

Methodological Achievements and Limits of the Asian Democracy Index

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Introduction

There is growing popular dissatisfaction with democracy in many parts of the world. In Asia, even countries that were considered “success” cases of democratic transition and democratic consolidation experience conflict and crises. There is empirical evidence that shows how economic development affects the survival of democracy, but not the transition from dictatorship to democracy (Przeworski et al. 1997, 2000). In South Korea, democracy has delivered political, social, and economic goods. Other democracies however grapple with the challenge of upholding democracy due to lapses in the delivery of economic goods to its poor population. This is true in the case of Thailand and the Philippines. Although these are considered as temporary reversals in the democratic consolidation discourse, the threat of a return to non-democratic government is real when a democratic regime fails to provide people with a basic standard of living. If economic development increases the likelihood of democratic survival, how does democracy impact on poverty and inequality?

The literature implies that redistributive reforms reduce poverty. In countries where reforms are thoroughly being carried out, the political power of the minority who might oppose other poverty reduction measures has been significantly reduced. This was observed even in the Philippines and Brazil, which are considered as having undergone only partial reform, where new possibilities for the mobilization and organization of rural poor people and their allies have been created (Putzel 1999; Houtzager 1999).

This paper aims to show a clear understanding of the quality of democracy in selected countries in Asia, and identify where these countries converge and diverge in terms of their experiences under democratic

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regimes. This discussion will then feed into an assessment of the feasibility of the Asian Democracy Index (ADI) of the Consortium for the Asian Democracy Index (CADI) as a tool for making cross-country comparisons of democratization.

CADI proposed a theoretical and empirical framework for understanding the process of democratization. The framework applies a “postcolonialist” perspective in studying Third World democratization, drawing from the experiences of South Korea and other Asian countries rather than “existing Western theories of democratic transition and consolidation” (Cho 2012, 5). It proposes a theoretical framework that focuses on three dimensions of democracy: dispersion of power, democracy as a formation out of various social and class struggles, and democracy as being “society-centric.” To examine the quality of democracy, it specifies the following propositions:

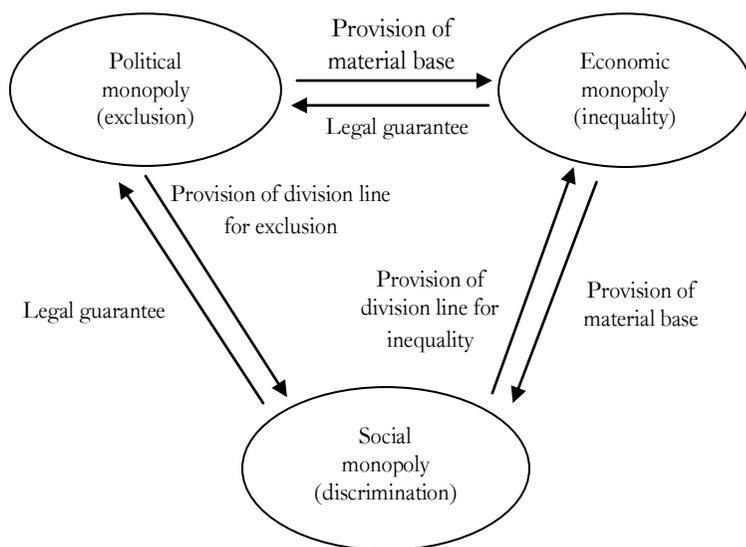
1. Democracy is power sharing. It is not just elections, the rule of law, or the guarantee of basic human rights.
2. Democracy is a historical formation that continuously recreates itself out of various social and class struggles. It is not a political system.
3. Democracy is a relational phenomenon of politics, economics, and society. It is not merely a political phenomenon. Politics in a democracy should allow formerly excluded diverse political groups in a dictatorial regime to re-emerge (CADI 2012, 39).

CADI takes on the “post-monopoly democratic perspective” that views democracy as a continuing process of breaking away from power and resource monopolies and democratization as the dissolution of monopoly complexes. It opines that democratization is to be understood as a long process of de-monopolization and that there are relational dynamics within and between the fields of politics, economy, and civil society (Cho 2012, depicted in figure 1).

CADI Data and Methodology

CADI initially consisted of member-teams from South Korea, Indonesia, and the Philippines. To generate empirical data on the quality of democracy in these countries, surveys of country experts in the fields of politics, economy, and civil society were conducted. A separate survey questionnaire

Figure 1: Relationship among Political, Economic, and Social Monopolies



Source: Cho 2012, 17

was developed for each field. The CADI Guidebook (2012) specifies a total of fifty-seven indicators of democracy—nineteen indicators in the field of politics, eighteen indicators in the field of economy, and twenty indicators in the field of civil society. These indicators measure up two core principles—liberalization and equalization. As defined in the CADI Guidebook:

Liberalization is a process to restore the autonomy of each field of a society by de-integrating the monopoly-complex, and to realize self-legislation. Thus, liberalization is a principle used to measure the level of liberalization from monopoly and regulation over certain fields. In this sense, it is a principle to measure how monopoly of resources is de-integrated in a procedural level.... [Liberalization] is divided into two subsidiary categories of autonomy and ability of competition/accountability.... The process of democratization involves the transformation in the relations of power in each field of politics, economy, and civil society. We call this transformation of relations equalization. The degree of equalization shows how much the quality of democracy has developed. It is a principle used to evaluate how much agents

achieve in terms of gaining actual resources within a certain system. That is, it is the actual degree of resource access. Equalization is also divided into two subsidiary categories: pluralization and solidarity/consequential equality (CADI 2012, 44-45).

The first round of pilot surveys were conducted in South Korea, Indonesia, and the Philippines in 2011. Every country had a target sample of twenty-seven experts per country and nine experts from each field. This was followed by two other surveys in 2012 (including Malaysia) and 2013 (including India). Table 1 shows the target sample of key experts by field, sector, and political leaning¹ in the Philippines in 2012, which is double the size of the 2011 survey.

As shown in the country papers published in this issue and the rest of this paper, the Consortium has employed a combination of innovative approaches in developing the index. These and the successful conduct of surveys are considered as the significant achievements of CADI.

Statistical Reliability Tests and Qualitative Responses as Descriptives

Using Philippine data, statistical tests of reliability were conducted herein to determine the consistency of indicators used in measuring the sub-principles of autonomy, competition, pluralization, and solidarity. The inter-item correlations or the Chronbach's Alpha obtained were of acceptable standard, usually 0.7 or higher. Aside from this, inter-rater reliability tests were conducted. Inter-rater reliability² is a measure used to examine the agreement between two people (raters/observers) on the assignment of categories of a categorical variable. It is an important measure in determining how well an implementation of a coding or measurement system works. Results of the reliability tests likewise reveal intra-class correlation coefficients of 0.7 or higher. This implies that the raters were consistent in the ratings that they provided despite differences in political leaning. The results of the said inter-item and inter-rater reliability tests of items included in the subprinciples in three fields—politics, economy and civil society—are summarized in table 4.

Interestingly, larger discrepancies are observed in the mean ratings given to political autonomy compared to economic pluralization. However, inter-item and inter-rater reliability tests in both subprinciples of democracy show similar results. Both imply that differences in the metrics are not due to the raters' differences alone. Such results also imply unidimensionality, i.e.,

component indicators of the subprinciples are measuring the same thing as indicated by the high inter-item correlations.

Table 1: Target Sample of Key Experts by Field, Sector, and Political Leaning, Philippines 2012

	Politics	Economic	Civil Society
Academic	3 Left, 3 Right	3 Left, 3 Right	3 Left, 3 Right
Nongovernmental/ Civil Society Organization	3 Left, 3 Right	3 Left, 3 Right	3 Left, 3 Right
Private	3 Left, 3 Right	3 Left, 3 Right	3 Left, 3 Right
TOTAL	18	18	18

Tables 2 and 3 include qualitative comments given by experts to explain their ratings in 2012. The political autonomy mean ratings range from 4.96 to 7.33. Economic pluralization mean ratings, meanwhile, are lower and the range is wider (1.39 to 4.87). Qualitative comments that provide explanation to the ratings are also included in the said tables.

The intra-class reliability tests using absolute agreement of raters' ratings (Fleiss 1981) reveal that mean ratings are not affected by raters' differences. Two-thirds of the indicators show substantial or very high agreement of experts' ratings. Economic pluralization and social autonomy indicated moderate agreement among experts, social competition registered a fair rating, and social pluralization showed only slight agreement. Raters' disagreements in social competition and pluralization might be due to the involvement of former members of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in government.

Data gathered from the surveys have been presented as country reports at CADI's annual conferences to determine configurations of different democracy indicators. However, to date, between-country comparisons of estimates cannot yet be made since some aspects of the ADI methodology have not yet been standardized (i.e., classification and selection of experts to be included in the survey varies by country). However, target sample sizes in all countries are within a common range.

Table 2: Political Autonomy Ratings and Comments, Philippines 2012

Political Autonomy	Qualitative Comments	Mean Rating
Q1: Degree of state violence	“Extrajudicial killings remain a problem due to laxity of rule of law”	4.96
Q2: Civil liberties	“Need to be more responsive to demands of citizenry (e.g. right to shelter)”	6.67
Q3: Freedom to organize political groups and undertake political action	“Still constrained by requirement to get permit to conduct rally from LGU” “There is cynicism about the quality of groups formed”	7.33
Q4: Degree of freedom for political opposition.	“Opposition is generally allowed in law and in fact, but government still resort to violence to regulate militant opposition groups,” “Lack of party loyalty in Congress” due to financial constraints	7.08

Enhancing the ADI Framework and Methodology

Since the ADI is at its development stage, a series of roundtable discussions and public forums were conducted in Seoul, Jakarta, and Manila to generate comments on the theoretical bases and framework of the study as well as its methodology. During the 2012 CADI conference in Manila, academic experts in the fields of political science and public administration gave commentaries on the ADI. According to Ronas, the ADI’s “demonopolization and equalization indices capture the characteristics of formally democratizing polities within an economic and social environment of severe equity problem” (2012, 218). On the other hand, Miranda (2012) and Rivera (2012) raised questions about conceptual definitions, selection of experts, index construction, and validation.

Analyses of 2012 CADI survey data reveal progress in some aspects of democratization, which supports Ronas’ assertion. Figures 1, 2, and 3 detail the component (subprinciple) scores in South Korea, the Philippines, and Indonesia, respectively. All show the same “shape of democracy”—the political autonomy index score is highest and the economic pluralization score is lowest in all three countries. This is possibly a result of significant liberalization of politics; however, this has been accompanied by low

equalization in the economic sphere. CADI defines economic pluralization as the “fair distribution of economic resources leading to both economic and socio-political democratization”; it is measured using the following five attributes: “economic monopoly, regional disparity, income inequality, asset disparity, and employment inequality” (CADI 2012, 65).

Table 3: Economic Pluralization Ratings and Comments, Philippines 2012

Economic Pluralization	Qualitative Comments	Mean Rating
Q9: Economic monopoly	“Dominant groups monopolize the economy,” “Competition is only among the tycoons”	2.22
Q10: Regional disparity	“Reinforced since government spend more for urbanized regions and almost neglect of other regions.” Here, the Cotabato provinces in Mindanao were cited as examples.	1.78
Q11: Income inequality	“Serious concern, Gini index still at 0.44”	1.39
Q12: Asset disparity	“large and increasing number of informal settlers in urban areas,” “agrarian reform and land distribution is almost total failure, farmers resorted to sharecropping and abandonment of their agricultural lands”	1.39 [range: 0-4]
Q13: Employment inequality	“discrimination when it comes to hiring of Muslims, and some other religious [groups,] although this is not comparable to racial discrimination in countries such as Australia, Japan, and even US and Europe”	4.87 [range: 0 to 8]

Given the afore-discussed, the research identified several limitations and issues to be addressed by CADI in order to enhance the ADI.

Table 4: Inter-rater Reliability Tests of Items in Domains of Politics, Economy, and Civil Society per Subprinciple of Democracy, Philippines 2012

Domain	Agreement	Interpretation*
Political		
Autonomy	.839	Almost perfect
Competition	.749	Substantial
Pluralization	.798	Substantial
Solidarity	.687	Substantial
Economic		
Autonomy	.673	Substantial
Competition	.853	Almost perfect
Pluralization	.590	Moderate
Solidarity	.751	Substantial
Civil Society		
Autonomy	.489	Moderate
Competition	.313	Fair
Pluralization	.208	Slight agreement
Solidarity	.733	Substantial

*Note: Interpretation of Cohen's Kappa Measure of Inter-rater Reliability (Vierra and Garrett 2005, 362):

< 0 – Less than chance agreement	.41-.60 – Moderate
.01-.20 – Slight agreement	.61 -.80 – Substantial
.21-.40 – Fair	.81-.99 – Almost perfect agreement

Cross-country Interpretation of Scores and Analysis

Figures 1, 2, and 3 show the distance of the subprinciples from the ideal (a rating of 10). However, if one wishes to explain the location of the scores, it has to be linked with other variables. This makes standardization of scores an important concern. The 2011 Philippine country report earlier raised questions about expert's/rater's bias since it was observed that in some variables, the ratings given by those who are left leaning and right leaning are found in opposite poles.

Country teams also vary in terms interpretation of scores. For instance, in the Philippines, on a scale of 0 to 10, it interprets the scores in relation to the perfect score of 10. The focus is on the question, "how far are we from being de-monopolized?" On the other hand, Indonesia looks at the score vis-à-vis the middle score of 5. One approach that can be considered is to define a typology of democracies (or level of de-monopolization of

societies) based on ADI values, similar to what the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) devised. The EIU democracy typology consists of the following:

1. Full democracies – scores of 8 to 10
2. Flawed democracies – score of 6 to 7.9
3. Hybrid regimes – scores of 4 to 5.9
4. Authoritarian regimes – scores below 4 (EIU 2012, 27-28).

Figure 1: South Korean Democratization Subprinciple Scores, 2012

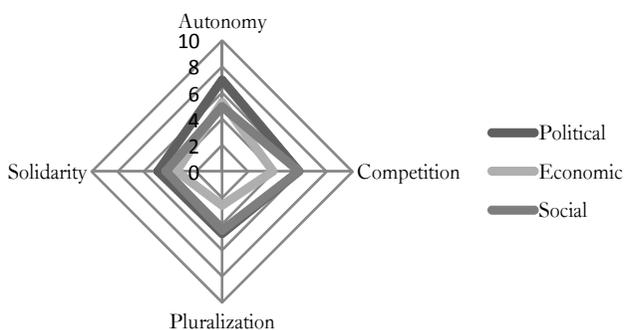


Figure 2: Philippine Democratization Subprinciple Scores, 2012

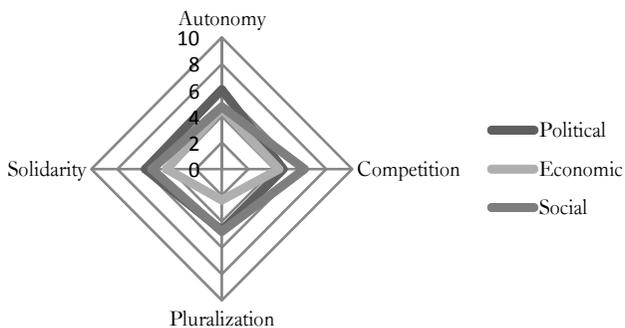
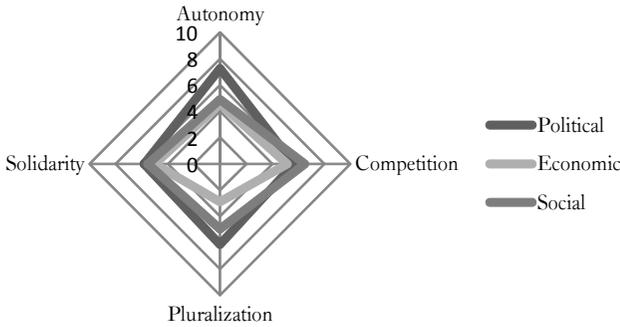


Figure 4: Indonesian Democratization Subprinciple Scores, 2012



Researchers' Verification of Expert Ratings

The CADI researchers consider that experts are part of the societal debate. Experts may not be neutral, but they play an important role in how problems are defined. They have descriptive and explanatory knowledge of democratization processes in their respective fields.

In CADI surveys in the Philippines, most experts have been providing explanatory commentaries to substantiate the numerical scores that they gave. The researchers have also been verifying the experts' ratings using available official and other credible data during data analysis. However, the current methodology retains experts' ratings even if ratings are inconsistent with verified data. The unverified ratings are also included in the calculation of the index. Related to this issue of data verification are issues of how experts are selected and how the explanatory commentaries should be processed, analyzed, and interpreted.

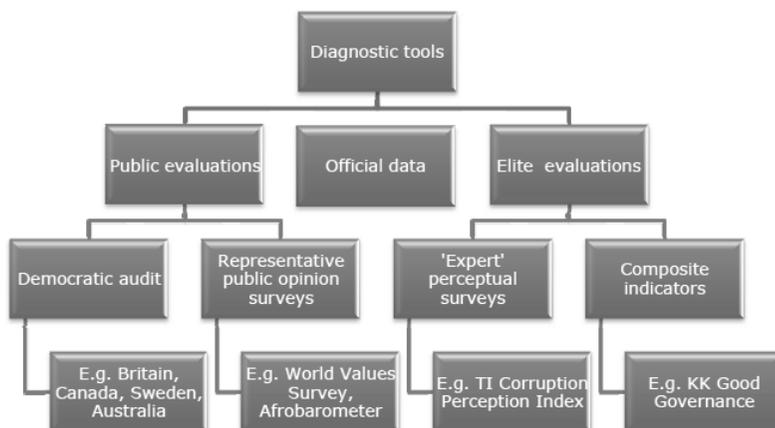
Delphi Technique of Validating Ratings

The Philippine CADI team planned to employ the Delphi technique of validating ratings given by experts. The Delphi technique is a qualitative method for obtaining consensus among a group of experts (Charlton, 2007).³ The researchers sought to identify where opinions of experts converge despite differences in political leaning. Unfortunately, there were reservations on the part of some of the experts to defend the ratings that they gave in a round table discussion set-up. Other modes of doing the Delphi technique will be explored in future survey rounds.

Matching Results of Expert Surveys with Public Opinion Surveys

Another way to validate the data is to match it with a public survey data. There is a whole range of data sets that can be used to assess democracy. These include regular world surveys conducted in selected countries. Figure 5 is the schematic diagram used by Norris (2011) to summarize the methods and measurements used in assessing democracy.

Figure 5: Methods and Measurements used in Assessing Democracy



Source: Norris 2011, 182

Taking off from Norris, public and elite evaluations of democracies may be used to identify patterns and estimate levels of democracy. These may also be complemented by official statistics. There are also indices that use a combination of data sources. For instance, the Economist Intelligence Unit's Index of Democracy uses public opinion surveys, mainly the World Values Survey (WVS) in addition to experts' assessments. The EIU gathers data on political participation and political culture as well as some data on civil liberties and functioning of government from the WVS. They also make use of the Eurobarometer surveys, Gallup polls, Asian Barometer, Latin American Barometer, Afrobarometer, and other national surveys. In the case of countries for which survey results are missing, survey results for similar countries and expert assessment are used to fill in gaps.

This approach has its advantages, but it raises questions of legitimacy, especially when the results do not coincide. Where perceptions differ,

which source provides the most legitimate, useful, valid, and reliable benchmarks for both scholars and practitioners? While elite evaluations are considered to be more factual, they can also be flawed like public evaluations. Norris (2011) mentions that when the WVS Wave 5 (2005–2007) data about cognitive judgments on the meaning of democracy were analyzed, substantial agreement about principles and procedures underlying democracy were found. Data provided evidence to show that longer historical experience of democratic governance significantly strengthens an enlightened knowledge of democratic procedures, evaluations of democratic performance, and democratic values in each society. Further, she asserted, “[the] most prudent strategy is to compare the results of alternative indicators at both mass and elite levels, including those available from cross-national public opinion surveys, to see if the findings remain robust and consistent irrespective of the specific measures” (Norris 2009).

Selection and Categorization of Experts

Another methodological issue that needs to be addressed is the criteria for selecting the experts, as well as the related matter of the categorization of experts. Is it necessary to categorize experts when all of them are experts? Is it necessary to have a random sample when all of them are experts? In the Philippines, there was an attempt to also represent the country’s three big island groups (Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao) since political, economic, and social context in those areas are different. In the past assessment of the CADI, the issue of standardization was raised. While there was a suggestion that CADI must have common criteria for selecting and categorizing experts who will participate in the study, the member countries decided to proceed with their current categorization. This now raises the question: would the index be different if CADI teams use conservative, moderate, progressive/pro-government, moderate or anti-government/left or right as respondent categories?

Increasing the Sample Size

As previously discussed, since the 2012 CADI survey, the target sample size was doubled (from twenty-seven to fifty-four) to address the earlier concerns about robustness of estimates. For instance, the Varieties of Democracy Index have 1,300 country experts for six varieties of democracy or roughly a sample size of 216. Given this, should CADI ADI teams further increase the sample size so that each sector would have thirty

respondents? The larger target sample size would also be beneficial if CADI ADI teams have three categories of political orientation of experts; there would be ten conservatives, ten moderates, and ten progressives or thirty experts for each of the sub-fields, or a total of ninety experts.

Weighting of Indicators

The issue of index construction concerns weighting of indicators and the level and rules of aggregation. The current method derives the composite index by taking the mean scores for each subprinciple from fifty-seven questionnaire items. The index of the two main components (liberalization and equalization) are also the average of the subprinciples. What weights to assign to indicators should be addressed by the theoretical assumptions underlying the ADI. The robustness of the index depends largely on the quality of conceptualization, as also pointed out by Miranda (2011). He argued that the legitimacy of measuring instruments and the usefulness of their measurements critically depend on the quality of conceptualization of democracy, its attributes and its corresponding components and operational variables (Adcock and Collier 2001; Bailey 1973; Bogaards 2010 and 2007; Bohlen 1990; Collier and Adcock 1999; Knutsen 2010; Munck 2009; Munck and Verkuilen 2002; Wetzel 2002; Van Hanen 2000, cited in Miranda et al. 2011).

Applicability of Questions in Different Countries

CADI's research not only shows that each country is at different stages of democratization. The Consortium also learned that many of the questions that appear in ADI survey questionnaires are, for example, more applicable to South Korea than India. Some questions need to be reframed and restated to capture the specificities of countries. For instance, there are differences in the use of the term NGO, civil society, and people's movement. Questions about corruption mostly refer to control of the private sector/business—they do not include land grabbing and water grabbing, which are pressing issues in rural and, to a certain extent, urban poor areas.

Another aspect that is important that ADI questionnaires do not consider now are questions about online media and social networking, which are new spaces for civil society. For example, in Thailand, even the "likes" in Facebook are now being monitored.

Frequency of Survey Data Collection

In terms of data collection, the challenge, particularly in the case of the Philippines, is keeping the interest of experts in participating in the survey. In the recent 2013 survey, some of the experts were no longer keen on answering the questionnaire. The respondents think that there has been no significant change within a one-year span. Thus, the researchers suggest that the survey be conducted every three years, coinciding with the holding of the national elections. Then, the pool of experts could be expanded and more detailed responses from them could be generated.

Way Forward: Dissemination of ADI

Increased dissemination activities would popularize the ADI, increasing the possibility of it being used not only in the academe but also by governments. Aside from the publications in *Asian Democracy Review*, the outputs of CADI research can be disseminated in different (international) forums, conferences, and lectures in order to generate more ideas in enhancing the ADI. Such dissemination will also improve CADI's institutional linkages.

More in-depth analyses of the data, cross-country comparisons and correlational studies that could link ADI to human rights, human security, and human development would improve ADI. It is hoped that these will be done not only by CADI's members, but also by non-member researchers or scholars as well.

Notes

1. The Philippine team classified respondents into (extreme) left-left leaning (herein simply called left or left leaning) and (extreme) right-right leaning (herein simply called right or right leaning). The former are "those who are known (by their reputations, publications, etc.) to exhibit critical or dissenting opinions against the Philippine government and its policies, and are at the same time avowedly supportive of "socialist" socioeconomic policies," while the latter are "those who have worked for the Philippine government, either in the bureaucracy or as consultants, and/or subscribe to the government's "neoliberal" socioeconomic policies" (Reyes, Berja, and Socrates 2012, 138).
2. Huck (2012) describes Cohen's Kappa as a statistical measure of inter-rater reliability, which ranges generally from 0 to 1.0 (although negative numbers are possible) where large numbers mean better reliability, values near or less than zero suggest that agreement is attributable to chance alone.
3. Specifically, the team was exploring "focus Delphi, seeking views of disparate groups likely to be affected by some policy; and normative Delphi, gathering experts' opinions on defined issues to achieve consensus (e.g., to set goals and objectives)" (Charlton 2007). According to Charlton, "the essential element in the Delphi process is

anonymity of participants when giving their [opinion, which] alleviates problems that could be caused by domination of the group by only a few participants (2007).

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