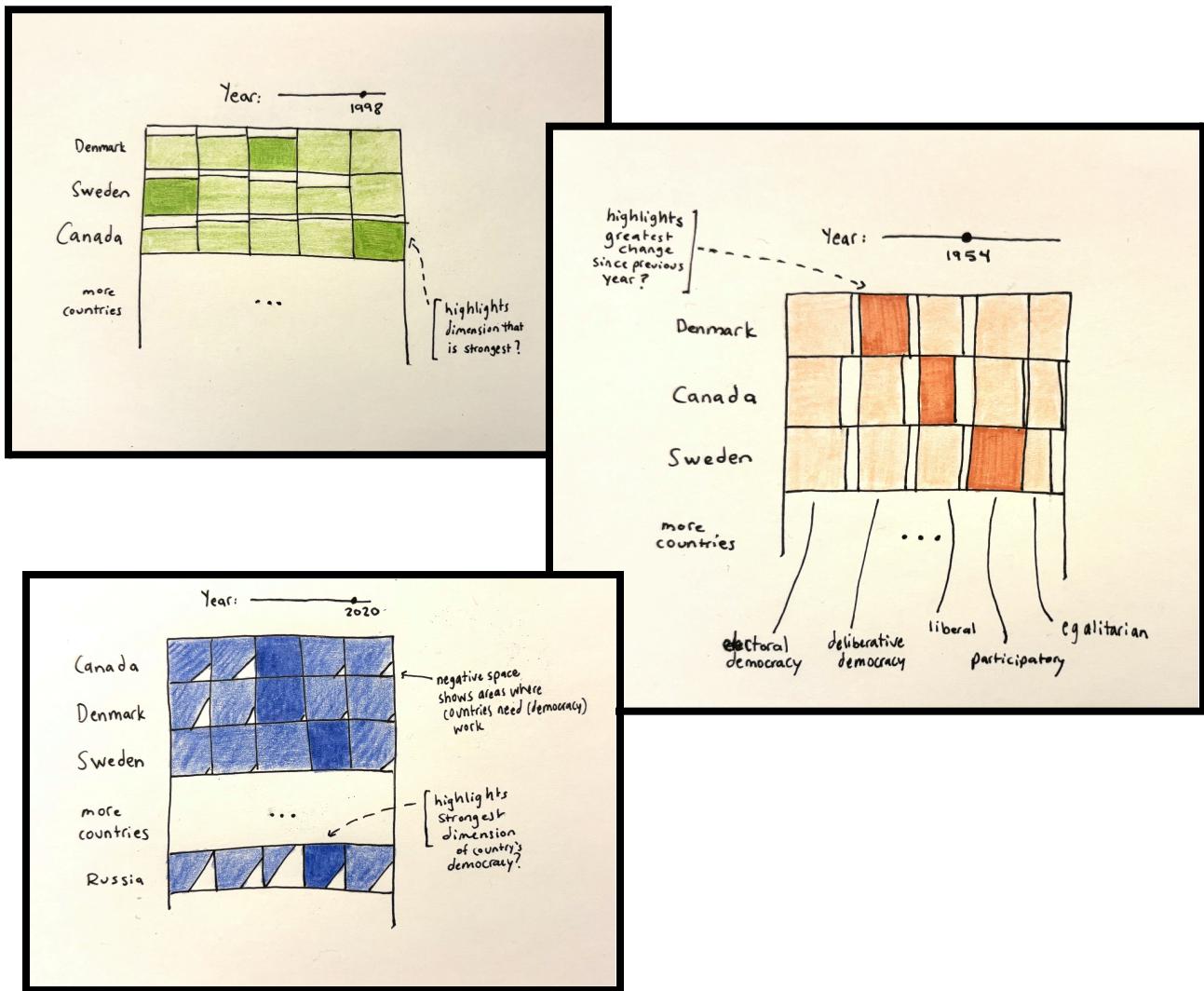


Novel Visualization

High-Fidelity Visualization



Low-Fidelity Sketches of Alternative Approaches



Reflection

My aim with this representation was to explore the use of negative space (i.e. whitespace rather than ink) to show patterns. I also wanted the visualization's design to take advantage of the fact that the main five attributes encoded are all indices on a 0-1 scale.

The intended audience is someone who is already comfortable with democracy data from encountering the other representations, so able to appreciate a more conceptual, pattern-driven approach. I approached the visualization as an artistic exercise—imagining what it would look like as a geometric, data-driven artwork I'd be happy to create in quilt form, or to hang on my wall.

The visualization encodes the five high-level democracy indices (Electoral, Liberal, Participatory, Deliberative, and Egalitarian) within each row. For each country–year (row), the chart illustrates the value of each index. Viewers can compare their relative strengths and see how patterns change across countries and using a slider, over time.

In my low fidelity sketches, I explored different kinds of whitespace: horizontal, vertical, and even more non-traditionally, triangular gaps. I also explored the use of saturation to emphasize a particular variable amongst the five attributes plotted. One possibility I imagined here was using saturation to highlight the strongest dimension of a particular country, so we can see e.g. electoral democracy is generally the strongest across the five attributes, or e.g. as time goes on, more countries are strongest in electoral democracy. Another possibility would be to use saturation to highlight the dimension that changed the most since the previous year, or to highlight all dimensions that decreased more than a particular threshold in a particular year. In this way, scrubbing through years could illustrate episodes of sudden change.

One design rule I broke was avoiding overplotting: the idea was that the mass of rectangles should be read holistically, with attention drawn to the gaps rather than the individual pieces. I also eschewed the traditional approach of using distinct hues for emphasis. Instead, the representation relies solely on changes in saturation to highlight areas of interest. I deliberately kept a single hue because it produces a more cohesive, visually harmonious piece—closer to a artwork than a multi-colour analytical chart.