive of some politicians backing this reform was, perhaps, to change people’s attitudes, making them more pro-market or pro-corporation, by more or less forcing people to choose their investments for themselves. Indeed, it is well known in the field of psychology (e.g., Tavris and Aronson 2007) that people try to avoid the “cognitive dissonance” that would follow from hoping that their stock prices appreciate while being critical of the “capitalist system”. Although often implicitly assumed—not least in comparative welfare state research (Korpi and Palme 2004; Svallfors

2006)—the adaptation of political attitudes is scarcely researched explicitly. Hence, we need to better understand how political decisions affect both behavior and attitudes, and to what degree peoples' actions reflects their attitudes or, in fact, if people are adjusting their attitudes to correspond with their behavior. The process-tracking methodologies that we plan to use will make new insights in this area possible.

In a broader context, this research can have a substantial impact on understanding whether and how policies affecting behavior also trigger changes in opinions/preferences that potentially erode the solidarity necessary for maintaining sustainable democracy (such as in a welfare state that guarantees an acceptable minimum standard of living for everyone (Halleröd 2004; Taylor-Gooby 2008)). Such questions, the answers to which are central to our understanding of the interplay between citizen opinion and democratic development, cannot be answered based purely on cross-sectional data. This being the case, existing analysis of such issues is nevertheless usually based on such data—implying strong doubts about the claimed causal relationships. These issues relate directly to the assumption of constant preferences made in economics. While this assumption is often questioned (e.g., Halleröd 2006), it still underlies almost all conclusions in welfare economics, which constitute the normative foundations that underlie many public priorities. Moreover, most existing evidence of endogenous preferences is either anecdotal or based on small-sample laboratory experiments, the implications of which are difficult to generalize.

An ongoing debate within the field of economics is whether there is scope for any kind of public paternalism or not. Whereas conventional theory is based on “revealed preference” methodology, insights from behavioral economics have highlighted that people often make systematic mistakes. To some authors, this implies that there is a role for sometimes limiting “consumer sovereignty”, and that policy makers should try to influence the choices individuals make, either directly or through some “soft paternalism” measures such as changing the default options (see, for example, Gruber and Köszegi (2002), O’Donoghue and Rabin (2006) and Johansson-Stenman (2008)). Others argue against such conclusions by highlighting, for example, that policy makers are also rational or that people have the right to choose even if they make mistakes in doing so (e.g., Sugden 2004). However, as yet there seems to be almost no empirical information regarding people’s opinions regarding the use of various kinds of paternalism.

From an information systems perspective, it is interesting to note the emerging attempts to provide technological (Ranerup 2008a) and other forms of support to citizens in choice-promoting reforms. This might mean that technology will be an important actor in forming the relationship between the state and the individual (Chadwick and May 2003; Lips 2007). However, the view applied here is not in line with the many studies based generally on the theoretical perspectives of governmentality and societal discourse, which find that governmental practices *produce* the subjects they seek (Clarke 2007). Therefore, empirical studies of emergent experience focusing specifically on individual technology use, activities, and perceptions are important. Consequently, a general question about which studies should be encouraged is how public political bodies and authorities are trying to influence, via these reforms, citizen behavior by introducing technological and other arrangements. A current attempt is the choice reforms implemented in primary care in Sweden, and the regional as well as national attempts to introduce Web portals with information and technological devices supporting choices (Green, McDowell and Potts 2008; Ranerup 2008). From the perspective of the individual, there are several other questions, most of which can be answered from existing and newly derived data: how and to what extent do individual citizens currently

participate in these reforms by actually pursuing activities of choice? What are the grounds for choice when it comes to the information provided by public authorities, and how is this information perceived? How do individuals view themselves in actual situations of choice (e.g., as citizens, consumers, customers or patients), and what information needs can be derived from this?

Taking a bird's-eye-view, the issues raised here concern social stratification and the distribution of life chances. So far, the evidence in research is mainly anecdotal regarding, for example, free-school choice and the effect of the choice itself in terms of reinforcing segregation and inequality with respect to school quality. The same basic argument is also raised in relation to the choices citizens are expected to make in a wide range of areas. The argument for choosing free-school, healthcare, and pension system reforms as three initial cases for study is that we will be able to make significant progress in terms of uncovering contradictions or obstacles in "pure" opinion-formation processes. The theme *changing political minds, attitudes and behavior* will, for example, facilitate better understanding of how individual choice helps reproduce systematic socio-economic cleavages. Such insight may also be important when trying to understand why relative income, and not just absolute income, tends to be determinant of individual well-being (Halleröd 2004; Johansson-Stenman et al. 2002). During the MOD project period, we will expand research into further areas. In particular, we will consider studies in environmental policies, and reforms regarding parental leave and gender equality, since they represent areas in which there has been considerable changes in Sweden over the past 25-30 years. Environmental studies and gender studies also represent areas where broad collaborations can be enacted.

\* \* \*

In summary; our point of departure is three transformative processes conditioning the working of representative democracy in contemporary society: *changes in democratic institutional arrangements* (a shift from government to governance), *mediatization and the introduction of new information technology* (e-democracy), and *individualization*. We use several different arenas to study the consequences of these transformations for the interaction between citizen opinion and democratic decision-making in the broad sense: off-election democracy, crisis democracy, and electoral democracy (the last serving as the self-evident reference point for our studies). We also study the link between opinions and political behavior, thus initiating a research theme that cuts across the abovementioned arenas. Legitimacy and responsiveness are core values in a sustainable democracy; even though we cannot state that there needs to be  $x$  percent of citizens supporting the government in order for a democracy to flourish, we believe that there is a "bottom line" where destructive processes can become a serious threat. Representative democracy is one of humanity's great inventions, and we seek to contribute to understanding how it can adapt to continuously changing circumstances.

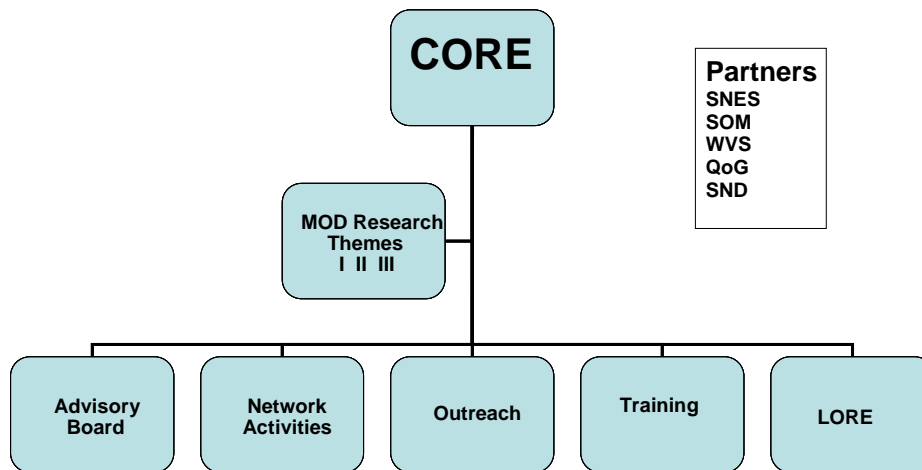
## 5. CENTRE FOR OPINION RESEARCH (CORE)

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A long-term goal for the MOD research group is to secure top-quality opinion research at UoG, regardless of topic or research theme. Our vision is even more far-reaching than that: we seek to establish a permanent *national* infrastructure for opinion research. After three years of this specific research investment, a national research center will be a long-standing result of our initiative. However, developments have to be taken incrementally. The first priority is to establish a Centre for Opinion Research (CORE) at UoG.

As stated previously, this is a formative moment. There is an urgent need to create a vibrant centre node in what is currently a loose network of many autonomous researchers, programs, projects and partners that conduct opinion research at UoG. First, it is important for research on opinion and democracy to develop in a highly competitive international research environment. One reason why we choose to make CORE into a node for all kinds of opinion research is to create opportunities for unexpected multidisciplinary influences. Creative research collaborations can never be planned entirely in advance, and we wish to establish an infrastructure that facilitates input into the planned research themes. Second, we want to establish CORE in order to secure the more efficient use of resources. A major objective with CORE is to pool resources for study design, data collection, data analyses, reporting and data documentation. We envision a research center that can serve the local and national research community in many ways, including the organization of network activities, the recruitment and training of research assistants, and the efficient communication of research results to media and the public. CORE will also be a useful platform for the establishment of LORE, the Laboratory of Opinion Research, which is our main instrument for developing process-tracking methodologies. The figure below presents a picture of the overall organizational structure.

**Figure 1. Centre for Opinion Research (CORE): Organizational structure**



Partners: Swedish National Election Study Program (SNES); Society Opinion Media Institute (SOM); World Value Survey (WVS); Quality of Government Institute (QoG); Swedish National Data Service (SND).

CORE will be guided by an *advisory board* that will initially be made up of the principal investigators of the partner organizations, the individuals involved in the preparation of this plan, and a number of internationally distinguished scholars (see Appendix). At present, our current partners are all important research programs and teams at UoG: the Swedish National Election Studies (which encompasses the European Election Study and the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems), the Society Opinion and Media Institute, the World Value Survey, the Quality of Government Institute, and the Swedish National Data Service. As their names indicate, these partners already operate on the national level; once CORE-UoG has been firmly established, this national-level experience will provide an ideal starting point for the launch of CORE Sweden. It should be noted that the partners integrated so far mainly operate within the field of social sciences. It will be an urgent task to integrate centers and secretariats outside the field of social sciences during the MOD project period.

CORE will play a key role in ongoing efforts to produce research that meets the highest international standards. In order to fulfill these plans, the CORE manager will be responsible for co-ordinating *network activities* such as internal seminars, workshops, meetings, research collaboration, and the preparation of research applications. The manager will also be responsible for expanding CORE's infrastructure to include more partners operating on the national level, such as Statistics Sweden (SCB).

Activities that facilitate *outreach* include a “help desk” for quick advice and a “room of references”, where data and documentation will be easily accessible. In a collective effort of participating researchers and partners, we also plan to create a large knowledge database—like a “Wikipedia” of opinion research—that organizes “tacit” knowledge on opinion research. This is especially important since many research programs at UoG will experience generational replacement in the coming years; we will thus systematically collect the accumulated experiences of our senior scholars. This “Wikipedia” will be developed in close collaboration with SND; indeed, we currently have ongoing discussions with SND regarding the creation of thematically-oriented internet portals that will provide even more effective ways of searching data, documentation and research resources. CORE will also publish a “poll of polls” on Swedish public opinion based on a collection of aggregated data on party preferences and attitudes collected by a number of private polling institutes. This will be done on a regular basis to serve the public, but also to raise media attention. In order for quick delivery to a wide national and international audience, we will run a Working Paper Series (as an online publication).

*Training* of research assistants and students is another planned task for CORE. Each of the individuals behind this plan has personally experienced how time consuming training short-term assistants can be. In this context, resource allocation is of particular value. Moreover, training students is important for enabling even better achievements in terms of student products such as Master's theses and doctoral dissertations, as well as for the recruitment of young scholars into future opinion research.

The MOD Research Themes I to III are presented in a separate box in Figure 1. This figure illustrates the fact that other research themes can also be connected to the CORE infrastructure. After the three years of the proposed MOD project period (2010 to 2012) the advisory board, network activities, outreach, training, and LORE will remain in operation. However, the more substantial research themes might change depending on the fortunes of future research applications.

#### *The Laboratory of Opinion Research (LORE)*

CORE is a platform for a variety of initiatives. From the perspective of the MOD research group, however, the most crucial initiative is the creation of a laboratory using Web survey techniques. “Process-tracking” is short for rather sophisticated methodologies that we have, as yet, only experienced the beginning of. When fully developed, the laboratory will include a standing panel of participants (citizens and various elite groups), a media “panel” tapping the media and Internet for information, and mobile equipment (i.e., mentometers and laptops) that can be used for immediate fieldwork at referenda, protest rallies, negotiations and other deliberative events. Renewal will take place through concerted analysis and real-time studies. The flexibility of LORE makes it possible to conduct systematic data collection on-site at a moment's notice. LORE will not only be useful for our multidisciplinary research themes, but it will also provide the research community access to equipment and resources needed for all



kinds of data collection to support process-tracking at the individual level. The most important features of LORE are:

1. *A huge standing panel* of participants available for research projects on an ongoing basis. Our ambition is to recruit a panel of approximately 100,000 citizen respondents. We will also recruit respondents from “elite” groups (national and local parliamentarians, bureaucrats and journalists). This panel is particularly important for the study of unexpected critical events. While the argument is rather straightforward for events that take place on the national level, it is also plausible that the huge standing panel will include a number of respondents affected by unexpected sub-national events.
2. *Specially-recruited panels* available for intense studies. Our extensive networks will help us develop an “early warning system” to alert us when (theoretically) interesting events are about to occur. This enables well-prepared concerted analysis. Web surveys can be repeatedly sent out to carefully selected groups of respondents in order to closely monitor individuals’ opinion-formation processes and interactions with other actors.
3. *A media panel* tapping “old” and “new” media for information. This panel will consist of automatically analyzed textual material from printed media, the blogosphere, and the Internet in general.

It is also important to note that the Web survey technique allows for the construction of survey-embedded experiments in which different stimuli (e.g., texts, graphic elements and images) are randomly presented to respondents. Web surveying also lets researchers apply factorial experimental designs. With this approach, we will be able to conduct a long series of experiments tailored to investigating causal mechanisms. LORE will also be useful for the recruitment of respondents for opinion research through focus groups and long interviews. A major challenge in qualitative research is assembling well-composed groups for group discussions and/or respondents for individual interviews. LORE will give us access to valuable information about respondents and provide an infrastructure for recruiting people.

Since LORE will let us test new ideas at comparatively low cost, it will be especially useful for establishing multidisciplinary research. The underlying idea of LORE is rooted in experience amassed at UoG Department of Political Science, primarily by Henrik Oscarsson in conducting campaign panel studies using Web surveys in several recent Swedish elections (2002, 2003, 2006 and 2009). We can also draw on the experience at the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication to build time series on the use of, for example, blogs and news provision via cell phones. Furthermore, LORE will benefit from current research initiatives of the Swedish Language Bank at the UoG Faculty of Arts. For example, Web surveys and media panels are facilitating a renaissance of open-ended survey instruments that generate vast textual material. There is a vital need for tools with which we can easily analyze the information contained in this initially unstructured data.

As stated previously, the MOD research group will also rely on existing data collection infrastructure, and we have secured funding for a survey of Swedish parliamentarians and a survey of Swedish journalists (both are scheduled to take place in 2010). Our ability to access elite groups such as politicians and journalists is internationally unique. So far, however, funding for parliamentarian and journalist studies has been piecemeal; more stable funding will allow us to make even better use of existing resources, by helping consolidate and develop time series dating back to mid-1960s for national and local parliamentarian surveys,

and to the 1980s for journalist surveys. Collaboration with established research programs will help us recruit respondents to LORE, since many of the long-standing programs are highly visible and have a good reputation among elite groups and the public in Sweden.

## 6. RESEARCH COLLABORATION

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We have used different strategies to pinpoint UoG's competencies in the field of opinion and democracy research, such as self-reporting from scholars at the Faculty of Social Sciences initiated by Dean Helena Lindholm Schulz in fall 2008, and mapping in the Gothenburg University Publications and Electronic Archive (GUP/GUPEA) with the help of Håkan Carlsson at Gothenburg University Library. These mappings confirm that current competencies in opinion and democracy research are concentrated in the Faculty of Social Sciences, especially in the departments most closely connected with the SOM Institute (i.e., the Department of Political Science, the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, and the Centre for Public Sector Research (CEFOS)). More importantly, the GUP/GUPEA mapping indicates that a few relevant publications have also emerged from the IT University and the School of Business, Economics and Law. Thus, there is common ground on which the MOD research group can build and foster further research on opinion and democracy at the IT University and the School of Business, Economics and Law. However, we plan for a careful mapping of partners, including *all* opinion research conducted at UoG. This mapping is crucial and goes beyond the initial mapping of competencies that concerned the connection between opinion *and* democracy.

At the national level, the MOD research group will gain from further collaboration with the research milieu surrounding the European Social Survey at Umeå University. The link with Umeå University is strengthened by the fact that, until 2012, Björn Halleröd will be in charge of the Umeå-based research program *Work and Welfare in an Ageing Population*, which, among other things, studies the link between the welfare system, preferences, and actions. Welfare policies constitute an area where noteworthy change has occurred in Sweden in recent decades, although little is known about the links between changes in opinions, policies, and the actual living conditions of citizens.

There are several important survey research centers and democratic studies centers around the world. In the Nordic region, two multidisciplinary research milieus will be particularly important to us: *Democracy: A Citizen Perspective*, an interdisciplinary center of excellence at Åbo Akademi in Finland, and the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) in Trondheim. We have strong personal links with both of these organizations. Professor Sören Holmberg is a member of the advisory board at Åbo Akademi, and the Akademi's director Professor Lauri Karvonen and associate director Kimmo Grönlund are familiar with the UoG research environment. In Trondheim, we have personal links with Professor Ola Listhaug, Professor Anders Todal Jensen, and Associate Professor Toril Aalberg. In the broader European context, a key institution is the Department of Communication Science at the University of Amsterdam, which is conducting multidisciplinary opinion and democracy research in connection with the 2009 EU parliamentary election; we have important contacts there with Professor Claes H. de Vreese and Dr. Andreas Schuck. We will also be able to immediately leverage our good contacts with the Danish National Election Study Program, headed by Professor Jørgen Goul Andersen, which in recent years has made significant achievements in opinion and democracy research.

Our intended use of various opportunities for research collaboration is key. A quick glance at lists of recent publications in the field of opinion and democracy research leads to several conclusions. Most importantly, we need LORE in order to position ourselves even more centrally in the international research community. Theoretical development goes hand-in-hand with methodological development, and UoG will be left behind if we do not take advantage of this opportunity. However, we will give priority to carefully selected collaborations, and the research milieus we choose to approach will depend partly on the funding allocated to this investment. Full funding will allow for research collaborations that are important for the establishment of CORE as a *national* resource for opinion research. If we receive less than full funding, we would concentrate on collaboration that improves the research themes *off-election democracy*, *crisis democracy* and *changing political minds, attitudes and behavior*.

Our overall strategy is to build an *open* infrastructure. We believe that a vibrant node, CORE, in combination with new process-tracking methodologies, will attract a large number of scholars. We are reluctant to specify too many partners or collaborators at this stage since we obviously need flexibility during the early phases of the project period. As stated previously, creative research collaborations can never be planned entirely in advance. We are aware of a number of relevant research projects currently ongoing at different departments, particularly in the Faculty of Social Sciences (e.g., protest studies undertaken at the Department of Sociology, and expertise in crisis amassed at the Department of Psychology). Recently, new arenas for international collaboration have opened up through personal contacts with scholars at the University of Manchester (experimental studies on local political processes) and with scholars at the University of California, Berkeley (cohort analysis and studies of long-term effects). While there may be trade-offs here between going “local” and going “global”, we hope to deepen collaborations at UoG and undertake collaborations internationally at the same time.

## 7. INTEGRATION INTO EDUCATION AND PLAN FOR COMMUNICATION

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We will draw on existing collaborations to integrate ourselves into education at UoG. The Faculty of Social Sciences offers two advanced-level courses in methodology, *Applied Statistical Analysis* and *Applied Qualitative Research Methods*, both of which unite students from the Department of Political Science, the Department of Sociology, the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, and the interdisciplinary masters program in European Studies. Monika Djerf-Pierre, Henrik Oscarsson and Lena Wängnerud are deeply involved in these courses, and there will be significant opportunities to use LORE-generated data in training students. Two other important advanced-level courses are *Citizens, Politicians, and the Media: Evaluating Democratic Processes* (in which Henrik Oscarsson is deeply involved) and *The Quality of Government in a Comparative Perspective*. These are courses in which the Department of Political Science collaborates with the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication and the Department of Economics.

The above collaborations form a platform for creating the international masters program *International Democracy and Opinion Research* (IDOR). This will be an interdisciplinary program focused on analyzing and understanding opinions related to issues of democratic development. The degree will prepare students for professional careers in organizations that measure and analyze citizen opinions, and for postgraduate research in the field. The curriculum would combine the academic study of citizens’ opinions and democratic developments, with more practical training in opinion analysis. However, this program needs

further planning and is targeted to start at the end of the funding period. The team behind this plan is involved in education at all levels at UoG, and as such will recruit and supervise undergraduate students and PhD candidates interested in multidisciplinary opinion and democracy research. The results of LORE will be integrated into our courses, and we believe that the flexibility of LORE will attract young people. Visiting scholars can also easily be integrated as guest lecturers. Since PhD programs at the UoG Faculty of Social Sciences are currently undergoing major reform, we are not presently suggesting anything specific at this level. However, we will follow developments closely.

As regards cooperation with society outside academia, we have already presented important ideas in the section on CORE (outreach activities). These will be ongoing activities, however; we have also planned two specific non-academic events. The first will be connected with the official launch of LORE. This event will take place in connection with the Swedish general election of 2010. Journalists and representatives of NGOs and political parties will be the main audience for this event, although the general public will also be invited. The second event, planned for the end of the project period, will be an International Conference on Multidisciplinary Opinion and Democracy Research at UoG in 2012. This will primarily be an academic event, although a panel of distinguished scholars will be invited to participate in a workshop intended to attract a broader audience. Each member of this team commit themselves to taking part in public debates on matters related to opinion and democracy research during the planning period; indeed, our research group is already highly visible in the media and takes part in seminars and lectures outside academia. We believe that this is actually the most important way of communicating with a wider audience, and that we contribute to societal development when we deliver new facts and perspectives, built on firm ground, to decision-makers and the general public.

## 8. PROJECT PRIORITIES

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The creation of LORE is the biggest priority. We are convinced that LORE is the key to renewal. It is important to note that the creation of LORE means that we would need to reserve funding for hiring personnel to recruit respondents, conduct surveys, and create data sets. We would also need to reserve funding to develop the programs necessary for conducting ethically correct panel studies on the Web and for tapping the Internet for information (i.e., the media panel). For this research to continue, we would also need a group of people willing to dedicate themselves to the full implementation of studies (making designs, constructing questions, analyzing data). As such, we need to form a MOD steering committee. While it is possible to launch LORE without launching the bigger CORE organization, the spin-off effects will presumably be much more restricted. With full funding, we would be able to establish CORE as a node for opinion research. With less than full funding, this part of the plan would not be realized (a detailed budget is included in Appendix).

Renewal is not only a product of technological developments but also of people coming together and exploring real world problems from different angles. We seek to recruit post-doctoral fellows and enable a wide range of scholars to join CORE/LORE and the MOD network. We prioritize inviting internationally distinguished scholars to be guest professors at UoG. We intend to recruit at least three people as appointed visiting scholars, one at each of the Faculty of Social Science, the Department of Applied Information Technology, and the School of Business, Economics and Law. Our plan is to invite the scholars for a preliminary visit in the first phase of the project period, and then for a second visit at the end. Each guest

professor will be asked to stay at UoG for two weeks on each occasion. We anticipate recruiting scholars with the potential to become future partners in cross-country comparative research. We will invite the same individuals for two visits to create a long-term commitment to our research environment. For the first visit, we will organize an internal conference at UoG based on the multidisciplinary research themes *off-election democracy*, *crisis democracy*, and *changing political minds, attitudes and behavior*. Scholars from all UoG faculties will be invited, and we will compose panels and workshops to maximize the emergence of new perspectives.

Full funding (SEK 7 million) includes CORE and the personnel needed to realize it.<sup>1</sup> It also includes funding for a coordinator responsible for the administration and long-term planning of research proposals (i.e., an individual who keeps track of dates, financing institutions, and all necessary details in connection with application procedures). Full funding will also foster the preconditions conducive to actual research. Aside from the projects outlined in this plan, we would also like to fund several new scholarships that would serve as a “lubricant”—enabling top-quality research proposals and publications from UoG. We will approach this strategically, giving priority to coalition-building that would help secure long-term funding for opinion and democracy research at UoG. With less than full funding, we would reduce ambitions related to CORE and proceed with funding new research and post-doctoral funding. Note that at the minimum level (SEK 3 million) there will be very little room to fund actual research. At this minimum level we commit ourselves to establishing LORE. Since the group behind this plan has not, as a whole, collaborated previously, there is a need for fresh funding to realize the initiatives presented in this plan.

## 9. EXPECTED ACHIEVEMENTS

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If we are provided the means, we will establish multidisciplinary opinion and democracy research as a signum of UoG. By the end of the project period, a basis for broad research into opinions and democracy should have been consolidated. We will also have developed process-tracking methodologies enabling new forms of empirical research. As a group and together with other interested scholars, we will have produced research results of interest to the international scholarly community and that will have stimulated public discussion and debate. Being visible is crucial for the MOD research group and also to being attractive to students—to future scholars in opinion and democracy research. With other interested scholars, we will also have drafted research proposals likely to obtain external funding. Finally, we will have built an infrastructure for opinion research that will last beyond the three years of this specific investment.

The first year, 2010, is dedicated to establishing the MOD research group, with a special focus on the creation of CORE/LORE. In the first year, all necessary recruitment will be done and we will have our first specific event directed toward the general public. Fall 2010 will be dedicated to joint data collection. The Swedish general election in September 2010 is a natural focal point for our research and in connection to the election we will be able to make recruitments to the various LORE panels. It is extremely important that new programs and

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<sup>1</sup> MOD has received (Dec. 7 2009) SEK 5 million per year 2010-2012 to fulfil the plans presented in this plan. CORE will however be part of an investment in infrastructure at the Faculty of Social Sciences, UoG, the following years.

techniques have been tested carefully and that LORE is ready for full-scale use in fall 2010. This means that some data collection must begin as soon as spring 2010.

In the second year, 2011, we will start by realizing the first round of guest professors and the internal UoG conference. The goal is to achieve intellectual “cross-fertilization” early in the MOD project period, so that researchers pick up theories and perspectives from other disciplines and incorporate them into their own work. During 2011 there will also be a special focus on submitting complete research proposals to funding bodies such as the Swedish Research Council (VR), the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation (RJ), and the Swedish Council for Working Life and Social Research (FAS). Since it is perhaps even more important to target funding bodies at the EU level, it will be crucial to consolidate international collaboration during this period. Proposals will be crafted around substantive issues as well as around issues of infrastructure. In this phase we will emphasize participation in workshops and panels within the structures of existing international conferences, but also organize a series of regular seminars (typically monthly lunch seminars) at UoG to consolidate interest in CORE/LORE and the MOD research themes.

The third year, 2012, is dedicated to expansion. The goal will be to transcend previous boundaries between disciplines and catalyze the development of new theories. CORE/LORE should make this possible, and the clearest manifestation of this achievement will be the International Multidisciplinary Conference of Opinion and Democracy Research at UoG. This conference should involve approximately 50 participants (about half internally and half internationally recruited). The second round of guest professors will coincide with this international conference, which will also involve a specially organized event for a non-academic audience. In this third year we also plan to expand via the international Master’s program IDOR. In this period we also plan for the final expansion of CORE into a national resource for opinion research.

Phases from Establishing to Expanding the MOD research group: 

2010	2011	2012
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishing LORE and CORE UoG</li> <li>• Initiating projects under MOD themes I-III</li> <li>• Developing necessary programs and techniques for process-tracking</li> <li>• Data collection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First round of guest professors and internal MOD conference at UoG</li> <li>• Participation in existing international conferences</li> <li>• Regular MOD-initiated seminars at UoG</li> <li>• Completing proposals for external funding</li> <li>• Continued data collection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishing CORE Sweden</li> <li>• Second round of guest professors</li> <li>• International MOD conference at UoG</li> <li>• Planning international masters program (IDOR)</li> <li>• Completing proposals for external funding</li> </ul>
<i>Emphasis on: cross-fertilization</i>		<i>Emphasis on: transcendence of disciplines</i>

List of references is available on request: [lana.wangnerud@pol.gu.se](mailto:lana.wangnerud@pol.gu.se)