

A hand-drawn diagram featuring several interlocking gears in shades of blue and purple. The gears are arranged in a circular pattern. A central gear has the number '24107' on it. A black line starts from the top, loops around the word 'how', and then points down to the word 'works'. Another black line starts from the top, loops around the word 'works', and then points down to the word 'Democracy'.

how

Democracy

works

Political Representation and
Policy Congruence in Modern Societies

Edited by Martin Rosema, Bas Denters
and Kees Aarts

PALLAS PUBLICATIONS

How Democracy Works



how

Democracy

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**Political Representation and
Policy Congruence in Modern Societies**

Essays in Honour of Jacques Thomassen

Edited by Martin Rosema, Bas Denters
and Kees Aarts

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Cover design and layout: Maedium, Utrecht

ISBN 978 90 8555 036 5

e-ISBN 978 90 4851 336 9

NUR 754

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Pallas Publications – Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 2011

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Preface

There are many good reasons to present a book on the functioning of representative democracy at this precise moment. But the true reason for its creation is a special event of a personal nature: the formal retirement of Jacques Thomassen at the University of Twente. In his long and impressive academic career Jacques Thomassen has greatly contributed to the study of democracy. He has authored and edited several influential academic works, which already started with one of his first articles in 1976, entitled “Party identification as a cross-national concept,” which is still considered to be a classic in the literature on voting behavior. His publications since include many books in both Dutch and English, often published by the leading academic publishers in political science. His reputation as an editor of books is almost unrivalled in political science. But there is much more. Jacques Thomassen has played a vital role in the development of major national and international data collection projects about political institutions, such as the *Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies*, *Dutch Parliament Studies*, *Comparative Study of Electoral Systems* and the *European Election Studies*. The data that are still generated on the basis of these collaborative projects provide a most valuable source of information for the study of democracy – without it researchers would arguably not be able to adequately study the functioning of democracy – and thus form one of the most important developments in the last decades in political science.

This *Liber Amicorum* serves to honour Jacques Thomassen for his extremely valuable contribution to the study of democracy. In his career he has collaborated with dozens of academics from many countries. They have learned to know Jacques Thomassen as a most competent and erudite scholar and a good colleague; and many enjoy the privilege of being amongst the many friends that he has made over these years. This volume is a collection of essays by some of these colleagues and friends. In planning this volume, we had to be very restrictive, and as a result many colleagues who would have liked to contribute to this book could not be taken on board. The final set of essays demonstrate the appreciation of the authors for Jacques Thomassen by bringing together in this volume some of their very best and fresh work on the theme that has been at the heart of his research agenda: the functioning of representative democracy. Together, these contributions provide the most up-to-date assessment of how democracy works in the world of today. The contributions in this volume have been created in the spirit of Jacques Thomassen’s

work. We hope that, together, they testify to the importance of Jacques' work as well as more generally to the need for theory-based, large-scale, international and longitudinal research in political science.

The planning and production of this book have taken place in a remarkably short period of time. We would like to extend our warmest appreciation to the persons who have made this possible and we would like to mention some explicitly. First of all, the authors who have contributed to this book have all adhered to the extremely strict deadlines that we imposed. We are very grateful for their cooperation. We also extend our thanks to Erik van Aert and his colleagues at Amsterdam University Press for the smooth cooperation in bringing these essays to the presses. We are also grateful to Marcia Clifford and Marloes Nannings for their valuable assistance in preparing the tables and bibliography. Last but not least, Janine van der Woude, our (and Jacques') wonderful secretary at the Department of Political Science and Research Methods, succeeded in transforming each of the contributions into a consistent format and a proper book chapter under the pressure of time and secrecy.

Martin Rosema, Bas Denters and Kees Aarts
Enschede, August 2010

1 How Democracy Works

An Introduction

Martin Rosema, Kees Aarts and Bas Denters

1.1 Introduction

ONE OF THE STORIES THAT JACQUES THOMASSEN IS KNOWN TO HAVE related more than once, and which is therefore probably of some significance, is about how his 1976 dissertation *Kiezers en gekozenen in een representatieve democratie* was received. The dissertation reported on the first true representation study conducted in the Netherlands, consisting of surveys among the members of parliament as well as among a sample from the Dutch electorate. It was part of a larger, international research effort that involved researchers from the United States, Germany, Sweden, France, Italy and the Netherlands. Many of these count among the top political scientists of the last decades.

The dissertation contained several remarkable results. Members of parliament appeared to have different policy views than their own voters. Notably, the representatives of left-wing parties were quite out of touch with their voters on law-and-order types of issues. The Dutch press showed a great interest in these results, and the dissertation promised to attract a great deal of coverage. Then a government-appointed committee published its long-expected report on the alleged corruption and bribing affair involving airplane construction firms and Prince Bernard, the Dutch prince consort. Within hours, the media attention shifted completely to the report, and attention for Thomassen's dissertation dwindled.

The story shows how the results of meticulous, time-consuming empirical research do not easily make the headlines – the news of the day is more attractive for the mass media. At the same time, serious research is indispensable for understanding and appraising the developments in everyday politics. It provides the frames for understanding the news, and offers possibilities for comparing the events of here and today with those in other countries or in the past. Without an idea about the divergence of mass and elite opinions, how could one have understood

the outburst of popular support for Prince Bernard at the annual ceremony of the opening of the parliamentary year in 1976?

Mass–elite relationships, in particular the democratic forms of these, and public opinion have been at the focus of Thomassen’s research since his earliest publications. The potential conflict between fundamental values of democracy is one of his constant concerns. Democracy can be regarded as an effort to reconcile the potentially conflicting values of liberty and equality. To make democracy work, we first need a clear view of the possible meanings of these values. What elements of liberty and equality constitute democracy, and how should democratic political systems function? Two equally important questions that follow are about how democratic systems work in reality, and which changes occur in that respect as a result of major societal developments like individualization, globalization and European unification. When the answers to all these questions are confronted, conclusions about the quality of democracy can be drawn: to what extent do political systems live up to the ideals?

This, in a nutshell, is the research program that has guided Jacques Thomassen throughout his academic career. During the past 40 years, it has not lost any of its relevance. In 2010, evaluating the functioning of democracy is even more relevant than ever, because of important changes in society that provide challenges to democracy. It seems therefore fitting to dedicate this book, which appears at the occasion of Jacques’ 65th anniversary, to the functioning of modern democracies in the light of the main principles of representative democracy. The analyses to follow, which are based on recent data from a range of authoritative international research projects, lead to fresh insights about how democracy works in the complex world of today.

The underlying rationale for presenting the present volume can also partly be found in fundamental changes in society in the last decades, as well as their political systems, which have an impact on how democracy can and will function. These changes include the weakening of traditional cleavages like religion and social class, the increased relevance of multi-level governance, and the personalization of politics. In addition, one can also think of the establishment of new democracies in Eastern Europe, the weakened ties between political parties and citizens, and the increasingly critical attitude of the public. Add to this the recent economic and financial crisis, and it is clear that there is sufficient ground for an in-depth analysis of how democracy works in this changed context.

These changes in society are the background of this volume, but it is important to note that thinking about the normative foundations of democracy has developed as well. For example, the notion of deliberation, which can be traced back to the direct democracy in ancient Greece, has been added to the list of elements that characterizes the ideal of democracy. Also the notion of (government) accountability has gained a more central position. But at the same time much has remained as it was. There are still opposing views on the extent to which citizens should play an active role in politics – ranging from the elitist view of limited citizen participa-

tion to the advocates of participatory democracy. Moreover, the new theoretical debates and democratic practices have not really altered the mainstream view of what constitutes the essence of modern democracy. Since the transformation of city-states to nation-states, the most essential feature of democracy has been that of political representation. The question is how such representation takes place in the complex world of multi-level governance. And the classic idea that the ultimate aim of democracy is to establish government policy that reflects the preferences of its citizens, has also remained fairly uncontested and drives research about democracy. Hence, the two basic principles that are still at the heart of democracy are political representation and policy congruence. These principles also guide most of the work in this volume, which thus provides an assessment of the functioning of modern democracies in the light of these classic concepts.

The essays not only constitute an intellectual tribute to Jacques Thomassen. They also bring together several of the main threads that characterize his work. In terms of his approach Jacques Thomassen's work is characterized by a number of elements, which thus also characterize this volume. The first guiding principle is a firm connection between normative democratic theory and rigorous empirical research. Either normative theory is used as the framework for deriving principles to evaluate democratic practices with the help of systematic empirical research, or the presentation of empirical analyses is followed by a discussion of the implications of the major research findings for the democratic legitimacy of the system. Second, in many instances Jacques Thomassen's work builds on the results of international comparative studies. This is not surprising if we consider the prominent position that he has occupied in many national as well as international projects in the field. The contributions presented in this volume make extensive use of these national and international research projects. The third element is a focus on multiple levels of government. Although initially Jacques Thomassen's work was predominantly oriented towards issues of representation and participation at the national level, he has since then made major contributions to the study of participation and representation at the local level and at the level of the European Union. In this volume, too, all levels of government are paid attention to and some chapters are fully devoted to the functioning of democracy in the European Union.

1.2 The basic principles: political representation and policy congruence

The contributions to this volume are organized in four parts. The first part focuses on two basic principles of democracy in modern societies, which have also been central in the work of Jacques Thomassen: political representation and policy congruence (e.g. Thomassen 1976, 1991, 2005; Thomassen, Van Schendelen and Zielonka-Goei 1992; Thomassen and Schmitt 1997; Miller et al. 1999). Although there are many different visions of democracy (see e.g. Held 2006), there appears to be a consider-

able amount of agreement on these key elements. In large-scale societies a system of political representation is unavoidable and forms the heart of the democratic system. Indeed, even the minimalist definitions of democracy, such as the famous one by Schumpeter, put the idea of elected representatives central. This is not to say that there is not much more. Indeed, Dahl (1989), for example, described a famous set of characteristics that are also crucial for a well functioning democratic system, such as freedom of speech and freedom of association. But the selection of political representatives by citizens in free and fair elections, in combination with universal suffrage, arguably remains the most essential feature of modern democracy. Furthermore, many agree on the purpose of political representation through elections and define it in terms of responsiveness or policy congruence (see e.g. Powell 2000). This means that policy preferences of citizens are reflected in policies adopted by the government. The extent to which policy congruence between citizens and their representatives exists, or with actual government policy, thus becomes an important indicator of democratic quality (Diamond and Morlino 2005).

The four contributions in Part I all deal with the principles of political representation and policy congruence and expand our understanding of both. In Chapter 2, Russell Dalton, David Farrell and Ian McAllister sketch the development of the study of political representation and argue that most studies have approached political representation as a discrete choice process. Policy preferences or ideological positions of citizens are typically compared with those of their representatives at a particular point in time. Dalton et al. propose an alternative approach that considers political representation more like a steering process in which government policy is adjusted from one election to the next. They test their ideas on the basis of data on elections in 35 nations from the *Comparative Study of Electoral Systems*. More specifically, they examine if post-election policy congruence between citizens and government in terms of left-right is greater than pre-election policy congruence, as their model suggests. The findings support their hypothesis and this leads Dalton et al. to conclude that the overall health of representative democracy is good.

In Chapter 3, Rudy Andeweg also reaches a positive conclusion about the functioning of political representation while focusing on the Netherlands. Andeweg discusses past research on policy congruence and observes that the common approach has been to examine if policy preferences of individual voters match policy preferences of the parties they voted for. Andeweg argues that what matters more for democracy, is whether policy preferences of parliament as a whole reflect those of the electorate as a whole and hence policy congruence should be studied at the aggregate level. On the basis of novel measures he analyzes policy congruence between parliament and the electorate using the elite and mass surveys of the *Dutch Parliament Studies* and *Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies*. The quality of representation appears to have increased substantially and gradually increased from 55 to 60 per cent in the 1970s to 89 per cent in 2006. This feeds optimistic feelings about the health of democracy, but Andeweg also gives a warning sign: citizens' trust in

democracy has not increased accordingly and hence whether policy congruence is the best indicator for the health of a democracy is debatable.

Sören Holmberg returns to the theme of political representation in Chapter 4 and analyzes the dynamics of mass and elite public opinion. The key question he addresses is whether opinion formation is dominated by political elites (top-down) or by citizens (bottom-up). He utilizes mass and elite survey data from Sweden on a wide range of policy issues across eight different elections since the late 1960s. Holmberg concludes that there is a considerable amount of overlap between shifts in opinion at the mass and elite level, and that most frequently elected representatives lead their voters and not the other way around. Democratic leadership turns out to be more than following the opinion of the electorate; it also involves shaping public opinion.

The final contribution in Part I is by Peter Mair, who in Chapter 5 asks the question if in modern democracies policy congruence is still central. It often seems that voters have become more concerned about the process of governing rather than the stands of political parties on the issues. Put briefly, the function of (government) accountability seems to have become more central than the function of representation (by parties). Building on these ideas, Mair develops three hypotheses about the nature of vote shifts in parliamentary elections. He tests these on the basis of aggregate level data on election outcomes in fourteen West European countries across the last five decades of the twentieth century. Mair observes that the divide between government and opposition has become more influential. However, in the same period volatility as such has also increased and hence the relative importance of incumbency has not changed. So government accountability has not become the dominant feature of electoral politics. This means that political representation remains as important as it has been.

1.3 Citizens' judgements of democratic governance and political parties

In Part II of this book we shift our attention to citizens' support for democracy, a theme that has also featured prominently in the work of Jacques Thomassen (e.g. Thomassen 1991, 2007; Aarts and Thomassen 2008; Thomassen and Van der Kolk 2009). In Chapter 6, Christian Welzel and Hans-Dieter Klingemann emphasize the importance of support for democratic values. Welzel and Klingemann argue that the stability of democratic regimes depends on the extent to which they satisfy their citizens' demand for democracy. Similarly, authoritarian regimes will be more stable if citizens' demand for democracy is weak. The authors refer to this match between demand and supply of democracy by the notion of democratic congruence. They further argue that what matters is how democracy is effectively respected at the supply side and intrinsically valued at the demand side, which is captured by the notion of substantiveness. Data from the *World Values Surveys* about dozens

of countries across the globe enable Welzel and Klingemann to test their ideas. They find that institutionalized democracy, as indicated by Freedom House ratings, indeed correlates with democratic preferences at the mass level. They proceed with analyzing the underlying mechanisms and conclude that democratic congruence emerges not because citizens internalize the regime choice of elites, but because elites satisfy mass demands.

In Chapter 7, Pippa Norris seeks to deepen our understanding of citizen satisfaction with democracy by focusing on the role of regime performance. She distinguishes between process accounts and policy accounts and discusses the assumptions of both in the literature. The first emphasize the importance of the intrinsic quality of democratic governance, as reflected in the protection of civil liberties and political rights, whereas the second emphasize the relevance of evaluations of governments' policy output, as reflected by economic performance but also factors such as security or social policy. Norris uses the *World Values Survey* and finds support for both accounts. She specifies which indicators are powerful predictors of satisfaction with democracy and which indicators do not have an effect, thus shedding new light on (sometimes contradictory) findings from previous studies.

Bas Denters, Oscar Gabriel and Lawrence Rose use a similar distinction between dimensions of judgement in Chapter 8, where they shift the focus to the local level of government. They address the relative importance of procedural and functional considerations for citizens' views on good local governance and analyze individual level differences in these views. The analysis, which utilizes data from national surveys in the Netherlands and Norway, shows that both countries display similar patterns. Citizens consider most of the items that tap either dimension or judgement important, which supports Norris' findings that citizens care about the input as well as the output side of democratic governance. Denters et al. further show that citizens display stronger support for items that link up with the notions of representative democracy, participatory democracy, and effective and efficient government, than for items reflecting the idea of limited government. They also show that these views do not differ strongly across different social and political groups and hence conclude that there is a fair amount of consensus among citizens about what constitutes good local governance.

The final contribution of Part II shifts the focus from the democratic system as a whole to its main actors: political parties. In Chapter 9, Kees Aarts and Bernt Aardal revisit the debate in electoral research about the proximity model and directional model of issue voting and hence analyze whether parties benefit more from moderate and centrist ideological positions or from positions that are as clear and unambiguous as possible. Aarts and Aardal utilize data from 37 democracies across the world from the *Comparative Study of Electoral Systems*. They analyze the distributions of party evaluations in relation to left-right ideology in the light of expectations derived from both models. One conclusion is that the proximity model works relatively well for centrist parties and the directional model works best for parties with a more pronounced ideological position. On the whole, however, the support

is weakest for the model that is dominant in textbooks, the proximity model, and much stronger for the directional model. This means that, in general, political parties benefit more from polarization than from moderation.

1.4 Political representation in the European Union

The contributions described so far focus on the national level of government, with the exception of the chapter on good local governance. One of the most important developments for democracy, however, has been the increased relevance of transnational political systems. The European Union is presumably the most relevant example and its democratic system has understandably received much attention in the literature on democracy. Jacques Thomassen has made important contributions to this literature (e.g. Schmitt and Thomassen 1999; Thomassen and Schmitt 1999; Steunenberg and Thomassen 2002; Thomassen 2009; Mair and Thomassen 2010). The two chapters of Part III focus on political representation and policy congruence in the European Union, treating electoral turnout and party choice.

In Chapter 11, Cees van der Eijk, Hermann Schmitt and Eliyahu Sapir start with the observation that in European Parliament elections turnout has always been lower than in national elections and often in large margins. They ask the question if consequently particular groups are better represented than others, which could have important implications for policy making. Van der Eijk et al. use voter survey data from the *European Election Study 2009* and analyze whether particular political parties would have received more or less seats if turnout had been higher. Their main conclusion, which matches findings on previous elections, is that the low level of turnout in the 2009 European Parliament election had virtually no impact on the distribution of seats: only one seat would have changed if turnout had been 'normal.' So the quality of political representation in the European Union works much better than one might think on the basis of the low levels of electoral participation.

Less positive conclusions are reached in Chapter 12, where Rosema and De Vries assess the quality of political representation in the European Union. They analyze whether in both available electoral channels – national and European elections – voters select parties that best represent their policy preferences. Rosema and De Vries use the survey data from 15 countries of the *European Election Study 2009*. As expected, voters somewhat more often 'voted correctly' in terms of left-right than in terms of European integration. Rosema and De Vries observed fairly strong biases at the aggregate level for the second dimension of conflict: voters were relatively likely to choose parties less Euroskeptic than themselves. This was caused by the fact that political parties showed limited variation in their stances on this topic. Moreover, opposition to European integration was mostly voiced by small parties at the extreme of either side of the left-right continuum and therefore were not viable options for most voters. This means that the quality of political representa-

tion in the European Union could benefit from future changes in the supply side of electoral politics.

1.5 The impact of the economic context

In the fourth and final part of this book the impact of the economic context is focused on. This theme has perhaps not been as central in the work of Jacques Thomassen as some of the other themes discussed above, but it has received attention in much of the literature relevant to political representation, especially studies of voting (see e.g. Thomassen 2005). Moreover, in the light of the findings on the relationship between regime performance and support for democracy, the question arises how the recent financial and economic crisis has affected support for democracy. In Chapter 12, Jan van Deth, who was Jacques Thomassen's first Ph.D. student, takes up this question. He uses survey data from the *European Social Survey* to study the development of citizens' political orientations across 21 countries in this turbulent time period. Van Deth shows that by the end of 2008, when the recession had strongly influenced the opinion climate, citizens' life satisfaction and political confidence had not really suffered from it. An in-depth analysis of the situation in Germany in the final months of 2008 confirms this conclusion: the increased economic threat was not matched by similar shifts in political trust or life satisfaction. What should be noted though, is that cross-national variation existed. One striking finding is that in countries where the negative economic developments were relatively small, happiness in fact increased. Yet the most relevant conclusion presumably concerns the robustness of democratic support. If democratic attitudes easily survive the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, this is a good sign for democracy.

For most citizens and politicians, thinking about the economy during the last couple of years presumably means thinking about bad economic times. However, in other times or at other places the mirror image may apply and the economy is prosperous. In Chapter 13, the final contribution to this volume, Ola Listhaug and Hanna Marthe Narud examine the effects of economic prosperity by focusing on Norway. They argue that whereas this country once was a typical example of cleavage-based politics, with the center-periphery cleavage being of primary importance, the cleavage structure has lost much of its impact. This has made room for the impact of the economic situation on election outcomes, with the Norwegian oil wealth as the most relevant factor. Listhaug and Narud analyze public opinion data and observe interesting differences between three elections in the first decade of the 21st century. Despite the economic growth, in 2001 and 2005 the incumbent parties lost substantially. This appears to result from the fact that government policy did not meet the expectations that citizens had. In 2009, on the other hand, when the economic crisis had emerged, the government could use the oil wealth for spending and citizens were satisfied with how the government dealt with the situation. This shows that

citizens do not blindly hold governments accountable for the economic situation, but respond to how governments deal with it in good times as well as bad.

1.6 Conclusion

The twelve contributions to this book are connected to each other in several ways and we have summarized each in some detail in order to demonstrate their inter-relatedness. Taken together, the broader picture that emerges from these contributions is that of representative democracy that, on the whole, functions rather well. The dynamics between citizens and their representatives and the government indicate that political elites are responsive to citizens, and citizens are responsive to political elites. These dynamics are oftentimes complex – and hence it may not always be clear how (or even *if*) democracy functions – but a close look and careful analysis on the basis of appropriate data reveal that much of the mechanisms that make up the political system meets up to the ideals. Policy preferences of citizens are reflected well in preferences of their representatives in parliament and in government policy, at least when it comes to the major dimensions of political conflict such as left-right ideology. Furthermore, across the world political regimes often supply the democratic governance that citizens demand. This is not to say that exceptions do not exist. For example, there are countries where the type of rule contrasts sharply with the desire of its population. And in the European Union citizens do not seem able to express their policy preferences with respect to the European integration project, and hence policy congruence on this dimension of political conflict may not be optimal. Nevertheless, the optimistic conclusions drawn in the several chapters clearly outnumber the expressions of worry. This seems to contrast with the tendency that one can often observe in public debate, in which the presumed crisis of legitimacy seems to be a permanent feature – a central topic in the formal farewell lecture by Jacques Thomassen on the occasion of his retirement.

The individual chapters link not only to each other, but also to the work of Jacques Thomassen. The themes that are addressed have been central in his work and the chapters have also been created in the spirit of Jacques Thomassen's approach. We hope that readers will agree that individually as well as collectively the chapters contribute to our understanding of the functioning of the democratic system in modern societies. There seems no better way to pay tribute to the work of Jacques Thomassen than by making a modest contribution to something that he himself has contributed to so enormously: the insight into how democracy works.

Part I

The Basic

**Principles: Political
Representation and
Policy Congruence**

2 The Dynamics of Political Representation

*Russell J. Dalton, David M. Farrell
and Ian McAllister*

2.1 Introduction

THE DEVELOPMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT CREATED THE potential for modern mass democracy. Instead of directly participating in political decision making as in the Greek polis or the Swiss canton, the public selects legislators to represent them in government deliberations. Citizen control over government thus occurs through periodic, competitive elections to select these elites. Elections should ensure that government officials are responsive and accountable to the public. By accepting this electoral process, the public gives its consent to be governed by the elites selected. The democratic process thus depends on an effective and responsive relationship between the representative and the represented.

The linkage between the public and the political decision makers is one of the essential topics for the study of democratic political systems (e.g., Miller and Stokes 1963; Miller et al. 1999; Powell 2000; Shapiro et al. 2010). The topic of representation is entirely appropriate in a volume dedicated to Jacques Thomassen since this has been one of his career research interests (Thomassen 1976, 1994, 2009a; Thomassen and Schmitt 1997; Schmitt and Thomassen 1999). This general topic has also generated extensive research on the nature of elections and citizen voting behavior, which examines the choices available to voters and their decision-making process. A related literature examines the process of government formation, and the correspondence between electoral outcomes and the resulting government. Representation research involves the merger of these two literatures to examine the correspondence between citizens and their elected leaders, and the factors that maximize agreement.

This representation literature provides the foundation for the research presented here; however, we offer a different perspective on how elections produce democratic

representation and accountability. Most of the previous literature views elections and government formation as discrete decision-making processes. Voters make their electoral choices much as they might make a major consumer purchase in a car dealership or a department store, and a large part of the literature explicitly utilizes such an economic choice approach. Similarly, research on the formation of government coalitions typically adopts the same approach, except that political leaders and parties are making the choices on cabinet formation once the votes are counted. In terms of game theory, this approach is like modeling representation as discrete decision-making at one point in time, like buying an automobile or new big-screen television. This leads to a focus on the wisdom or accuracy of this one decision; on whether people are rationally making a choice that matches their preferences.

Of course, elections and democracy are an ongoing process. The outcome of one election is just one point in this process. The performance of parties in government inevitably affects decisions – by voters and elites – at the next election. Thus, when a new election approaches, voters enter the campaign with this evidence of prior governing as a starting point for their evaluations. Citizens also look forward to what they expect of the government after the election. This essay suggests that rather than a discrete, point-in-time choice, democracy is based on a process of ongoing, dynamic representation that occurs through a comparison of the past and the future across repeated elections. In other words, elections function not simply as a method of collective political choice at election time, *but as a dynamic method of steering the course of government*. We provide preliminary empirical evidence of this process in this article.

This article proceeds in four steps. First, we briefly review the previous literature on political representation that provides a foundation for our research, and offer a dynamic extension of this literature. Second, we introduce the empirical evidence we use from the *Comparative Study of Electoral Systems* (CSES). Third, we examine the empirical correspondence between citizens and their government based on the CSES data as a test of the dynamic model. Our fourth and final section discusses the implications of our findings.

2.2 Conceptualizing representation

What does it mean to be represented in a democracy? Prior research has evolved through three different answers to this question, from studying individual legislatures, to political parties, to the representativeness of governments. First, the early Michigan representation studies focused on the link between a constituency and its representative. This followed from the long-standing debate over trustee-delegate models of representation in a single member plurality (SMP) electoral system (Miller and Stokes 1963; Barnes 1977; Farah 1980; Converse and Pierce 1986; McAllister 1991). This research compared constituency opinions to those of the legisla-

tors elected from the district, and yielded mixed empirical results, especially in the party-dominated European cases.

In a second phase, research shifted its focus to the link between voters and their preferred parties rather than individual legislators. This research drew upon *responsible party government* theories of political representation (Rose 1974; Castles and Wildenmann 1986; Katz 1987, 1997; Blondel and Cotta 2001). This party government model seems more relevant for parliamentary systems with strong political parties (Thomassen 1976; Dalton 1985; Holmberg 1989; Esaiasson and Holmberg 1996; Matthews and Valen 1999). In these nations, parties rather than candidates are the prime political actors. The party government model thus compares agreement between voters and their selected party. The voter half of the dyad is composed of all party supporters in a nation (even if there are geographic electoral districts or regions); the elite half is composed of party officials as a collective. Candidates are selected by party elites rather than through open primaries, so they are first and foremost party representatives. The responsible party government model further presumes that members of a party's parliamentary delegation act in unison (Bowler et al. 1999). Parties vote as a bloc in parliament, although there may be internal debate before the party position is decided. Parties exercise control over the government and the policymaking process through party control of the national legislature. In sum, the choice of parties – rather than constituency-based representation – provides the electorate with indirect control over the actions of legislators and the affairs of government. Sartori (1968: 471) thus maintains that “citizens in Western democracies are represented *through* and *by* parties. This is inevitable” (italics in original).

As cross-national empirical research on representation expanded, this led to an even broader research focus on the extent to which governments represent the citizens who elected them. Powell (2000; Huber and Powell 1994) was one of the first to compare the Left-Right position of the median voters (from public opinion surveys) with the Left-Right position of the governing parties (from expert surveys) for a large set of established Western democracies. He found broad congruence, which varied with the clarity of government responsibility and other contextual factors. Since then several studies have used data from the *Comparative Manifestos Project* to compare citizen-government congruence (Klingemann et al. 1994; McDonald and Budge 2005). Much of this research has considered how electoral system rules might affect the degree of congruence between citizens and their government in Western democracies (Huber and Powell 1994; Wessels 1999; Powell 2000, 2006). And recent research has utilized the surveys from the *Comparative Study of Electoral Systems* (CSES) to expand the bases of comparison to include new democracies in Eastern Europe and East Asia (McAllister 2005; Blais and Bodet 2006; Golder and Stramski 2010; Powell 2010a).¹

In broad terms, studies of voter-party congruence and citizens-government congruence have found high levels of agreement – evidence that democracy works. For instance, two cross-national studies of voter-party congruence found strikingly

high correlations between the voter-party dyads on Left-Right positions (Dalton, Farrell and McAllister forthcoming; Schmitt and Thomassen 1997). The first study compared parties for the nations in the CSES project, and the second compared parties competing in the 1994 European Parliament election. Similarly, several representation studies show reasonably high levels of congruence between the public's Left-Right position and those of their government (Thomassen 1994; Wessels 2007). Other research has examined congruence between public policy preferences and government policy outputs, also concluding that public opinion matters (Page and Shapiro 1992; Wlezien and Soroka 2007; see also Erikson et al. 2002). Based on such evidence, Soroka and Wlezien (2003) come to a simple conclusion: 'Democracy works.'

These representation studies, however, have largely examined representation as a cross-sectional relationship between citizens and parties/government based on the results of a single election or at a single point in time. Do voters in an election get a government that is generally congruent with their overall policies preferences – which is the essence of democratic representation? Some of this literature presents a theoretical debate on the nature of representation. Does representation function through voters prospectively evaluating alternatives and providing governments with a mandate for future action, or do voters retrospectively judge the performance of past governments and hold them accountable at election time (e.g., Przeworski et al. 1999)? This is a reasonable starting point, but we believe that this approach creates a false dichotomy and misspecifies the actual nature of democratic representation.

Democracy is not a single event, but an ongoing process. Once elected, people judge parties not just by what they said in the campaign, but by how they actually govern and by the decisions they take that affect people's lives. Sometimes the gap between campaign rhetoric and the reality of governing can be large. George W. Bush's "read my lips, no new taxes" comes to mind. And there are numerous cases where governments followed an unexpected course after taking office, or where external events forced a major change in policy direction.² Parties and governments also campaign on a large range of issues, and the attention given to each may change overall public perceptions of government performance because the public's agreement on specific issues should naturally vary. Between elections new parties or political leaders emerge, so citizen decisions might shift with a new choice set. In fact, given the complexity of politics it is almost inevitable that some voters (and expert analysts) are surprised by some of the actions of government once it takes office. Consequently, the fit between citizens and the government is likely to change over a multi-year electoral cycle.

Thus, rather than a single consumer purchase or a single decision game, the representative aspect of elections is more like a repetitive decision process or repetitive game. The analogy of navigating a sailboat on the sea might be useful. The public (the captain) makes the best choice in directing the ship of state at the moment, and then reacts as conditions change. If scandal touches a party or a party leader-

ship appears ineffective, voters may select the best of the remaining options in one election. If a government moves too far in one direction, the next election provides a mechanism to shift direction back toward the public's collective preferences. If the public oversteers in one election, influenced by a charismatic personality or an intense issue controversy, they can correct course at the next election. And if conditions in the world change, elections can also steer a new course in reaction to these changes. In short, representative democracy is a repetitive decision-making process that provides a method for the citizenry to adjust the course of government, correcting discrepancies in direction that arise from outcomes in the previous election or the autonomous actions of the incumbent government.³

In fact, we might argue that this democracy's primary strength is its ability to repeatedly enter such feedback into the political process. Prospective voting on a party or government's election manifesto is only likely to generate meaningful representation if there is accountability at the next election. Retrospective evaluations of a government's performance have greater meaning if considered in terms of the government's initial policy goals. To dichotomize accountability and representation misses the key point that both can function meaningfully in a process where they both are considered on an ongoing basis across elections.

This dynamic perspective appears in time series research linking public opinion and government policy outputs (Page and Shapiro 1992; Wlezien and Soroka 2007), but it is less evident in representation studies that focus on voter-party congruence or public-government congruence at one point in time.⁴ This essay provides an initial empirical test of this dynamic hypothesis using data from the *Comparative Study of Electoral Systems* project. The comparison of citizen and government positions across nations and across time is a difficult empirical challenge because of the data requirements it imposes. We therefore present a simple first test of the dynamic hypothesis. We ask whether citizen agreement with a newly elected government is greater than with the pre-election government. *If representation is a dynamic process, then post-election congruence generally should be greater than pre-election congruence, as citizens steer the ship of state back in the direction they want it to follow.*

2.3 The empirical evidence

To study representation we need measures of both citizen positions and government positions. The initial wave of representation studies were single nation studies based on surveys of the public and elites. Other research, such as the *Comparative Manifestos Project* or party expert surveys, estimates party positions from their election platforms or the evaluations of academic experts – but lacks data on citizen positions in these same party systems. To compare citizen and government positions, previous research often merged data from different sources or estimated citizen opinions from the positions of political parties. Large, cross-national compari-

Previous analyses show that almost 90 percent of the public in the diverse set of CSES nations have a Left-Right position, and this increases further among those who voted in the previous election (McAllister and White 2007; Dalton 2009). This high level also transcends old and new democracies, and nations of quite different heritages. Furthermore, a wide range of research demonstrates that such Left-Right orientations are strongly related to citizen positions on the salient issues in the society (Inglehart 1990; Dalton 2006). For each nation we calculated the *median score for the entire public* who expressed a Left-Right position.

The second step in estimating citizen-government agreement requires that we identify the position of the government in Left-Right terms. To do this we first need to measure the position of political parties that might comprise the government. One common method is to measure the party positions using data from the *Comparative Manifestos Project* (Huber and Powell 1994; Klingemann et al. 1994; McDonald and Budge 2005). The manifesto data have the advantage that they are available for a long time span for most Western democracies, and have been expanded to include the new democracies of Eastern Europe. Another alternative is to utilize academic experts to measure party positions (Benoit and Laver 2006).

While both of the party manifesto and expert methods have their own advantages and disadvantages,⁷ we rely on another source – the citizens themselves. The CSES asked respondents to place the major political parties on the same Left-Right scale as they used to identify their own Left-Right position. The project guidelines called for the survey to ask for the locations of up to six significant parties. The number of parties actually evaluated across nations ranges from three parties in the United States to nine parties in France and the Netherlands. This has the advantage that evaluations are done for the same election as voters own self-location, and the data are collected simultaneously for citizens and parties. Furthermore, since the question is the extent to which citizens elect parties and governments that represent their political views, citizens' perceptions of the parties is an ideal standard for such comparisons.

A relatively large proportion of the public in most nations does provide a Left-Right position for the parties.⁸ To determine each party's position on the Left-Right scale we used the mean placement of the entire electorate as the broadest measure of the citizenry, even broader than just those who voted.⁹ In France, for example, the Communist Party receives an average score of 2.4 on the Left-Right scale in 2002, while the National Front is placed at 7.9. By comparison, Americans placed the Democrats at 4.2 on the Left-Right scale in 2004, and the Republicans are located at 6.6.

To what extent can we consider public perceptions of the parties an accurate assessment of the parties' political positions? Those who doubt the public's ability to express their own views in Left-Right terms would understandably question the public's ability to summarize accurately the Left-Right position of political parties. One answer is that these perceptions *are reality* to the voters if they use them in making their electoral choices. In addition, in other research we have compared

citizen placements to other measures of party positions, and the strength of agreement is strikingly high.¹⁰ Individual citizens may have imprecise impressions about politics, but when the views of the entire public are aggregated, the perceptions of ordinary people are virtually identical to the Left-Right scores given by political science professors judging the same parties.

We next used these party scores to define the overall political position of the government. Since most parliamentary governments include more than a single party in a coalition, this often requires combining scores for the parties in the governing coalition. We followed the standard methodology to define the government's Left-Right position as the average of the governing parties, weighted by each party's share of cabinet portfolios.¹¹ This gives greater weight to large parties that exercise more influence in setting government policy, and undoubtedly are more visible as citizens evaluate the government as a whole. And naturally, in a single party government the government's position is synonymous with this party. This method was used to estimate a Left-Right score for the pre-election government and the post-election government.

2.4 Citizens and governments

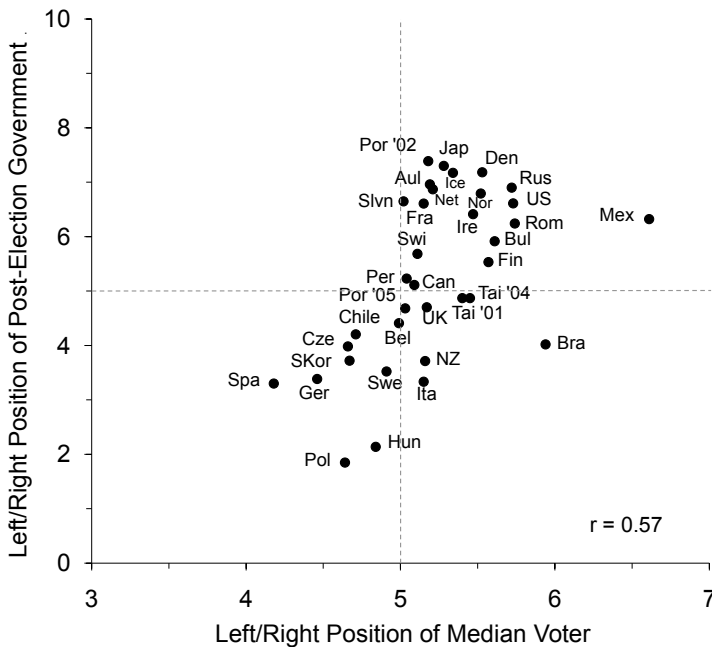
The standard methodology in examining the representativeness of government is to compare the position of the median citizen or voter, with the position of the government. The degree of congruence is an indicator of the extent to which elections generate a democratic government that reflects the public overall.

There are, of course, many caveats and conditions that precede such a comparison (Powell 2000, 2010a). The use of a single Left-Right dimension to summarize citizen and voter positions has both advantages and disadvantages in capturing political reality, especially when used to compare citizens and parties across a very diverse group of democracies (Thomassen 2009c). One might ask whether it is better to use the median citizen as a measure of public preferences, or perhaps the median of all those who voted. Or, one might offer a narrower view of representation and maintain that the government is there to represent those who elected it, not the public at large. Similarly, the weighted combination of parties in the governing cabinet might not fully reflect the power of each party in defining government actions. And in the case of multiparty governments, the public's ability to select the government is often supplanted by post-election negotiations among party elites (Powell 2000). In addition, our measures of public opinion and government positions from the CSES project are subject to measurement error, which may be significant with only 35 nations for our analyses. And so we approached these analyses with modest expectations.

Figure 2.1 presents the relationship between the Left-Right position of the median citizen and the Left-Right position of the post-election government. The important finding is the strong congruence between citizens and their elected gov-

ernments. Leftist publics generally select Leftist governments, and similarly on the Right. One way of summarizing this is to note that only four of the 36 nations lie in the two off-diagonal quadrants which indicate a government that is basically out of synch with its public.¹² As we should expect, the scores for the median citizen cluster near the center of the Left-Right scale, between 4.0 and 6.0, since there is a center-peaked distribution of Left-Right public attitudes in most nations. The Left-Right positions of governments are more varied, with a standard deviation that is three times larger than for the median citizen position. This means that governments accentuate differences between electorates. In other words, a half-point difference in the citizens' median position predicts a full-point change in the composition of the government. This corresponds to the well-known pattern because the government was selected by only half the public, and thus it is typically more polarized than the public as a whole. In overall terms, the congruence in Figure 2.1 provides strong evidence that democratic representation works even over this diverse set of democracies – as noted by the .57 correlation between these two variables.

Figure 2.1 Comparing citizens and post-election government on Left-Right scale



Note: The figure plots the median Left-Right position of the public and the average post-election government position (party scores weighted by shares of cabinet seats) for each nation. N = 35.

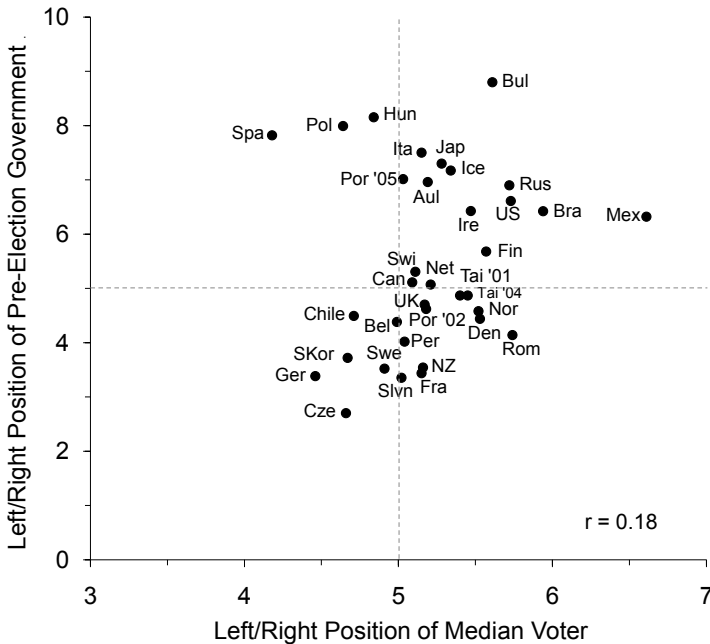
Country abbreviations are listed in the appendix of this chapter.

Source: Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES), Module II

Most analyses of political representation stop with the evidence just presented in Figure 2.1, or examine factors such as the structure of government or the electoral system that might systematically affect the level of congruence across nations. By contrast, our dynamic model of democratic representation leads us to ask another question: do elections produce post-election governments that are more congruent with public preferences than the pre-election government? As we have argued, and democratic theorists have maintained, elections should provide the power to remove governments that are not consistent with public preferences while retaining governments that share their political views. We might expect a broadly similar relationship across pre- and post-election governments because of the incumbency advantage and the persistence of government. But theory would predict the congruence should generally be greater for the post-election comparison. This is a basic assumption about accountability in democratic theory, but to our knowledge it has not been empirically tested.

Figure 2.2 compares the Left-Right position of the median citizen and the weighted Left-Right position of the pre-election government. The pattern is striking

Figure 2.2 Comparing citizens and pre-election government on Left-Right scale



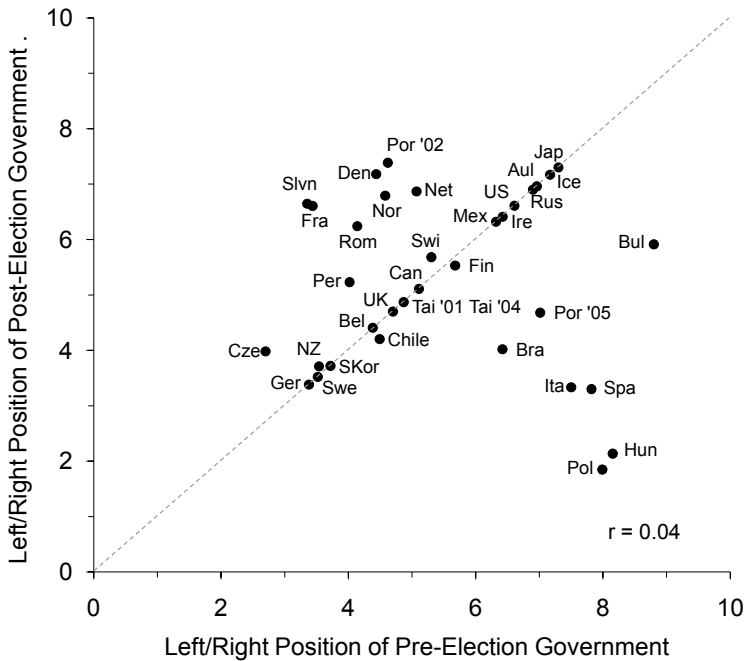
Note: The figure plots the median Left-Right position of the public and the average pre-election government position (party scores weighted by shares of cabinet seats) for each nation. N = 35.

Source: CSES, Module II

ingly different from the previous figure. For the exact same set of nations there is only a weak and statistically insignificant relationship between citizens and the pre-election government ($r = .18$). In this comparison, about a third of the nations are in the two off-diagonal quadrants. Spain and Poland, for example, had pre-election governments that the public perceived as much more conservative than the median citizen, while the Romanian government was seen as much more liberal than the median citizen. Moreover, this is not because the public has changed its position (it is the same in both figures), or the public changed their Left-Right placement of individual parties (the same party scores are used in both figures to calculate the government position). Another way to express this pattern is to compare the absolute difference in citizen-government Left-Right positions for the pre-election and post-election governments. This difference decreases from an average different of 1.30 for the pre-election government to 1.13 for the post-election government.

These results suggest that by the end of an election cycle, many governments have become distant from the current political values of the public that initially elected them. This is when electoral accountability can improve democratic repre-

Figure 2.3 Left-Right position of pre- and post-election government



Note: The figure plots the average Left-Right position of governments (party scores weighted by shares of cabinet seats) for each nation. N = 35.

Source: CSES, Module II

sentation. This disconnection between citizens and many pre-election governments arises from many sources, and we examine some of them below. The essential point, however, is that in nations where citizens see the pre-election government as out of synch with the public's broad political orientations, elections appear to provide a way to increase congruence.

These analyses indicate that elections can change the course of government, either shifting the tiller of state to the right or the left. And yet, we might presume that there is a generally persisting pattern of congruence as we have measured it: leftist publics will generally elect leftist governments, and rightist publics will elect rightist governments. And most of the time, governments (or the major coalition parties) are reelected. We can marshal more direct evidence on the ideological changeability of government as a result of elections by comparing the pre-election and post-election governments directly in the CSES nations.

Figure 2.3 plots the pre-election and post-election Left-Right positions of the governments. First, about half of the nations in this set (19) had elections that returned the incumbent government to office or produced small shifts (less than .50 on the Left-Right scale). That is, these nations lie directly on the 45-degree line indicating the same pre/post-election position, or very close to the line if a small shift in cabinet seats changed the average for the coalition.

The dynamic affect of elections enters when there is a significant change in government between elections. This is quite apparent in the nations that are located off the diagonal. For instance, the 2004 Spanish election produced a shift from the People's Party-led government of José María Aznar to a socialist government of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero. This caused a 4.5 point shift in the Left-Right composition of the Spanish government. Poland similarly experienced a large shift to the Left when the Democratic Left Alliance victory produced more than a 6 point leftward shift in the government (on a 0-10 scale). Conversely, elections in Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway and Portugal produced a sizeable rightward shift between pre and post-election governments.

One can provide a post-hoc explanation for the shifts in government in most of these cases. In Spain, for instance, the public had grown weary with the PP's drift to the Right and the party's new leader did not have Aznar's initial popularity; Zapatero also was a popular representative of the Left. The desire for change was then compounded by the Madrid terrorist attack on the eve of the election. Such factors change the vote shares going to different parties, which then shifts the government formed after the election. Furthermore, since the party choices were highly polarized in Spain, a shift in course by the public produced an even greater Left-Right shift in the composition of the post-election government. Elections tend to oversteer the ship of state for this reason.

In addition, there are some systematic patterns in these cross-time comparisons. For instance, the overall Left-Right polarization of the party system is strongly related to the absolute difference in the Left-Right position pre/post-election governments ($r = .46$).¹³ This presumably occurs because more polarized party choices

mean that when voters do change course, the available party choices generate a large shift in government positions.

As we might expect from what Powell refers to as a 'proportional vision' (2000), the shifts in pre/post-election governments are also much greater in the proportional representation system than in majoritarian electoral system ($\text{Eta} = .35$). While it might have been expected that PR systems would produce gradual adaptation to shifting vote shares among parties, the greater diversity of choices creates more volatility, as does the greater preponderance of post-election coalition negotiations leading to post-hoc program and policy renewal by the participating parties. Even though we might expect majoritarian democracies to produce substantial policy shift when the majority changes (as *Finer* (1975) would argue), the obvious point is that a change in government occurs less frequently in these systems (Powell 2010b, Table 11.1). Among the six majoritarian elections in our set, only one produced a change in government.

Finally, pre/post-election shifts tend to be larger in new democracies than in established democracies ($\text{Eta} = .18$). This seems consistent with a political law of entropy that would suggest greater volatility in new democracies which decreases with the institutionalization of the political system and, more specifically, with the development of a stable party system. Yet, we also note that some of the largest instances of pre/post-election volatility occur in established democracies.

At least to the authors, this pre/post-election comparison is a striking pattern. To the extent that these results from the CSES nations are generalizable to other democracies, this means that the composition of a post-election government is essentially independent of the pre-election government ($r = -.04$). This might be interpreted as meaning that elections are a random process, with no predictability of what will happen after the votes are counted. However, Figures 2.1 and 2.2 show that this is not a random process, since voters are steering government toward a position more consistent with their Left-Right preferences. If we return to the sailboat analogy from earlier in this essay, a sailboat must tack to starboard and port to make headway; these shifts might seem random but are necessary to go forward. Similarly, it appears that elections produce turns to the Left, or to the Right (and sometimes continue on the same course) in order to generate a democratic course that is generally congruent with public preferences. The median British voter, for instance, has a choice of going Left with Labour or to the Right with the Conservatives, but not a government formed down the center.¹⁴ In summary, our findings provide strong evidence that elections do generate a dynamic of democratic representation if we trace this process over time.

2.5 Conclusion

Normative theories of democracy suggest that elections perform two essential functions. First, elections should ensure that governments are accountable for their

actions to the citizens who elected them. Second, elections should perform a representative function, by ensuring that the legislature broadly reflects the distribution of opinions within the electorate. The tensions between these two functions are obvious, and in a range of books and papers, Thomassen has drawn attention to how these tensions vary across different institutional contexts, with majoritarian democracies stressing the accountability function, consensus democracies the representative function (see Thomassen 1994, 1999, 2002, 2005; Thomassen and Schmitt 1997). Thomassen's seminal contribution has been to enhance our understanding of how institutional arrangements interact with individual political behavior to resolve this tension. His key role in the CSES project during the 1990s has enabled many of these hypotheses to be tested empirically. In particular, drawing on his European background, Thomassen has pointed to the role of political parties in mediating the processes of accountability and representation in modern democracies (Thomassen 1994).

The results presented here build very directly on Thomassen's pioneering work on representation and accountability. We find that rather than elections acting as a discrete, point-in-time choice, as it is often assumed in theoretical and empirical studies, there is a dynamic relationship between governments and voters. Our findings suggest that democracy is based on a process of ongoing representation that occurs through retrospective as well as prospective evaluations of government performance. People elect a government, but then have the chance to reevaluate this decision at the next election. Democracy works by this dynamic process over time, even if decisions at one election deviate from what was desired or expected. Characteristically, Thomassen had anticipated this conclusion, pointing in a 2005 article with Andeweg to the dynamic interaction between evaluations made prior to and after an election (Andeweg and Thomassen 2005). While their empirical case study was a single country – the Netherlands – the conceptual typology that Andeweg and Thomassen developed has wide application to comparative studies of political representation.

The next stage in this research is to gain an understanding of how and why this dynamic relationship between voters and governments takes place. Specifically, why does the empirical correspondence between citizens and their governments increase when we compare pre- and post-election evaluations? Testing these explanations is beyond the scope of this essay, but five explanations immediately occur as worthy of further study. The most straightforward explanation is that citizens may change their median position, or there may be differential turnout between groups of voters which will change the aggregate images of parties. We know that low turnout has a range of political consequences (Lutz and Marsh 2007), so it follows that turnout may influence the left-right position of the electorate as well. A variant of this explanation suggests that if voters change their images of the parties, perhaps in response to changes in leadership, this will in turn alter their median position. Such an explanation would certainly apply to the British Labour Party under Tony Blair

or the German SPD under Gerhard Schröder, but whether it applies more generally is an open question.

The other potential explanations focus on exogenous factors, such as a sharp economic downturn, a political scandal or the entry (or exit) of a charismatic leader onto the political stage. Such changes may lead people to vote against the incumbent government, independently of whether they agree with it in Left-Right terms. Voters may also perceive governments as acting differently in office to what they said they would do before the election. When this occurs, a future election permits voters to correct the course of government. The final explanation points to the policy agenda of parties. The changing salience of political issues between elections, which affects vote shares but not the overall Left-Right positions of the parties, may be a factor. For instance, one election may be concerned with the economy, the next about social welfare. Since elections decide a package of policies, it is inevitable that the issue hierarchy will act like winds buffeting our sailboat of state.

Whatever explanations emerge from future empirical studies, the overall assessment of the health of representative democracy is good. The dynamic that we have identified in the representative linkage between citizens and governments is evidence of a corrective process that operates from one electoral cycle to the next. In the lead-up to an election voters may have tired of the government, and are unsure which way to turn in the approaching election. The congruence between the two parts of the classic dyad has weakened. The election allows voters to make the correction and to identify more strongly with the newly incumbent government.

Notes

- 1 Although electoral system differences are not our primary concern, we should note that these new studies now question whether the electoral system significantly affects the overall level of citizen-government congruence (see Powell 2004, 2010a).
- 2 Stokes (1999) examined presidential elections in Latin America and counted nearly a quarter of the elections were followed by a fundamental economic policy shift from the pre-election campaign.
- 3 This analogy is flawed because of principal-agent problems. Even if the public directs government to move in a certain direction, the member of government may choose to act differently. Perhaps in our nautical jargon a significant gap between principal and agents would be an act of mutiny.
- 4 There are a few time series studies in a single nation that begin to explore the dynamics of representation over time (Holmberg 2009; Thomassen 2009c). But the limited number of elections makes it difficult to systematically compare levels the representativeness of governments and how this changes. Other research examines the congruence between public policy preferences and government policy outputs over time (Page and Shapiro 1990; Wlezien and Soroka 2007).

- 5 We gratefully acknowledge access to these data from the project website (www.cses.org) which has additional documentation on the project, details of the participating countries and the teams, and the questionnaires that have been used in the three modules conducted to date.
- 6 Many public opinion researchers have questioned whether ordinary people can understand and utilize abstract political concepts like ‘Left’ and ‘Right’ (Converse 1964; Lewis-Beck et al. 2008). We agree that abstract ideological thinking as meant by political theorists is largely confined to a small sophisticated stratum of the public; we use the Left-Right scale as a surrogate for political identities and positions on contemporary issues.
- 7 The methods and empirical agreement of several alternative measures of party positions is discussed in Dalton, Farrell and McAllister (forthcoming, chapter 5).
- 8 Across this wide range of nations, a relatively high percentage can position the two largest parties; the average is 82 percent across 36 legislative elections in Module II. Taiwan is a clear outlier where only a minority uses the Left-Right scale for themselves or the parties. However, in the next lowest case, Romania, two-thirds of the public can locate the two largest parties on the Left-Right scale. Even in multiparty systems, a strikingly large percentage of the public can position some of the smaller minor parties.
- 9 We use the entire electorate to estimate party positions, but one might use the self-location of party identifiers or the self-location of party voters. These are reasonable alternatives that might yield significant differences in a few instances – often very intriguing cases such as the positioning of extreme parties. Our initial exploration of these alternatives showed high consistency in party locations across these alternative methods. For instance, we compared the Left-Right placement of 115 parties in *CSES module II* for both the public at-large and those who voted for (or partisans of) each party. The two measures are correlated at .95. Consequently, we rely on the estimates of the entire public, which also reduces the likelihood of partisans overestimating agreement by placing the party near themselves on the scale.
Party positions were not available for Belgium. In this one case we estimated party positions using the Benoit and Laver (2006) party expert survey. For additional information on party positions and alternative methodologies see Dalton, Farrell and McAllister (forthcoming).
- 10 Additional evidence of the validity of citizen perceptions comes from comparing these party locations to those derived from other methodologies. In other research we have extensively studied the agreement between citizens’ Left-Right placements of the parties and other methodologies (Dalton, Farrell and McAllister, forthcoming). For instance, Kenneth Benoit and Michael Laver have collected academic experts’ judgements of party positions in 2002-03. A total of 168 parties in 27 nations are included in both the *CSES* and expert study. Despite different methodologies and a slightly different time reference for both estimates, there is a very strong agreement between where the public and experts locate political parties on the Left-Right scale ($r = .89$). Another standard methodology estimates party positions from election manifestos. For the 144 parties that overlap with the *CSES*, there is a .63 correlation in parties’ Left-Right positions. The party manifesto

- data are valuable, especially for their cross-national and cross-temporal coverage, but these data appear to yield the least consistent measures of party Left-Right positions.
- 11 We want to acknowledge Steffen Blings of Cornell University who calculated these government scores.
 - 12 The significant deviations are Belgium, Brazil, Italy and New Zealand.
 - 13 For a discussion of party system polarization, its measurement and effects see Dalton (2008, 2010). We also considered the effective number of electoral parties (ENEP) as a correlate of pre/post-election differences. The ENEP is not significantly related to the absolute difference of pre/post-governments ($r = .07$), which further indicates that it is the diversity of parties not their numbers that affects governmental change in Left-Right terms.
 - 14 Although we generally find close agreement between voters and their parties in Left-Right terms, the parties at both poles tend to hold more ideological positions than their voters. So governments of the Left and Right are also likely to be more ideological than their own supporters.

Appendix: List of country abbreviations

And	Andorra
Arg	Argentina
Aul	Australia
Bel	Belize
Bra	Brazil
BuF	Burkina Faso
Bul	Bulgaria
Can	Canada
Col	Colombia
Cyp	Cyprus
Cze	Czech Republic
Den	Denmark
Eth	Ethiopia
Fin	Finland
Fra	France
Ger	Germany
Gha	Ghana
Hun	Hungary
Ice	Iceland
Indo	Indonesia
Ire	Ireland
Ita	Italy
Jap	Japan
Jor	Jordan

Mex	Mexico
Mol	Moldova, Republic Of
Mor	Morocco
Msia	Malaysia
Net	Netherlands
Nor	Norway
NZ	New Zealand
Per	Peru
Pol	Poland
Por	Portugal
Rom	Romania
Rus	Russian Federation
SAfr	South Africa
Serb	Serbia
SKor	Korea, Republic Of
Slvk	Slovakia
Slvn	Slovenia
Spa	Spain
Swe	Sweden
Swi	Switzerland
Tai	Taiwan
Tha	Thailand
Tri	Trinidad & Tobago
Tur	Turkey
UK	United Kingdom
Ukr	Ukraine
Uru	Uruguay
US	United States
Viet	Viet Nam
Zam	Zambia

3 Approaching Perfect Policy Congruence

Measurement, Development, and Relevance for Political Representation

Rudy B. Andeweg

“It would be naive to expect perfect congruence in any real system of political representation.”

— *Thomassen and Schmitt 1999b: 186*

3.1 Measuring policy congruence

IN MOST STUDIES OF POLITICAL REPRESENTATION, THE PRIMARY TOUCHSTONE for ‘good representation’ is that elected politicians act in accordance with the preferences of their electorate. In cross-sectional studies this criterion is usually called ‘policy (or issue- or ideological-) congruence’ and the main debate is whether majoritarian electoral systems or proportional representation (PR) systems produce higher congruence (e.g. Huber and Powell 1994; Miller et al. 1999; Blais and Bodet 2006; Powell 2009). In longitudinal studies it is often called ‘policy responsiveness’, with studies debating whether some representative institutions adapt to changes in public opinion more quickly (Stimson et al. 1995), and whether responsiveness is caused by representatives adapting to voters, or the other way around (Esaiasson and Holmberg 1996; Holmberg 1997). All such studies agree that policy congruence (or responsiveness) indicates good political representation. This *communis opinio*, however, hides considerable disagreement about the proper operationalization and measurement of policy congruence/responsiveness.

Ideally, in order to gauge policy congruence, we need to compare the policy preferences of voters with the policy preferences of representatives. Voter preferences are customarily measured in surveys, often using a general Left-Right scale or specific issue scales. Occasionally, voter preferences are not measured directly,

but are considered to be revealed by their party preference: all voters for a party are assumed to agree with that party's manifesto. Obviously, such a strategy biases the results in the direction of high congruence. The preferences of representatives are sometimes measured through content analysis of election manifestos, unrealistically assuming that all representatives belonging to a party agree with all proposals in that party's manifesto. As most of such studies in the manifesto approach count words or sentences devoted to particular policy areas, they measure a party's issue saliency rather than a party's issue position. A lively debate has ensued over the question whether policy positions can be derived from saliency measures (see e.g. Laver 2001). Alternatively, some studies employ expert surveys to measure the policy positions of the various political parties (also assuming that there is no variation among representatives of a party). One of the risks here is that the local experts use their knowledge of a party's voters' ideological preferences as one of the ingredients to estimate that party's position, also biasing the results towards high congruence. This bias is even greater in a third type of study, which measures the representative's (or more often: her party's) position on the basis of the voters' perception of that position: it is likely that this perception is not independent of the voter's own position. Finally, a fourth type of study measures representatives' positions in the same way as voters' positions are measured: by asking the representatives directly, in a survey, using Left-Right and/or issue scales. Such studies, however, are relatively rare.

A second controversial choice is the proper identification of 'the representative.' Some classic American studies compared the individual representative with the voters in his or her constituency (Miller and Stokes 1963). Many European studies compare the national electorate with the governing party or the governing coalition. In the latter case the coalition's position is usually assumed to be the average of the governing parties' positions (however these are measured), weighted by their size in terms of ministerial posts or parliamentary seats. The problem with these two strategies is that they look at particular actors (the individual Congressman, the government). Pitkin (1967: 216-225) has argued that representation should not be seen as an activity of individual actors, but rather as a systemic property that results from all actors' behavior. In that perspective, we should not try to measure congruence between voters and particular representatives or parties, but between the electorate as a whole and parliament as a whole. Studies of such 'collective' as opposed to 'dyadic' representation are also relatively rare (e.g. Weissberg 1978).

A third problem is that 'the' electorate (or even 'the' constituency) and 'the' parliament, or government, or party are not unitary actors. They consist of many individual voters or representatives who usually express a variety of preferences. The solution is often to reduce this variety by comparing central tendencies (the mean, or the median). The ultimate reductionism is to assess policy congruence by way of comparing the position of the median voter with the position of the median legislator. For some (but not all) purposes it may make sense to use a measure of central tendency at the level of the political elites (Pierce 1999: 14). The government, for

example, in most countries is constitutionally required to speak with one voice. This is not the case with political parties, but where cohesion, loyalty, or discipline make parties behave as unitary actors (Andeweg and Thomassen 2011), a single measure for all MPs belonging to a party may suffice. It is an empirical question whether parties or other collectivities are unified or not; it is not a question to be resolved by assumption. For less unified parties, and for parliament as a whole, using a mean or a median results in considerable loss of information. The same reasoning applies *a fortiori* to the voters of a particular party or to the electorate as a whole. An example of the type of loss of information that may result from using measures of central tendency is that the same mean or median can result from very different distributions. Extreme polarization with an almost empty center may produce the same result as a normal distribution across an issue scale. Pierce illustrates this with an example from the Netherlands: “In 1971, the mean position on the abortion issue of the voters for the three parties that later merged into the Christian Democratic Appeal, an umbrella religious party, was 3.76 (on a 7-point scale), while the mean position of the CDA deputies was a very similar 3.57. Of those deputies, almost 40 percent located themselves at 3 or 4 and none placed themselves at the extremes of 1 or 7. Among the voters, however, fewer than 25 percent placed themselves at 3 or 4 on the same scale, while almost 45 percent located themselves at the extremes.” (Pierce 1999: 14-15). Comparing the means in this case results in a conclusion of high congruence, while that conclusion is proven to be misleading when comparing the entire distributions. We already saw that many measures carry the risk of a bias towards high congruence. This is exacerbated by the use of central tendency. However, studies comparing entire distributions are rare.

In this chapter I shall take ‘the road less traveled by’ and choose the ‘rare’ strategies in each of the three controversies discussed above: I shall use a direct measure of representatives’ preferences rather than relying on a proxy; I shall study collective representation comparing the preferences of the entire electorate and of parliament as a whole rather than dyadic representation (although I shall also compare all voters of a party and all MPs of a party); and I shall compare the complete distributions of preferences rather than mean or median preferences. Thus I avoid biases towards finding high congruence that I identified above: proxy measures of MPs’ preferences (expert judgements) or of voter preferences (their party choice) that are not independent of, respectively, voter preferences or MP preferences; assuming that all MPs or all voters share the same preference; and using measures of central tendency.

3.2 Approaching perfect policy congruence

For this study I shall make use of “the rich data sets for the Netherlands” (Pierce 1999: 14). It is one of the very few countries for which we have data on the ideological position and issue preferences of voters and MPs, measured at several points in time using almost identical questions. Since the 1970s, a consortium of political

scientists from various Dutch universities has conducted voter surveys in each election year. Most of these *Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies* (DPES) have included questions on general ideological preferences and on specific issue preferences. For 1972 the data on voters are taken from a survey conducted by Tilburg University, rather than from the DPES. Starting in 1968, political scientists, also from various Dutch universities, have regularly conducted surveys of Members of the Lower House of Parliament (confusingly called the Second Chamber). An attempt is made to interview all MPs, with response rates around 90 percent (75 percent in 2006 when fieldwork coincided with the run-up to early elections). The first *Dutch Parliament Study* (DPS) dates back to 1968, but the first study does not allow for comparison with the election studies of that period. For that reason the time series in this chapter starts in 1972. We can compare the ideological and issue positions of voters and MPs in 1972, of voters in 1977 with MPs in 1979, of voters in 1989 with MPs in 1990, of voters in 1998 with MPs in 2001, and of voters and MPs in 2006.

Unfortunately, for some years Left-Right position was measured on scales of different length for voters (11-point scales) than for MPs (7-point scales). I converted all 11-point scales into 7-point scales, using the formula $y = a + bx$, where 1 must equal 1 and 11 must equal 7 (hence $y = .4 + .6x$; see Irwin and Thomassen 1975: 417-418, footnote 10). For 1972, the DPS used a 9-point scale which was likewise converted to a 7-point scale with the formula $y = .25 + .75x$.

As mentioned above, we want to compare the entire distribution on these scales of voters and of MPs, but how can we compare the distributions other than by eye-balling them? In one of the few previous studies with the same purpose, Holmberg employs a simple system that was originally proposed by Galtung: "He distinguished between four different shapes that can characterize a distribution: A-curves and J-curves are uni-modal with the peak at either end of the scale (J) or toward the middle (A). U-curves are bimodal with the peaks at the ends of the scale while S-curves are multi-modal. If the curves are symmetric (or nearly so), Galtung uses a foot script zero, otherwise a + or a - will indicate whether the distribution is skewed to the left or to the right. Accordingly, Galtung's AJUS system permits us to classify distributions in twelve different ways." (Holmberg 1999b: 88). Holmberg's 'curve shape analysis' shows that voters and MPs often had congruent issue profiles in West Germany and the Netherlands, while Swedish and French, and to some extent also American representatives were more polarized (U and S shaped distributions) than voters in these countries. Curve shape analysis undoubtedly gives more information than comparing means, but it is still relatively crude. As we shall see momentarily, the shape of the distributions of MPs and voters is congruent in the Netherlands for recent years, but this similarity can still hide considerable differences between the two distributions.

In an earlier study of collective issue congruence in the Netherlands, Thomassen represents the distributions of voters and MPs in the same graph, which allows for immediate impressionistic analysis (Thomassen 1976: 147). In search of a single measure by party, he then calculates the consensus of MPs of a party on an issue

by subtracting the percentage of MPs to the Left of the scale's midpoint from the percentage of MPs to the Right of that midpoint. He then went on to calculate the consensus of that party's voters on that issue in the same way. The consensus between a party's voters and its MPs on an issue is calculated by subtracting the absolute difference between the MPs' consensus score and the voters' consensus score from 100 (also see Irwin and Thomassen 1975). This rather complicated procedure makes sense if the main purpose of the study is to analyze intra-party issue consensus (as it was in Thomassen's case). However, for our purpose consensus and congruence should not be confused. If there is consensus on a relatively leftist position among voters, and an equally high consensus on a relatively rightwing position among MPs, policy congruence is still low.

In a recent influential paper, Golder and Stramski claim that majoritarian electoral systems may produce higher policy congruence measured as a 'many-to-one relationship' (i.e. comparing voters to government), whereas PR systems result in higher policy congruence measured as a 'many-to-many relationship' (i.e. comparing voters to parliament) (Golder and Stramski 2010; but see also Powell 2009). For what they call many-to-many representation, they too had to find a way to measure the congruence between the preference distribution of voters and the preference distribution of MPs. They came up with the following solution:

$$\text{CONGRUENCE (MANY-TO-MANY)} = \sum_x | F_1(x) - F_2(x) |$$

In this formula $F_1(x)$ is the cumulative distribution function for the voters' preferences, and $F_2(x)$ is the cumulative distribution function for the MPs' preferences (Golder and Stramski 2010: 96). As the two distributions are more similar, the measure approaches zero.

Because no compelling reason is offered for the choice of *cumulative* distribution functions, I propose to use the non-cumulative distribution function.¹ In practice this means that at each point on the 7-point scales on which preferences are measured in our studies, we compare the percentage of voters positioning themselves at that point with the percentage of MPs positioning themselves at that same point, and we take the *lower* of these two percentages. If we sum the resulting seven percentages, we have a measure for the overlap between the two distributions ('the common area under the curve'). The outcome is the same as with Golder and Stramski's measure, but it has the advantage that it lends itself to straightforward visual presentation, and that it is intuitively more appealing to have a measure ranging from zero (no overlap between the two distributions, no policy congruence) to one hundred (identical distributions, complete policy congruence).

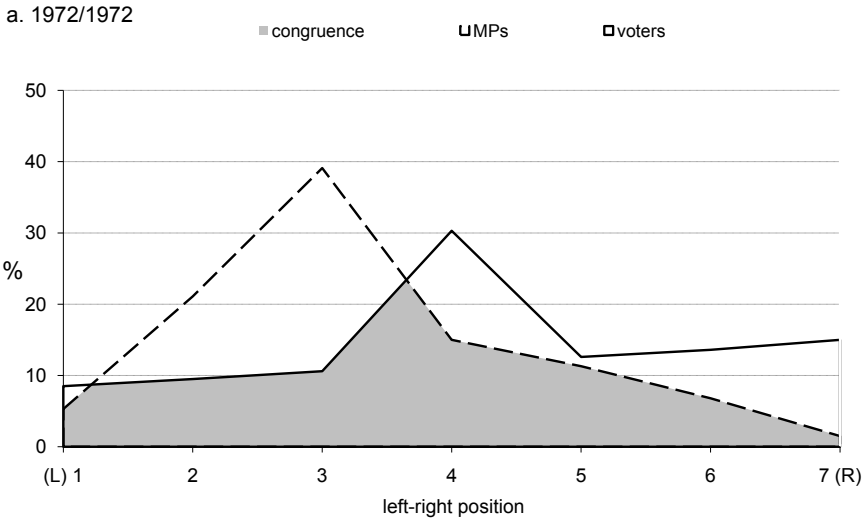
Unfortunately for Golder and Stramski, they themselves could not really analyze many-to-many congruence with their newly developed measure: "In our upcoming empirical analyses, we assume that all legislative representatives from the same party share the ideological position of their party. (...W)e are forced to make this assumption due to data constraints (...)" (Golder and Stramski 2010: 96-97). This

is one of the measurement problems that we seek to avoid. This study of policy congruence in the Netherlands is not hampered by such constraints or assumptions, be they realistic or not. Not having to equate an individual MP's position with that of her party also allows us to study 'many-to-many' congruence within (the larger) political parties.

In Figure 3.1 I present the distributions of both Dutch voters' and Dutch MPs' self-placements on the Left-Right scale. For each point in time, the two distributions are represented by graphs in the same figure. Strictly speaking, the distributions are on an ordered rating scale and should be represented by histograms, but for presentation purposes continuous lines work better (and are used more often; see Thomassen 1976: 147; Holmberg 1999b: 95-99; Thomassen and Schmitt 1999b: 193-194).

In 1972 and especially in 1977, the voters (represented by the fat black line in the figures) are spread out across the scale in a bi- or even multi-modal distribution that was a common type of distribution in that period, when the impact of pillarization was still felt in the Netherlands. For the MPs interviewed in 1972 and 1979 (represented by the narrower grey line in the figures), however, we find a uni-modal distribution which is skewed to the Left (in 1977 even with the mode at point 2 on the scale). If we compare the distributions of voters and MPs, we see that the

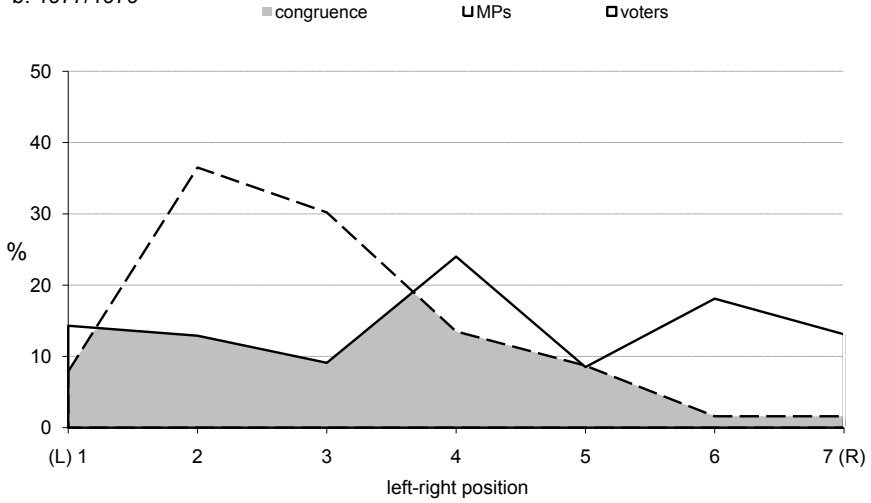
Figure 3.1 Collective policy congruence between voters and MPs on Left-Right scale, 1972-2006



Note: Common area under the curve = 60% (Voters N = 1136; MPs N = 133).

Sources: Dutch Parliament Study (DPS) and Dutch Parliamentary Election Study (DPES)

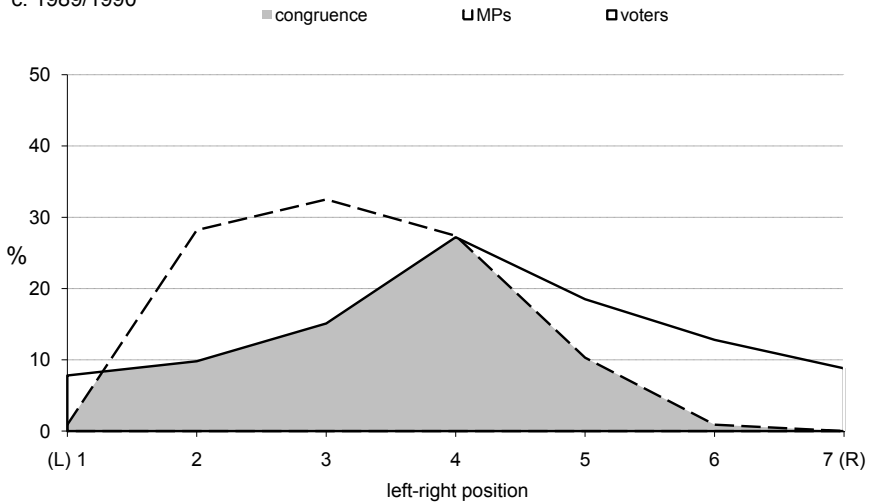
b. 1977/1979



Note: Common area under the curve = 55.1% (Voters N = 1523; MPs N = 123)

Sources: DPS and DPES

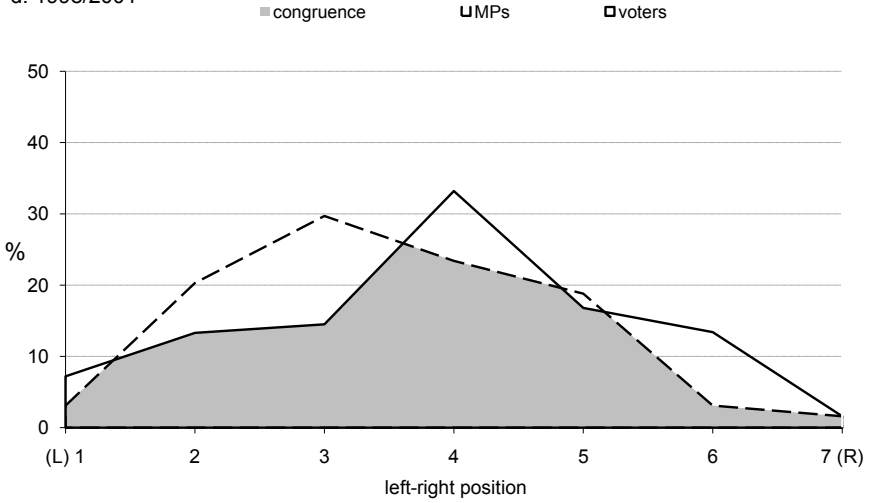
c. 1989/1990



Note: Common area under the curve = 64% (Voters N = 1687; MPs N = 117)

Sources: DPS and DPES

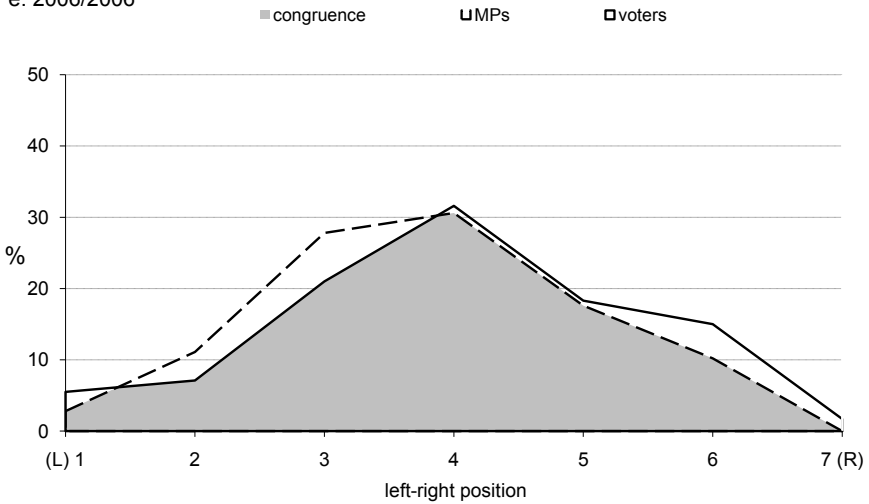
d. 1998/2001



Note: Common area under the curve = 75.8% (Voters N = 1690; MPs N = 128)

Sources: DPS and DPES

e. 2006/2006



Note: Common area under the curve = 89.3% (Voters N = 2345; MPs N = 108)

Sources: DPS and DPES

extremes on the scale are used more often by voters than by MPs, and we see that, on average, MPs are to be found to the Left of the voters. These two aspects are also common, and not only in the Netherlands in that particular period: they can be seen in all five figures. The overlap between the two distributions (the shaded area in the figures: the common area under the curve) was 60 percent in 1972 and 55 percent in 1977/1979: in other words, policy congruence was just over halfway between no congruence and perfect congruence. If we now look at the more recent comparisons, we see that policy congruence consistently improves over the years: roughly ten years later, in 1989/1990, the overlap between the two distributions is 64 percent, or almost two-thirds policy congruence. Again ten years later, in 1998/2001 the overlap has increased further, and policy congruence is above three-quarters. Finally, in 2006 policy congruence is almost perfect, at 89 percent. In less than a third of a century, policy congruence between Dutch voters and MPs has increased from just over half to two thirds to three-quarters to nearly perfect!

3.3 Characteristics of dynamic representation

In terms of dynamic representation it is interesting to note that the voters have not contributed much to this rather impressive improvement: After the 1970s, the multi-modal distribution was replaced by a uni-modal distribution, but since then the changes have been marginal. (Do note that in terms of curve shape analysis congruence has not changed after the 1970s, whereas the common area under the curve has increased). Parliament on the other hand has clearly moved closer to the electorate. In 1979, the mode for MPs was at a rather Leftist point '2' on the 7-point scale; by 2006 it had moved to a centrist point '4', coinciding with the mode of the voters. In the terms of Esaiasson and Holmberg: it is a case of 'representation from below' rather than of 'representation from above' (Esaiasson and Holmberg 1996; Holmberg 1999b).

In studies of dynamic representation, two mechanisms are generally distinguished: 'replacement' in which voters replace their representatives with more congruent ones, and 'rational anticipation' in which incumbent representatives adapt their position to that of their voters in order to avoid defeat in the next elections (Stimson et al. 1995). Instead of rational anticipation, the same effect can result from representatives having a role conception of a 'delegate' rather than of a 'trustee' (Miller and Stokes 1963), but the difference between rational choice and normative institutionalism need not concern us here. In our case, greater congruence can have resulted from the replacement in elections of Leftist MPs (parties) with more Right-wing MPs (parties); it is intriguing that the near-perfect congruence in 2006 occurred after the entry of new Populist Right parties in parliament. However, congruence can also have improved because the MPs of incumbent parties have adapted their preferences to those of their voters, either in rational anticipation, or because they feel they ought to do so. In order to see whether established parties

also adapted to public opinion, I have compared the distribution of a party's MPs over the Left-Right scale with the distribution of that party's voters. For smaller parties with only a handful of MPs, one can hardly speak of a 'distribution', and comparison with the voters' distribution does not make much sense. For that reason, the analysis is confined to parties with relatively sizeable parliamentary party groups at all five points in time. These are the three established parties: Labour (PvdA), the Christian Democrats (CDA), and the Conservative Liberals (VVD).

Table 3.1 Left-Right intra-party policy congruence between voters and MPs over time (common area under the curve as %); 1972-2006

	1972/1972	1977/1979	1989/1990	1998/2001	2006/2006
Christian Democrats (CDA)	47.3	40.2	66.0	76.1	82.1
Conservative Liberals (VVD)	77.5	55.4	32.9	76.5	85.9
Labour (PvdA)	53.2	52.9	52.3	51.4	68.0

The overlap between the distributions of these parties' MPs and their respective electorates is presented in Table 3.1. Initially, policy congruence declined for all three major parties in the 1970s. Since the 1970s the parties show different patterns. For the Christian Democrats the development of intra-party congruence is as consistent as the increase in overall congruence: in 2006 policy congruence had doubled compared to what it was in 1977/1979. Congruence between Conservative Liberal MPs and their party's voters was exceptionally high in 1972 and first dropped to less than a third in 1989/1990, but has picked up since paralleling overall congruence. The situation within the Labour Party is different: policy congruence between Labour MPs and Labour voters is relatively low at all five points in time. If it changed at all between 1972 and 1998/2001 it decreased ever so slightly, only to increase in 2006. However, for all three parties the most recent congruence figures are highest. Even with the different pattern for Labour, it is clear that replacement of parties is not the only explanation for the improvement in policy congruence: the incumbent parliamentary party groups also resemble their voters more than they did before. This finding is reinforced by a change in the role conceptions of Dutch MPs. When asked in 1972 what an MP should do if she had a different view on a particular issue than her party's voters, 71 percent opted for the role of 'trustee', answering that the MP should follow her own opinion in such cases. Only 7 percent chose the role of 'delegate', advocating that the MP should follow her party's voters, with the remaining 22 percent answering that 'it depends': the role of the 'politico.' By 2001 the percentage of trustees had dropped to 40 percent (slightly rising to 49 percent in 2006), with 21 percent delegates and 40 percent politicians (dropping slightly to 31 percent in 2006) (Andeweg and Thomassen 2007: 16). The most likely cause of this increased congruence and this shift towards more responsive

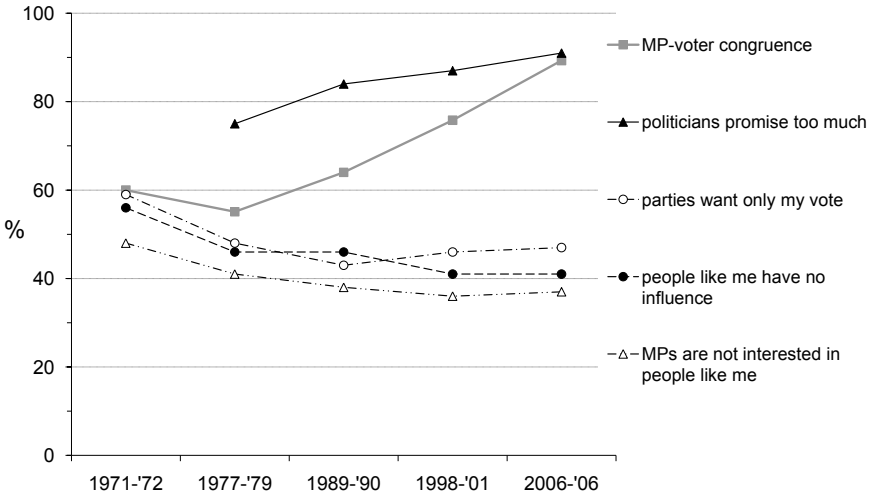
role models is simply the increase in volatility in the Dutch electorate since depolarization started: Pedersen's index of net electoral volatility rose from an average of 5 percent in the 1950s to 12 percent in the 1970s and 19 percent in the 1990s. In the 1990s average net volatility was higher only in Italy (Mair 2008: 238). Political parties and their MPs can no longer count on the votes of a social segment of society that will remain loyal regardless of the policy positions taken. MPs are, in King's words, 'running scared', anxiously keeping their ear to the ground to detect any shift in public opinion that may threaten their reelection (King 1997).

3.4 Too good to be true?

Golder and Stramski end their paper on 'many-to-many' policy congruence by suggesting that a measure of the overlap between the distributions of voters and MPs such as I have used "will open up new avenues of research. For example, scholars will now be able to investigate whether substantive, and not just descriptive, representation influences things like political participation rates, perceived levels of legitimacy, trust in the political process, and satisfaction with democracy" (Golder and Stramski 2010: 105). Following that line of thinking: has the Netherlands now become a model representative democracy where volatile voters have forced their representatives to be so responsive that policy congruence is near perfect? Is this why the Netherlands was the exception to the rule of growing disaffection with politics in the trilateral democracies (Putnam et al. 2000: 14-15)? Is this why the Netherlands is consistently among the EU member-states where the *Eurobarometer* registers the highest satisfaction with how national democracy works? Although the satisfaction rate fluctuates, it has clearly increased over time, from 52 percent very or fairly satisfied in 1974, to 80 percent satisfaction in 2007. However, if we zoom in on more specific questions relating to trust in politics, we get a different picture.

The lines in Figure 3.2 represent the policy congruence data from Figure 3.1 and distrust in politics at the same points in time. I selected the items from the DPES that most relate to responsiveness: "Parties are only interested in my vote, not in my opinion", "People like me have no influence in politics", "MPs are not interested in people like me", and "Knowingly politicians promise more than they can deliver" (this last item is only available since 1977). The percentages of respondents who agreed with these statements are presented. In other words: if trust in politics is influenced by policy congruence, we would expect the lines for these items to go down, while the line for policy congruence goes up. We do see a decline of distrust between 1972 and 1977, but at that time collective policy congruence actually declined somewhat. After 1977, when congruence steadily increased, only the percentage agreeing that "people like me have no influence in politics" shows a slight decline, but the agreement with statements about parties not being interested in voters' opinions and about MPs not being interested in ordinary people merely

Figure 3.2 Collective policy congruence on Left-Right scale and political distrust, 1971-2006



Sources: DPS and DPES

fluctuate but show no trend. The percentage agreeing that politicians promise too much is even going up. Purists might argue that some of these items measure lack of efficacy rather than lack of trust, but if these data can serve as indicators of political legitimacy, it would seem that the spectacular rise of policy congruence had no impact on legitimacy.

This is puzzling because policy congruence is regarded as *the* criterion for good representation. One might argue that the Left-Right scale that I used is not an appropriate instrument to measure policy congruence. This criticism would affect most congruence studies, but it might be that ‘Left’ and ‘Right’ are so devoid of any substantive meaning, that congruence on this scale is also meaningless. If this were the case, we would find much less policy congruence when we look at specific issues.

For a number of issues we can compare the positions on 7-point scales of both MPs and voters, just as we did with the Left-Right scale. We compared the distributions and calculated the amount of overlap between these distributions, the common area under the curve. The issue of income differences (should be smaller/same or greater) is a Left-Right scale, but one with a specific socio-economic content. Thomassen has argued that elections only provide parties with a policy mandate if all issues fall on a single Left-Right dimension (Thomassen 1994). This would allow voters to correctly estimate a party’s position on issues for which they have no information on the party position, and it would allow parties (and MPs) to correctly estimate their voters’ positions on all kinds of issues. Thus, we might hypothesize that policy congruence is easiest to achieve for issues that correlate with the Left-Right dimension (called ‘structural issues’ by Thomassen 1999), such as income equality.

Table 3.2 Collective policy congruence on selected issues; 1972-2006

	1972/1972	1977/1979	1989/1990	1998/2001	2006/2006
income equality	70.1	65.5	83.2	85.2	78.4
abortion	70.6	75.5	86.8		
euthanasia			85.6	84.4	57.8
multiculturalism				79.0	75.1
European integration				81.6	75.8

Indeed, Table 3.2 shows high and increasing congruence between voters and MPs although it drops somewhat in 2006. However, with an inexplicable exception for 2006, policy congruence is even higher for euthanasia (and earlier also for abortion) than for income equality. This confirms Thomassen's rejection of his own hypothesis for the 1972-1989 period (Thomassen 1999: 51). Thomassen explains his finding by pointing out that abortion (and presumably for our more recent studies also euthanasia) are issues on another, religious-secular, dimension that is more or less orthogonal to the socio-economic Left-Right dimension. However, social cleavages and ideological dimensions may be neither sufficient nor necessary conditions for congruence. Issues such as euthanasia and abortion are such high profile issues that MPs and voters can 'coordinate' their preferences without the heuristic aid of correlation with a major ideological dimension. And an issue such as taxation may correlate to the Left-Right dimension, but have a relatively low profile, and hence produced low policy congruence in Thomassen's study (Thomassen 1999). We may expect less congruence for issues such as multiculturalism (should cultural minorities assimilate or be allowed to keep their own culture) and European integration (should go further or has gone too far), as these issues are relatively new, and parties have shifted their position on these issues in recent years. Indeed, we do find lower congruence rates (which also declined somewhat between 1998/2001 and 2006) for these two issues. This is all very interesting and worthy of further analysis, but for our purpose the most important conclusion to be drawn from Table 3.2 is that the congruence between voters and MPs may often be lower for concrete issues than for the abstract Left-Right scale, but they are nevertheless substantial. Even on an issue such as multiculturalism, which is the object of constant populist rhetoric about a rift between 'the assimilationist people' and 'the multiculturalist elite', policy congruence in 2006 was still over 75 percent.

If lower policy congruence for specific issues cannot explain the coexistence of increasing Left-Right congruence with unchanged levels of trust in politics, we are left with two other possibilities. One solution to the puzzle would be that policy congruence has increased, but that the sensitivity of voters to whatever differences between politicians and citizens remain has increased even more. In the past voters may have been simply more tolerant of unresponsive representatives because they voted on the basis of group loyalty rather than issue positions, and this has

changed. A more radical solution to the puzzle would be that policy congruence is not the touchstone for good representation that political scientists usually assume it to be. Perhaps many voters do not want to be represented by mere ‘delegates’ who parrot the latest public opinion hypes in parliament, but prefer ‘trustees’ who are allowed to follow their own instincts as long as they actually solve society’s problems. ‘Hyper-responsiveness’ by representatives may actually harm their ability to govern the country, and thus, paradoxically, even contribute to popular disenchantment (King 1997). In Figure 3.2 we showed that the only item that exhibits a clear increase in political cynicism refers to politicians knowingly promising more than they can deliver. These promises may well be quite congruent with what voters want, but if they are not acted upon voters are still left dissatisfied. Such a line of reasoning fits with arguments in the literature about a shift from input legitimacy to output legitimacy (Scharpf 1999: 7–15). As Manin suggests: “The age of voting on the candidates’ platforms is probably over, but the age of voting on the incumbents’ record may be beginning” (Manin 1997: 221). If such a trend underlies our paradox of rising policy congruence without rising trust in politics, it has far reaching consequences for both the practice and the theory of democratic representation. It would mean that mechanisms for ex post control of representatives (accountability) should be improved, rather than investing in reforms to strengthen ex ante control mechanisms (cf. Andeweg and Thomassen 2005). It would also mean that studies of democratic representation should no longer focus so much on policy congruence. It would be tragic: just as policy congruence between voters and their representatives approaches perfection it is no longer relevant...

Acknowledgement

The Tilburg representation study, the various *Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies*, and all but one of the *Dutch Parliament Studies* were financed by the Dutch Science Foundation NWO. The 2006 *Dutch Parliament Study* was made possible by the Dutch Government’s Council on Public Administration (ROB). I would like to thank Cynthia van Vonno for her assistance with the data analysis and presentation.

Note

- 1 Matt Golder later informed me that their preference for the cumulative distribution function was based on the fact that two non-cumulative distribution functions that do not overlap result in a congruence score of ‘0’, regardless of the size of the gap between the two. He agrees, however, that a complete lack of overlap is highly unlikely in the reality of political representation (Matt Golder, personal communication).

4 Dynamic Representation from Above

Sören Holmberg

4.1 Introduction

THEORIES OF REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY ARE RELATIONAL, FOCUSING on connections between voters and elected representatives. Naturally, representation has to do with relationships between what economists call principals (voters) and agents (elected representatives). Agents are supposed to act on behalf of the principals, like decide on the laws regulating the working of society or set tax levels. Principals have one essential job – electing the agents. Eventually principals also give agents instructions/mandates and try to ensure that agents do their job by retrospectively holding them accountable.

Representational relationships can be studied statically emphasizing differences between levels, between principals and agents. Hanna Pitkin talks about standing-for representation. How large should differences be between principals/the people and agents/elected representatives? Do agents have to be similar to principals in order for representation to function well? Many studies of social representation and policy representation have analyzed the problem. As a matter of fact, empirical studies of political representation have been dominated by these kinds of static level comparisons. That goes as well for the limited number of comparative projects that have been done on political representation (Miller et al. 1999; Schmitt and Thomassen 1999; Esaiasson and Heidar 2000).

The reason for this focus on static level comparisons has not been theoretical. Students in the field have on the contrary always been conscious of the fact that representative democracy harbors an interplay component between principals/voters and agents/legislators. Instead, the main reason for the dominance of static level comparisons has to do with a lack of good time-series data dealing with the relationship between principals and agents. This is especially true in political science where it so far has been very costly to collect comparative data on voters and legislators; particularly if one wants to study the opinions of voters and elected

representatives. Surveys are expensive and they have a very noticeable access problem on the elite level. Elected representatives are often reluctant to participate in surveys. Response rates are very low in most elite surveys making all inferences tenuous (Brothén and Holmberg 2009).

The central issue in representative democracy theory has to do with power. From a normative standpoint it is the principals/the people who should have the power – they should decide what the agents/the representatives do. The will of the people shall rule. But – and here we come across the classical problem of democracy – who and what determines the will of the people? Aristotle was aware of the problem. In *Politics* (1995 [330 B.C.]) he warns that demagogues can manipulate the opinions of people. If demagogues (different special interests; elite groups) form what people think it is not the will of the people that decides. It is the will of the demagogues.

Translated into a more modern vocabulary, the question is who or what molds the will of the people. But, as well, who or what influences the decisions of elected officials? One model is that the will of the people is autonomous – people form their own opinions without being impacted by demagogues, elite groups or spin doctors. Then, in turn, the will of the people directs the will and decisions of elected representatives.

Another, less idealistic, model realizes that such a thing as an autonomous public opinion does not exist. Opinions are not born via some sort of immaculate conception, without the imprint of external opinion molders. External opinion formation is an obvious reality. And these opinion building forces can be as different as work mates, personal friends, mass media, political parties, PR-firms and religious leaders. In a democratic society, opinion formation is everywhere – and it is legitimate and encouraged. The debate is free. The result is that public opinion is not autonomous. On the contrary, public opinion is to a large extent determined by the ‘free’ opinion formation going on in democratic societies. This means that Aristotle’s demagogues are back molding opinions, but this time quite legitimately.

Consequently, in a modern democracy, presidents, political parties and legislators influence the will of the people without their tactics being perceived as illegitimate demagoguery. Politicians are not supposed to just follow public opinion. To the extent that they have an ideology or vision, they have the right - if not the obligation - to try to influence what people think. Top-down opinion formation is legitimate in a democracy.

A model where principles unilaterally decide what agents shall do is too simplistic. In a democracy with an open debate, agents influence principles as well. We get an interplay where principals/voters are influenced by agents/politicians at the same time as agents/politicians are influenced by principals/voters. Expressed differently, modern representative democracy is best modeled as a dynamic interplay between citizens and elected representatives, not as a static relation between two levels of actors – voters and politicians.

4.2 From opinion to policy

A new research area that has evolved during the last couple of years does just that – i.e. study the influence and interplay between different democratic decision levels. The field is sometimes called dynamic representation, or more precisely *opinion-policy research*. Focus is on the relationship between public opinion and the policies enacted by elected officials.

Mass opinions are measured via survey-based data collected across time. Issue positions and ideological leanings are what are commonly studied. Time series data of this kind has been recorded for 20 to 30 years for a number of Western democracies. The policy component in the equation is usually operationalized in many different ways. Here we find a mixture of everything from measures based on oral statements in parliaments and standpoints printed in party programs over budget priorities to legislative decisions and concrete policy outcomes. If not in theory, but in practice, it seems as if policy can be almost everything from proposals to decisions to implemented outcomes.

The decisive criteria, however, is that policy shall say something about what politicians actually do in different societal areas. Ideally, policy should be something more than what elected representatives think and want. Policy should have a concrete side to it. Attitudes are one thing, decisions and enacted policies are something else.

The normative point of departure for opinion-policy research is that the will of the people shall determine what is done in a representative democracy. And what is done should be operationalized via the phenomenon of policy. So far, most of this kind of opinion-policy research has been done in the United States. Most recently some studies have also been performed in Western Europe. The crucial question is whether agents/politicians deliver the policy outputs or outcomes that the principals/the people want. Opinions and opinion shifts are compared across time with enacted policies and policy changes.

The main result in the US as well as in Western Europe is that there is a clear relationship between opinion and policy. Opinion changes are related to changes in policy. Not always, but often, the relationship is interpreted causally. Public opinion influences the policies enacted by politicians. Representative democracy works as is told in school books. The will of the people rules. Public opinion influences public policy (Page and Shapiro 1983; Jacobs and Shapiro 1994; Kuklinsky and Segura 1995; Stimson et al. 1995; Manza and Cook 2002; Hobolt and Klemmensen 2005, 2008; Soroka and Wlezien 2007).

Two mechanisms working to create the fit between opinion and policy are emphasized in the literature – elite anticipation and election outcomes. In the first case, politicians read what people want and if necessary adjust their policies in order to avoid losing on election day. The threat of losing makes elected representatives change their ways to secure re-election. In the second case, politicians have read public opinion wrongly and are punished by voters at the polls by not being re-

elected. The consequence in both cases is that policy is changed in the direction of what people want. And it is the existence of elections that brings about the change. Either elections lead to a changing of the guard, and the new guard gives people what they want. Or the threat of election loss forces the old guard to give people what they want. Either way, democratic elections are the instrument that makes the will of the people rule (Bafumi and Herron 2008).

The enthusiasm over the clear connection between opinion and policy is sometimes exaggerated in the literature. Hakhverdian applauds Great Britain: “While the Westminster system has received much criticism for its failure to reliably link rulers to the ruled, this paper finds that dynamic representation on the left-right scale in the United Kingdom functions quite admirably” (Hakhverdian 2008: 1). James Stimson is equally elated when it comes to the United States. Dynamic representation functions so well that a rational electorate is not needed. It is enough with rational politicians. His conclusion is: “For the United States at least, the longitudinal evidence confirms... that governing bodies do respond to public opinion – and perhaps more important, to changes in public opinion.” He continues: “The revised understanding is that rational and ambitious politicians do an excellent job of anticipating what their constituents want... Rational activist politicians... eliminate the need for a rational activist electorate” (Stimson 2007: 855).

A weakness in the opinion-policy literature is that public opinion is too little problematicized. It is too often taken for granted. Feed-back processes from policy to opinion are occasionally discussed (Erikson et al. 2006), but other plausible influences on public opinion are almost always absent. One such possible influence is opinion formation emanating from elected representatives. Politicians do not just form policies. They try to form public opinion as well. In a worst case scenario it is imaginable that the connection between opinion and policy is spurious. The relationship has been brought about by a third factor – politicians’ opinion molding. First, elected legislators actively shape the will of the people, then they enact policies that suit the then formed public opinion. It looks like the will of the people, but in reality it is the politicians who rule via the public opinion they have created.

And there is nothing undemocratic about this process. Opinion formation is open to everybody in a democracy, including to politicians. The public opinion that the politicians form becomes the will of the people. However, the process does not come across as entirely tasteful. We are not accustomed to regard top-down opinion formation as one hundred percent house-broken. Top-down opinion molding smells of manipulation, propaganda and expensive TV-commercials. Allegedly virgin opinions minimally influenced by the imprint of politicians spin are more readily accepted.

Sentiments of this kind do exist and make it extra important that we empirically study the relationship – not only between mass opinion and policy – but also between mass opinion and elite opinion. If elite opinion influences mass opinion – top-down opinion molding – it is important that it is measured and highlighted in public discourses. At the same time, this might also have the consequence that the

very idealistic picture of the relationship between opinion and policy, found in the opinion-policy literature, has to be modified somewhat. In all likelihood, the connection between opinion and policy is not totally spurious, but on the other hand, maybe it is neither as strong nor unidirectional as it is portrayed in the literature.

4.3 Representation from above or from below?

In the following we will *not* focus on the relationship between opinion and policy. Instead, we highlight the relationship between mass and elite opinions – that which opinion-policy research tends to overlook – but which ought to be put more center stage. We study to what extent changes in public opinion are related to changes in the opinions of elected politicians. Change and potential influence are our interest. Are there parallel movements when opinions change among voter and legislators? And if so, who leads whom? Dynamic representation is the focus of study. The central question is whether the representation process is best characterized as a *top-down system* where elected representatives dominate opinion formation or as a *bottom-up system* where voters' policy views rule? In the first case we talk of representation from above, in the second case we deal with representation from below.

The ideal for a majority of today's democratic theorists, especially for those advocating participatory democracy, is representation from below. The will of the people should be as autonomous as possible, and not be run by politicians. The thinkers and politicians who invented representative democracy in the late 1700s – Charles-Louis de Montesquieu and Abbé Siéyès in France, Edmund Burke in England and James Madison in USA – had a somewhat different vision (Held 1987; Manin 1997; Holmberg 1999a). They did not view representative rule as an approximation to direct democracy (Ober 2008). The direct democracy of ancient Greece was not their inspiration. On the contrary, they saw their invention as something qualitatively new. Division of labour, efficiency and leadership from above were their guarding principles. Mass participation was less important except at election time when people were supposed to give or not to give their consent to the rule. Hence, the central idea of Madison and the others were that elected legislators should lead and people should approve or disapprove come election time. The model was representation from above.

4.4 The Swedish case

Sweden is an excellent case to study, although not necessarily from a theoretical point of view. First, when representative democracy in Sweden is compared internationally it does not appear deviant in any way (Miller et al. 1999; Schmitt and Thomassen 1999; Esaiasson and Heidar 2000). Because Sweden is not an interesting outlier, the results are more likely to be generalizable. Second, the Swedish case

is an excellent case due to data availability. In Sweden we find the world's longest time-series of systematic representation studies comparing voters and national parliamentarians.

The string of Swedish representation studies started in 1968/69 and comprises to date eight studies including the latest one in 2006.¹ In every study eligible voters and elected members of parliament have been asked about their opinions on between twelve and twenty political issues. The issues have not always been the same across time. Some issues have become dated and new ones have become politicized. There are, however, enough issues measured repeatedly to make possible a dynamic analysis of opinion changes. Altogether, we have some fifty cases where an issue has been studied at least twice across time among voters as well as among members of parliament (MPs). For the period 1985-2006 we have six issues included in all the studies and an additional six issues surveyed on between three and five occasions. Add to this as well that a left-right self-placement question has been put to voters and MPs in all studies since 1985. Consequently, there is no lack of data. Dynamic representation can be studied empirically.

4.5 Swedish issue agreement

We start our dynamic analysis statically by looking at degrees of issue congruence in our latest study in 2006. The results in Table 4.1 show the extent to which eligible voters and members of parliament had the same opinions on nineteen issues with identical question wordings included in the Riksdag Study and the 2006 Swedish National Election Study.

Issue agreement has been measured in three different ways. First, by taking average differences between mean issue positions among all responses (between 1 and 5). Secondly via average summed percentage differences between dichotomized opinion distributions, and finally, by examining the proportion of issues displaying different majority positions among MPs and in the electorate. Compared across issues or political parties, the three congruence measures yield roughly the same results.

If we start by looking at the results for different issues a previously known pattern appears. Congruence tends to be strongest on old politicized issues at the center of the political discourse (Holmberg 2004). In Sweden that means that issue agreement tends to be highest for left-right issues. Examples are issues like private or public health care, degree of income differences, taxation levels and the size of the public sector. Newer and less discussed problems usually reveal lower degrees of issue agreement. Examples of this in the 2006 study are research on embryonic stem cells and whether Sweden should introduce active euthanasia.

As has often been the case previously, toward the bottom of the congruence ranking we find issues dealing with immigration/refugees and the European Union (Holmberg 2000). Accepting fewer refugees into Sweden ends up 17th out of 19, while Turkish membership in the EU is last. Citizens are much less positive to accepting

Table 4.1 Policy agreement between members of the Swedish Riksdag and eligible voters 2006 (percentage regarding policy proposals as very or quite good)

Issue	v		s		mp		c		fp		kd		m		All										
	Rd	Vo Diff	Rd	Vo Diff	Rd	Vo Diff	Rd	Vo Diff	Rd	Vo Diff	Rd	Vo Diff	Rd	Vo Diff	Rd	Vo Diff									
Reduce defence spending	95	88	7	87	64	23	100	89	11	85	54	31	57	59	2	41	48	7	14	48	34	66	60	6	
More Private Health Care	0	12	12	0	23	23	70	32	38	100	58	42	100	73	27	100	79	21	100	82	18	56	49	7	
Abolish Nuclear Power	100	84	16	95	54	41	100	86	14	96	61	35	5	41	36	52	56	4	5	31	26	63	53	10	
Reduce Income Differences	100	100	0	99	91	8	100	96	4	74	89	15	33	82	49	64	81	17	18	68	50	75	85	10	
Ban Home-City Driving	83	49	34	46	52	6	87	85	2	35	46	11	20	45	25	30	40	10	5	28	23	34	46	12	
Lower Taxes	0	24	24	3	48	45	27	38	11	100	83	17	100	77	23	100	90	10	99	96	3	56	69	13	
Membership in NATO	0	2	2	2	17	15	0	7	7	18	23	5	91	33	58	43	31	12	96	44	52	37	24	13	
Reduce the Public Sector	0	8	8	1	15	14	8	17	9	100	41	59	100	55	45	94	49	45	99	66	33	49	34	15	
Forbid All Pornography	60	71	11	62	70	8	42	69	27	43	68	25	21	55	34	79	79	0	12	52	40	43	64	21	
Leave EU	95	60	35	2	37	35	67	45	22	0	29	29	0	18	18	4	29	25	1	16	15	10	33	23	
Limit Gene-Modified Food	100	93	7	75	83	8	89	91	2	75	84	9	17	83	66	88	74	14	19	81	62	59	82	23	
Strengthen Animal Rights	95	91	4	70	83	13	94	79	15	7	69	62	31	64	33	36	60	24	16	67	51	49	76	27	
Allow H-sex Coupl adopt children	100	76	24	95	49	46	94	89	5	96	48	48	100	51	49	0	19	19	51	51	0	78	50	28	
Change to the Euro Currency	0	16	16	72	35	37	4	23	23	48	45	3	100	60	40	83	44	39	95	65	30	70	42	28	
Allow active Death Assistance	22	50	28	23	61	38	47	49	2	22	57	35	39	69	30	0	29	29	51	65	14	31	61	30	
Forb Research on Embry Stem Cells	7	49	42	11	53	42	31	46	15	15	37	22	0	34	34	50	57	7	10	36	26	14	45	31	
Accept Fewer Refugees	0	23	23	2	50	48	0	17	17	4	40	36	4	39	35	10	46	36	22	60	38	8	48	40	
Six-Hour Work Day	100	84	16	27	75	48	94	80	14	0	56	56	0	45	45	0	50	50	0	41	41	21	62	41	
Allow Turkey as Member of EU	69	27	42	85	16	69	82	30	52	95	17	78	95	19	76	70	7	63	77	18	59	82	20	62	
Average 19 issues	18			30			15			33			38			23			32			23			
No of Issues with Different Majorities =	2			7			4			7			7			4			7			7			

Comment: The respondents were asked to indicate to what extent they thought the policy proposals were good or bad. All response alternatives have been dichotomized. Persons without explicit opinions (DKs and middle answers ("neither good nor bad?"), were excluded from the analysis. The degree of policy agreement is measured by a simple percentage difference measure. A small percentage difference indicates large policy agreement. The party initials are as used in Sweden: v = Left Party, s = Social Democrats, c = Center Party, fp = Liberals, m = Conservatives, kd = Christian Democrats, and mp = Greens. Rd indicates MR's opinions, Vo indicates voters' opinions.

Table 4.2 Policy agreement between MPs and voters, 1968-2006

Party	Average Difference Between Mean Issue Positions							
	68	85	88	94	96	98	02	06
v	0,9	0,9	0,7	0,7	0,6	0,8	0,6	0,7
s	0,9	0,7	0,7	0,6	0,6	0,8	0,7	0,9
mp	-	-	0,7	0,6	0,7	0,7	0,6	0,6
c	0,7	0,4	0,4	0,5	0,6	0,5	0,8	0,8
fp	0,7	0,5	0,6	0,6	0,8	0,7	1,0	1,1
kd	-	-	-	0,7	0,8	0,8	0,7	0,6
m	0,6	0,7	0,7	0,9	1,0	1,0	0,9	0,9
All	0,7	0,4	0,3	0,4	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,6
Number of Issues	20	20	12	20	16	12	18	19

Party	Average Difference Between Dichotomized Percentage Distributions							
	68	85	88	94	96	98	02	06
v	20	19	16	20	16	18	16	18
s	26	25	25	21	20	25	26	30
mp	-	-	18	16	14	16	16	15
c	21	14	16	21	24	24	34	33
fp	23	16	20	22	30	29	33	38
kd	-	-	-	23	30	33	29	23
m	20	20	22	26	34	32	30	32
All	20	15	13	14	16	16	18	23
Number of Issues	20	20	12	20	16	12	18	19

Party	Percentage of Issues Exhibiting Different Majority Positions Among Members and Eligible Voters							
	68	85	88	94	96	98	02	06
v	15	15	0	15	0	8	0	11
s	25	15	33	25	19	33	22	37
mp	-	-	17	5	0	0	0	21
c	20	15	8	30	25	33	28	37
fp	15	10	42	25	44	25	28	37
kd	-	-	-	15	38	50	22	21
m	20	15	25	20	31	33	28	37
All	35	30	25	25	33	31	33	37
Number of Issues	20	20	12	20	16	12	18	19

Comment: The analysis draws on results from 20 issue questions put to both Members of the Riksdag and a sample of eligible voters in 1968/69, 1985 and in 1994. The comparable studies in 1988, 1996, 1998, 2002, and 2006 comprised 12, 16, 12, 18, and 19 issue questions respectively. Some of the issue questions are the same through the years, but not all of them. The three different measures of policy congruence are constructed as follows: The means difference measure shows the divergence between members' and voters' opinions when all issue items have been scaled between 1-5, with 3 as a middle alternative, but excluding don't knows. The measure can vary between 0.0 (perfect congruence) and 4.0 (maximum difference). The percentage difference measure is calculated as half the summed difference between members' and voters' answers to dichotomized issue questions after don't knows and persons without clear issue positions (3s) are excluded. Zero (0) stands for perfect congruence and 100 for maximum policy difference. The third measure, proportion of issues displaying different majority positions among members and voters, is based on the results from the analysis of the dichotomized items. As in the previous measure, zero (0) stands for perfect congruence and 100 for maximum policy difference.

refugees into Sweden or granting Turkey membership in the European Union than MPs.

The results for the different parties are also recognizable from previous studies. The Greens (mp) and the Left Party (v) exhibit the highest average issue congruence between voters and MPs. The Non-Socialist parties tend to have the lowest scores with the Liberals (fp) in the bottom. Earlier during the 1980s and in the first study in 1968/69 Social Democrats (s) were in the bottom (see Table 4.2).

Turning to how the degree of issue congruence has changed across time, the hypothesis is that it has declined. A number of processes that we believe contribute to stability and high issue agreement between voters and MPs have diminished in Sweden during the last decades. One example is issue voting which shows lower levels than in the 1970s and 1980s. And issue voting among voters is one essential prerequisite for issue agreement to develop between MPs and citizens. Another example is that volatility has increased among voters. The proportion of party changers between elections is much higher today than 20 to 30 years ago and an increasing number of voters decide their party choice late during election campaigns (Oscarsson and Holmberg 2008). Thus, the impact of short term factors has increased and system predictability has decreased. A third example is that turnover of MPs in the Riksdag is higher today compared to previously (Ahlbäck Öberg et al. 2007). More volatile voters have a counterpart in more volatile MPs making the entire system less stable. Add to all this that the ideological differences between parties in Sweden have shrunk, especially the distance between the two dominant parties, the Social Democrats (s) and the Conservatives (m). The ideological profiles and issue positions of the parties have become less evident making it more difficult for voters to employ issue voting.

Looking at the results in Table 4.2, our expectations are confirmed. Issue congruence between voters and MPs has declined over the years in Sweden. The result in 2006 is the lowest we have ever witnessed. The average percent difference between the issue opinions of all MPs and the electorate is 23 percentage points. The next lowest result is found in the study in 1968/69. That study was done with the help of personal face-to-face interviews with MPs, and sometimes the phrasing of the issue questions was not exactly comparable to the questions put to voters. If we stay with the more comparable surveys done since 1985, the results reveal a slowly deteriorating level of issue congruence in Sweden, from an average percent difference of 13-15 points in the 1980s to an average difference of 18 points in 2002 and 23 in 2006.

However, looking at the development for the different parties, it is apparent that all parties have *not* experienced a down-turn in issue congruence between voters and MPs. Two small parties – the Greens (mp) and the Left Party (v) – do not show any diminished degree of congruence. Another minor party, the Christian Democrats (kd), reveals varying results but no declining trend over-time. For the remaining four parties, however, there is a clear downward trend in the level of issue agreement between voters and MPs. Most noticeable for the three Non-Socialist parties, the Center Party (c), the Liberals (fp) and the Conservatives (m), but also for the Social Democrats (s).

Consequently, our hypothesis is mostly confirmed. Over the last twenty years, issue congruence between Swedish voters and members of parliament has declined. It has gone down for the Riksdag as a whole and for four parties, including the two large and dominant parties.

4.6 Ideological left-right positions

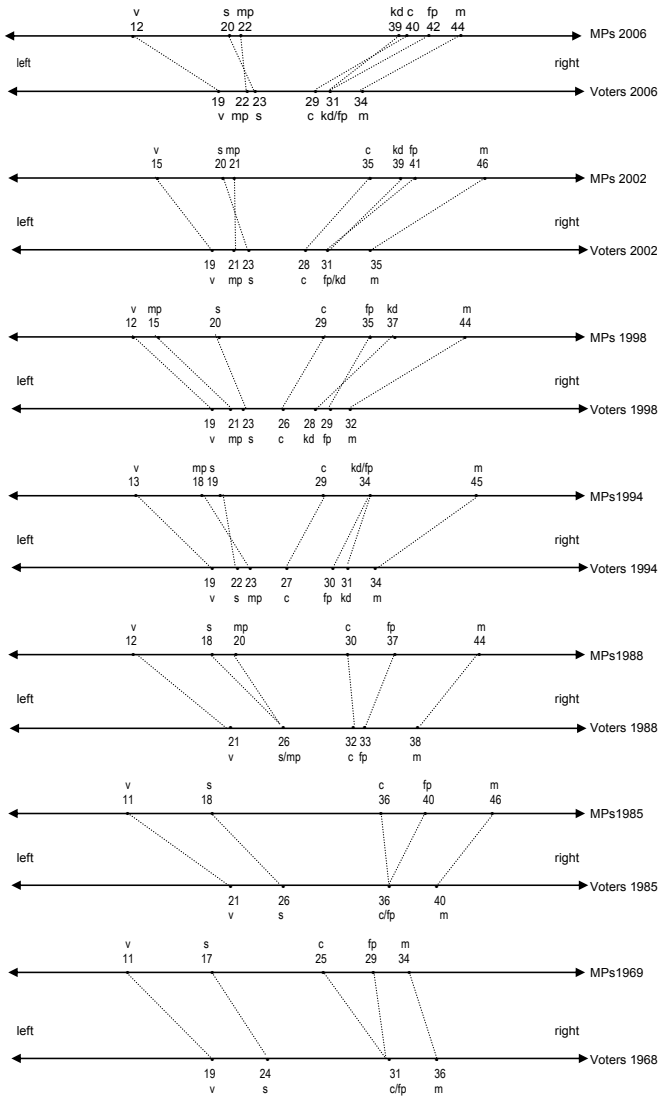
Considering how uni-dimensional and dominated Swedish politics are along the left-right cleavage, nothing is more imperative to study than the relationship between voters and elected legislators on the all important left-right scale. Left-right is a kind of super issue influencing party positioning and voting behavior much more than any other issues. Consequently, policy congruence on the ideological left-right divide says more about the working of representative democracy in Sweden than agreement on other more concrete issues.

The results in Figure 4.1 show how opinion representation on the ideological left-right dimension has changed for the different parties since the 1960s. The analysis is based on seven left-right indices, one for each study, constructed from survey answers to specific left-right issue questions. MPs and voters were asked identical questions on each occasion, but the issues differ somewhat across time, making all exact comparisons of party positions tenuous over time. Nevertheless, results can be compared in a more general way, since the findings are very robust; a replacement of one or two issues does not significantly change the outcomes.

Our results reveal that a rather dramatic change has occurred regarding how the Swedish parties represent their voters on the left-right dimension. A representation model characterized by a left divergence among party elites in the late 1960s has been replaced by an elite conflict model starting in the 1980s, where opinion differences are more noticeable and more polarized among party elites than among voters. In the 1960s Swedish representative democracy was distinguished by a system of left-leaning elected members in all parliamentary parties. In the 1980s that model transformed into an elite conflict model with more ideologically polarized party representatives than voters. Since then Socialist MPs tend to be to the left of their voters, while non-Socialist MPs are to the right of theirs. The change has been most profound for the non-Socialist parties who in the 1960s were very close to their voters on the left-right scale, although slightly to the left. Today all the non-Socialist parties in the Riksdag are further away from their voters – and in all cases are clearly to the right of their electoral supporters.

The elite conflict model with larger opinion contrasts among legislators than among voters is not unique to Sweden. On the contrary, it is the model most often found in Western representation studies (McCloskey et al. 1960; Thomassen 1976; Westerståhl and Johansson 1981; Converse and Pierce 1986; Miller and Jennings 1986; Huber and Powell 1994; Gelman 2008). Australian theorist Peter Medding has proposed that there is a functional necessity for party elites to make differenti-

Figure 4.1 Within-party agreement between voters and MPs on Left-Right dimension, 1968-2006



Note: For party abbreviations, see note at Table 4.1. The results are means based on seven left-right attitude indices. The values can vary between 10 (far left) and 50 (far right). Some of the items are the same over the years, but not all of them. The index for 1968 is constructed from 15 issue questions, for 1985 from 12 issues, for 1988 from 8 issues, for 1994 from 7 issues, for 1998 from 5 issues, and for 2002 and 2006 from the same 5 issues. The latter were: size of the public sector, lower taxes, income equality, private health care and six-hour work day. The mean for MPs is 29 in 2002 and 31 in 2006, and for voters the means are 26 and 28, respectively. For more details about the 1968 results, see Holmberg (1974, ch. 3); about the 1985 and 1988 results, see Esaiasson and Holmberg (1996, ch. 6).

Sources: Swedish Riksdag Study (SRS) and Swedish National Election Study (SNES), 1968-2006

ated appeals in order to present policy options clearly to a public and to avoid loss of support (Medding 1982; McAllister 1991).

If we look at how ideological congruence between all MPs and the electorate has changed on the left-right scale, a left-leaning Riksdag in the 1960s has been replaced by a somewhat right-leaning Riksdag since the late 1990s.² Studying the outcomes for the individual parties reveal that Left Party (v) MPs on average always have been to the left of their voters, more so in the years 1968-1988, less so in the 2000s. Social Democratic (s) MPs have also always been to the left of their electoral supporters, most evidently 1968-1988, markedly less so since the late 1990s. When Green (mp) MPs first entered the Riksdag in 1988, and again in 1994-1998, they were ideologically located to the left of their voters. In the 2000s, however, Green MPs and voters occupy the same average position on the left-right dimension. Members of the Center Party (c) were situated to the left of, or at the same position as their voters during the years 1968-1988. After that, Center MPs have gradually shifted their position to the right of their electoral supporters, most pronouncedly so in 2006. Liberal (fp) MPs have traveled a similar route; from a position slightly to the left of their voters in the late 1960s to an ever more clear location to the right of their electoral supporters in the 2000s. Christian Democratic (kd) MPs have only been included in our representation studies since 1994. But in the four surveys in which they have participated they have ideologically been to the right of their voters, less so in 1994, more clearly in the later studies. Conservative (m) MPs, like Center and Liberal MPs, have changed from an ideological position somewhat to the left of their voters in the late 1960s to a position clearly to the right during the last twenty years. In the case of the Conservatives, the location of the MPs to the right of their voters is most evident in the years 1994-2002, less so in 2006. The *New Moderates*, as the Conservatives call themselves, are still to the right of their electoral supporters, but slightly less so than the old Moderates.

4.7 Who follows whom?

What happened in the election of 2006 is illustrative. Ideological left-right opinions shifted somewhat to the right among voters as well as among MPs. Since our left-right indices are based on identical issue questions in 2002 and 2006, we can compare what took place more precisely. In the electorate, the left-right average changed from a value of 26 in 2002 to a value of 28 in 2006; the higher the score the more right oriented is the ideological position. At the same time, the left-right average among MPs shifted in the same direction from 29 to 31. Thus, voters followed MPs and moved to the right. Public opinion changed to the right in the direction of where politicians already were. The development can be seen as a case of potential opinion formation from above.

When the opinion of citizens shifts in the direction of the opinion of politicians, at the same time as the opinion of politicians is either stable or reinforced

in the same direction, we speak of a potentially elite-driven representation process. Citizens follow politicians. Mass-driven representation, on the other hand, involves opinion changes among politicians in the direction of where public opinion is. Causal processes behind the opinion shifts are of no consequence for our classification. The only thing of consequence, and the only thing we can measure given our data, is whether opinion swings are compatible with potential elite-driven or potential mass-driven opinion forming processes.

We will distinguish between four different patterns of opinion change: One, where public opinion shifts in the direction of where politicians' opinion already was (potentially elite-driven opinion change). Two, politicians' opinion follows public opinion (potentially mass-driven opinion change). Three, where citizens as well as politicians change their opinions in the direction of where, respectively, politicians and citizens were previously (potentially an elite- as well as a mass-driven opinion change). And, finally, we have a pattern where opinion changes among voters and MPs are not related – citizens' and politicians' opinions move in different directions (potentially not related opinion change).

Elite and mass opinion shifts between adjacent elections will be systematically studied for five pairs of elections, starting with the elections of 1985 and 1988, and ending with the elections of 2002 and 2006. Altogether, the analysis covers fifty one issues/cases where we can study opinion shifts among MPs as well as among voters between two adjacent elections.

The extent to which Swedish opinion shifts during the twenty year period 1985-2006 were potentially elite-driven, mass-driven, elite- as well as mass-driven, or not related between elite and mass is shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Elite or mass driven opinion shifts among Swedish MPs and eligible voters in 1985-2006

Opinion Shift Patterns	1985	1988	1994	1998	2002	All cases
	1988	1994	1998	2002	2006	
Potentially Elite-Driven	63	44	33	55	43	47
Potentially Mass-Driven	12	44	11	9	21	19
Potentially Elite- and Mass Driven	12	12	33	0	21	16
Not Related Opinion Shifts	13	0	23	36	15	18
Sum per cent	100	100	100	100	100	100
Number of Cases	8	9	9	11	14	51

Comment: The analysis is based on surveys among Swedish MPs and eligible voters measuring issue opinions on 51 issues at five pairs of elections 1985/88, 1988/94, 1994/98, 1998/02 and 2002/06. The opinion shift patterns are defined in the text.

A sizeable majority of all opinion shifts (82 percent) reveals a pattern indicating a potential relationship between opinions among citizens and politicians. Only 18 percent of all investigated cases reveal unrelated opinion movements, where mass and elite point of views were distanced from each other. The most prevalent pattern is potentially elite-driven changes (47 percent); voters shift their opinions toward where MPs' opinions already are located. The opposite process, where MPs' opinions change in the direction of public opinion is less common. It occurs in only 19 percent of the studied cases. Thus, potentially mass-driven opinion shifts are clearly happening less often than potentially elite-driven opinion changes. Potential top-down opinion formation dominates over the alternative model – bottom-up opinion formation. The somewhat ambivalent and in-between process where elite views shift in the direction of public opinion at the same time as public opinion changes toward politicians' positions, occurs only in a small minority of cases (16 percent).

Looking at within-party opinion shifts is a tricky business since the limited number of voters and MPs for many of the parties make all estimates statistically uncertain. Nevertheless, if we go ahead and study the outcome for the different parties it is apparent that potentially elite-driven opinion shifts are most common even for intra-party opinion movements (see Table 4.4). The potentially elite-driven model was more prevalent than the potentially mass-driven model for six of our seven parties. The exception is the Social Democrats (s). If the result for the Social Democrats is a random occurrence or indicative of something else – perhaps a higher degree of sensitivity to opinions among party supporters – it cannot be determined with the data at hand and will thus have to be determined more precisely by future studies.

Table 4.4 Within-party dynamic opinion interplays between MPs and voters in 1985-2006

Opinion Shift Patterns	Party							The Riksdag as	
	v	s	mp	c	fp	kd	m	Average seven parties	a Whole and All Eligible Voters
Potentially Elite-Driven	37	20	37	29	35	32	35	32	47
Potentially Mass-Driven	14	29	26	24	22	24	22	23	19
Potentially Elite- and Mass Driven	14	35	12	20	18	32	14	21	16
Not Related Opinion Shifts	35	16	25	27	25	12	29	24	18
Sum per cent	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Number of Cases	51	51	43	51	51	34	51	282	51

Inspecting the results for the parties in Table 4.4 more closely, it is evident that the elite-driven process occurs somewhat more frequently for parties which, on many issues, hold non-centrist positions. This is the case for the Greens (mp), the Left Party (v), the Liberals (fp), and the Conservatives (m). Presumably, these parties have a larger stake in molding opinions than more centrist parties. Two centrist parties – the Social Democrats (s) and the Center Party (c) – reveal the lowest proportions of elite-driven opinion shifts. Differences are not overwhelming, but they are there and they support the hypothesis – representation from above is more common among parties holding non-centrist issue positions than among more centrist parties.

4.8 Effects on policy congruence

Hanna Pitkin once established the obvious democratic claim that “representatives... must not be found persistently at odds with the wishes of the represented...” (Pitkin 1967: 209-210). In the long run, issue congruence between politicians and citizens should occur on politicized issues. Given this imperative, a look at which process - whether elite-driven or the mass-driven - is most effective at producing increased levels of policy congruence, reveals perhaps a surprising outcome. As it turns out, the elite-driven process proves to be most effective, not by much, but nevertheless more effective. As the results in Table 4.5 indicate, 63 percent of all potentially elite-driven opinion changes lead to increased levels of issue agreement between MPs and the electorate. The comparable result for potentially mass-driven opinions shifts is 50 percent.

Table 4.5 Effects of elite and mass driven opinion changes on the level of issue congruence between MPs and eligible voters

Opinion Shift Patterns	Issue Congruence			Sum Per cent	Number of cases
	Increases	The Same	Decreases		
Potentially Elite-Driven	63	4	33	100	
Potentially Mass-Driven	50	0	50	100	24
Potentially Elite- and Mass Driven	75	12	13	100	10
					8
Not Related Opinion Shifts	0	0	100	100	9

Although it is legitimate and quite common, sometimes opinion formation from above is looked upon as something less democratic and a bit suspicious. However,

we find that representation from above actually is more effective in bringing about elite-mass congruence compared to the more idealistic model of representation from below. At least in Sweden, top down opinion formation more often leads to issue agreement between elected members and the electorate than bottom up opinion processes.

4.9 Dynamic opinion representation

So far our analysis has relied on studying short term opinion shifts over five election cycles. We have investigated changing policy views among elected members and voters between adjacent pairs of elections. However, for many of the relevant issues we have access to longer time series, sometimes stretching back 20 years. Consequently, we can study opinion forming processes over longer time periods. Thus, the question becomes – are potential elite-driven opinion shifts more common than potential mass-driven changes even when the time horizon is extended to 10 to 20 years, instead of only to three to four years?

Long term opinion developments on twelve issues among politicians and citizens are presented in Figure 4.2. We can, election year by election year, follow the proportion of respondents who support different issue proposals, and we can study opinion differences between MPs and the electorate.

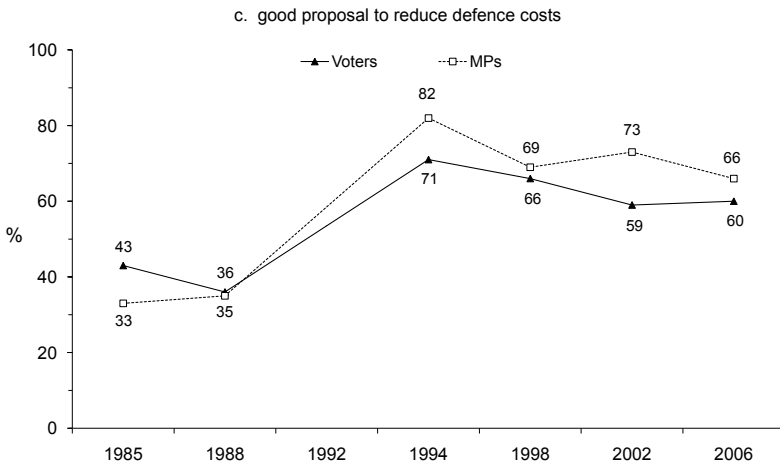
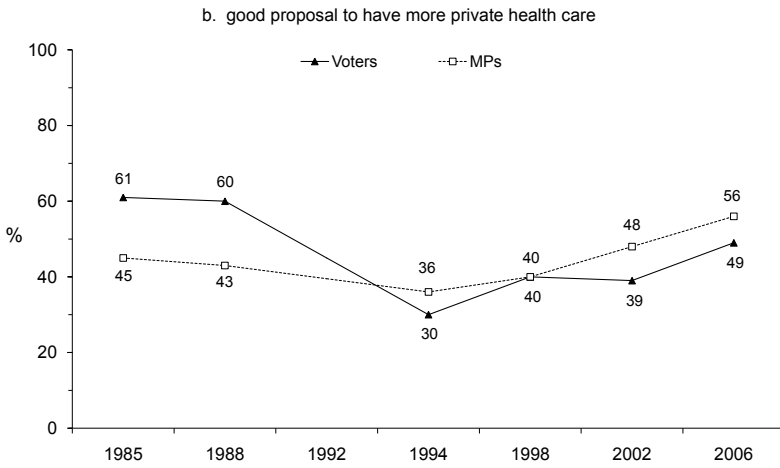
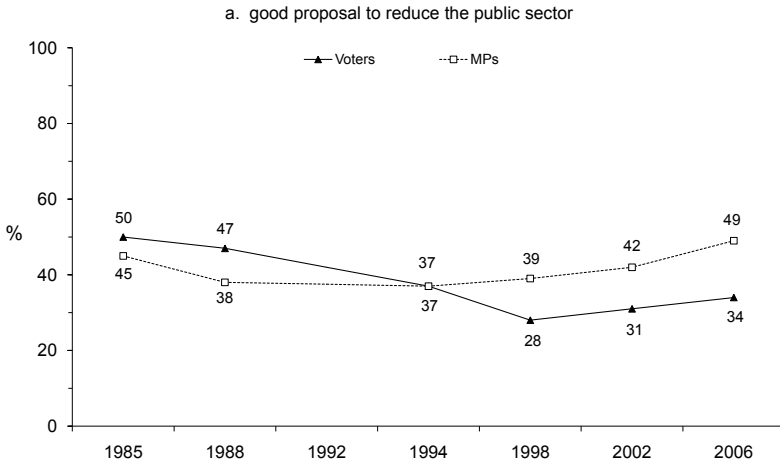
Upon first impression, we see that issue agreement between mass and elite is high in Sweden. Additionally, all opinion movements in most cases are very synchronized and parallel. Yet first impressions can be misleading. All distances between the curves would have appeared much bigger if the graphs had been done using different and larger scales.

The degree of policy congruence, for example, is best evaluated by looking at the percentage differences presented year by year under the graphs. In this case, a rule of thumb is that percentage differences in the range of maximum 6 to 10 points between opinions of politicians and the electorate are what could be expected if the process is stochastic. That is, if parliamentarians are chosen by lot instead of in elections. Percentage differences larger than 10 points clearly indicate a lesser policy congruence between elite and mass than a randomly selected Riksdag would achieve.

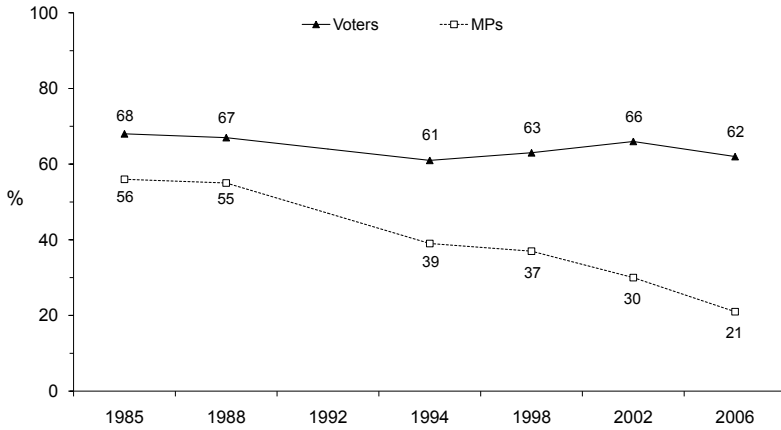
A high 81 percent of the cases in Figure 4.2 reveal a larger opinion difference than 10 points between Swedish MPs and the electorate. With such results it is very difficult to claim that issue agreement is high in Sweden. The outcome illustrates well that representative democracy involves leadership functions resulting in opinion differences as well as in opinion agreements.

However, the impression that opinion shifts among politicians and citizens to a large extent move together in a parallel fashion is not wrong. In most cases, they do in fact shift in the same direction. This occurs in 63 percent of adjacent election years – and the proportion of potentially related opinion changes across leaders and

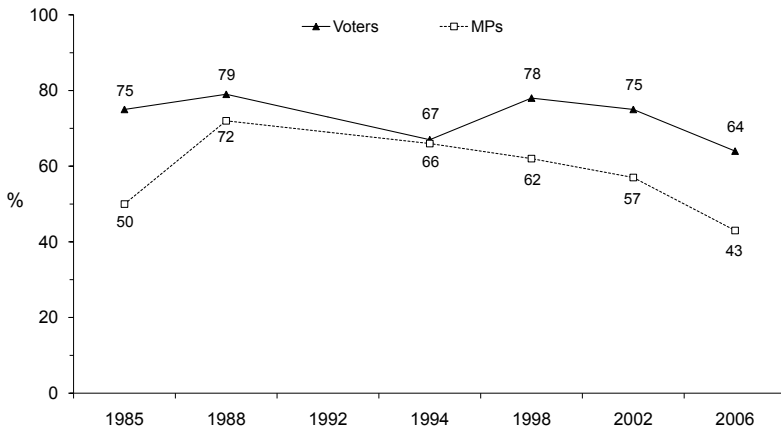
Figure 4.2 Dynamic opinion representation



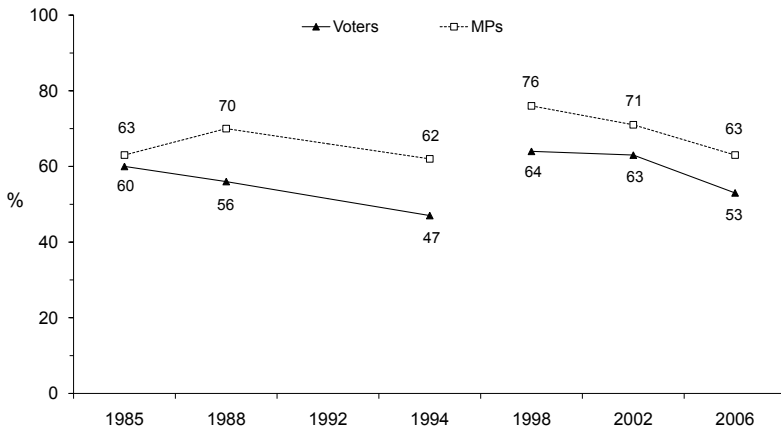
d. good proposal to introduce six-hour work day



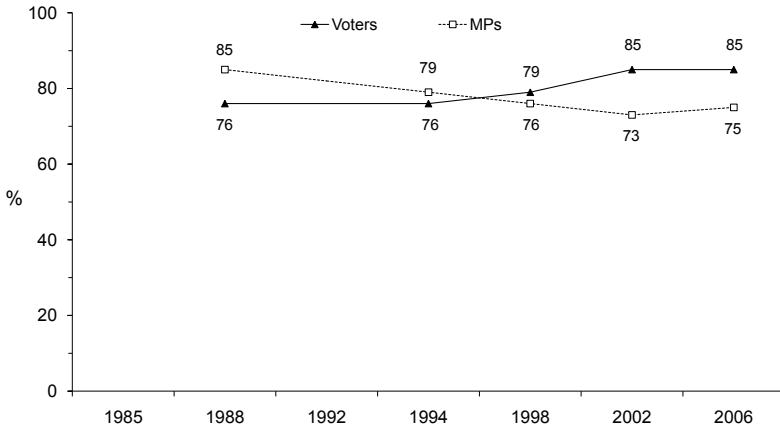
e. good proposal to forbid all pornography



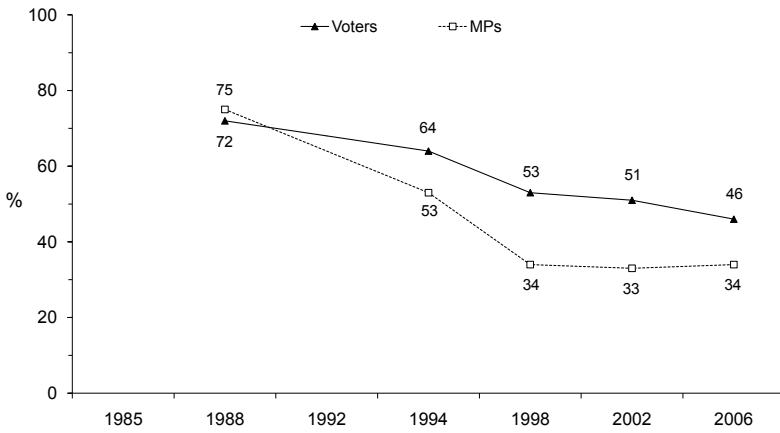
f. bad proposal to retain (-'94) / good proposal to abolish nuclear power ('98-)



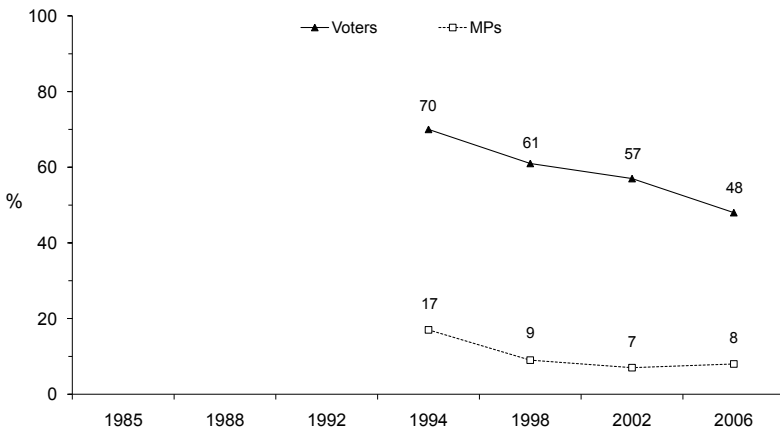
g. good proposal to reduce income differences



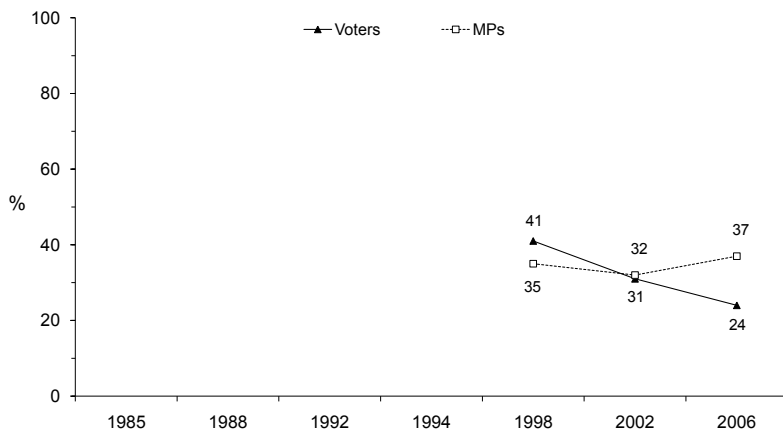
h. good proposal to ban inner-city driving



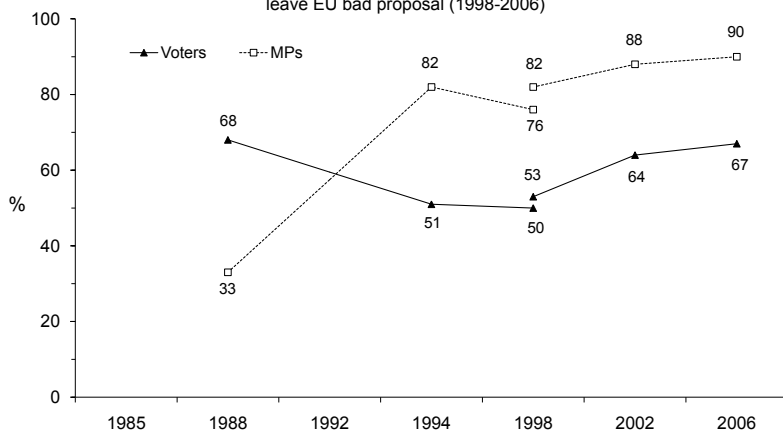
i. good proposal to accept fewer refugees



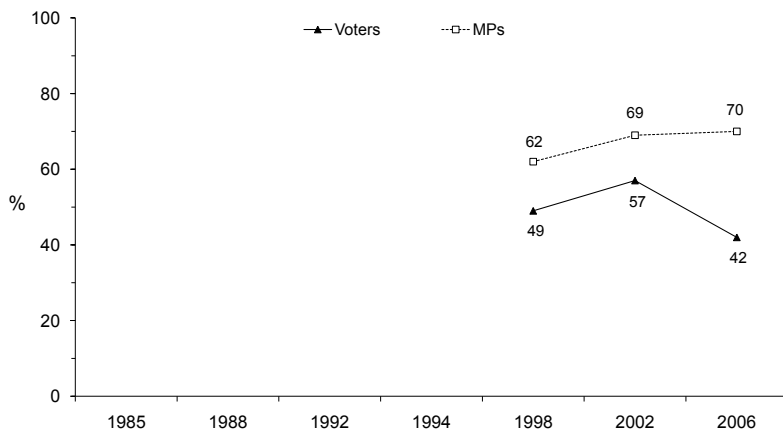
j. good proposal to become a member of NATO



k. EG-member good proposal (1988), EU-membership in favour (1994-1998), leave EU bad proposal (1998-2006)



l. good proposal to enter EMU/change to Euro



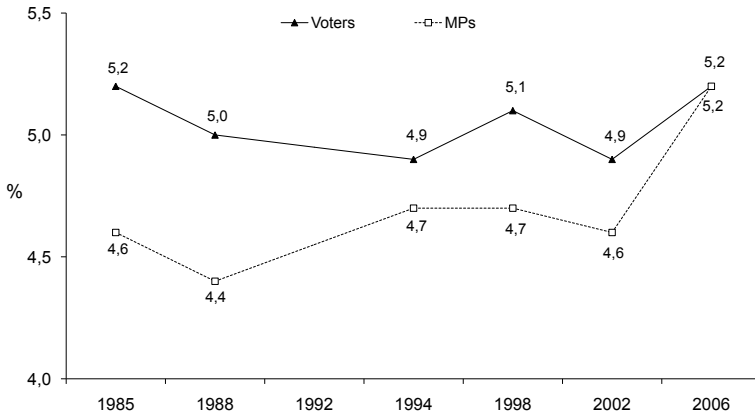
voters is as high as 81 percent. Thus, elected members and voters most often dance together, keeping step. But of course this is nothing new. We have shown it before based on the analysis of the short-term opinion movements. What is in fact fruitful from this study is that for twelve cases we can follow opinion changes over longer periods and, like before, classify whether our twelve issues predominantly are characterized by elite- or mass-driven opinion processes. As previously, in classifying the twelve cases we study the opinion shifts between adjacent election years.

Such a classification yields nine issues where opinion shifts mostly have been potentially elite-driven and three where a mass-driven process dominates. The elite-driven process is most evident for two left-right issues – whether the public sector should be reduced and if health care should be more privately run. On these issues, citizens' opinion shifts have tended to be in the direction of where politicians' opinions already are. Among the three mass-driven issues, the future of nuclear power in Sweden is the most illustrative case. Going back to 1985, Swedish people have always been *less* opposed to using nuclear power than elected politicians. When attitudes have become more positive towards nuclear power among MPs as well as among voters, it was citizens that led the opinion change and MPs followed suite; a nice example of potential bottom-up opinion formation – of representation from below.

As before, a central question is what impact opinion shifts have had on the long term level of policy congruence between politicians and citizens. Our normative expectation is to find an improvement. You can dance out of step for a short while, but preferably not in the long run. Issue agreement should increase, not decrease over time. Viewed in this perspective, the outcome is not encouraging. Among our twelve cases there are only three examples of an improved issue agreement over time. These cases are Swedish EU membership and refugee acceptance, where MPs as well as voters have become more positive which leads to decreased degrees of opinion differences, e.g. higher levels of policy congruence, and private health care where politicians have become more positive at the same time as citizens have become more negative, resulting in a diminished difference in points of view. In all three cases, the dominating opinion change pattern is a potential elite-driven process where voters shift their attitudes toward the MPs.

Our remaining nine cases reveal three where the degree of policy congruence change slightly up and down over time without any clear trend, and another six where levels of issue agreement diminish. The cases in which congruence diminishes are most often not dramatic. Levels of issue agreement fall by between 7 to 15 percentage points. However, one issue reveals a rather drastic down-turn in policy congruence between elite and mass opinions. That issue is whether Sweden should introduce a six-hour work day. In the 1980s, a majority of MPs as well as voters were in favor of a shortened work day to six hours; voters somewhat more (68 percent) than MPs (56 percent). Since then, support has plummeted in the Riksdag (to only 21 percent in 2006), but only weakened marginally among citizens (to 62 percent in 2006). As a consequence, the opinion difference has increased from 12 points in

Figure 4.3 Positions of MPs and voters on Left-Right scale, 1985-2006



Note: The Left-Right scale runs between 0 (left) and 10 (right). The results are averages based on self-placements among members of parliament and eligible voters.

Sources: SRS and SNES, 1985-2006

1985 to 41 points in 2006. A majority of MPs do not support a six-hour work day any longer (not since 1994). A majority of the electorate, however, continues to be in favor of a shortened work day (Rohdén 2004). Twenty years of discussion and opinion formation have led to an increased opinion distance between politicians and citizens, not to a decreased distance which is not a very positive result for Swedish representative democracy. This rather failed process has predominately been elite-driven.

4.10 Subjective left-right positions

Comparing the average left-right location of the Riksdag as a whole with the position of the electorate, MPs have been significantly to the left of the voters only once – in 1968/69. On all other occasions MPs have on average held ideological views close to the mean position of the electorate or slightly to the right.

However, if we instead look at how MPs and voters place themselves on the left-right scale, another pattern emerges (see Figure 4.3). Now, the Riksdag is to the left of the electorate most of the time. This is an outcome we recognize from most international research. Elected representatives during the last decades of the twentieth century tended to locate themselves more to the left compared to where their voters in turn placed themselves (Schmitt and Thomassen 1999: 119; Holmberg 2000: 169). That was also the case in Sweden in the years 1985-2002 but not in 2006. The election in 2006 witnessed an ideological shift to the right among voters

as well as among MPs, but most clearly among MPs, resulting in – for the first time – the Riksdag *not* being situated to the left of the electorate in terms of how MPs and voters perceive their own positions.

Instead the result is a Riksdag where MPs' average left-right self-placements perfectly match those of the electorate. Former subjectively left-leaning MPs have changed their positions toward the right where voters' subjective position was already; in other words, a potentially mass-driven opinion shift.

Seen more generally however, mass-driven processes are not the rule regarding opinion movements on the left-right dimension. On the contrary, they are exceptions and have occurred infrequently – once only if we look at opinion changes on the subjective left-right scale (2002-2006), and only once as well if we study left-right movements on the issue-based indices (1968/69-1985). Potential elite-driven opinion shifts have been more common. They have occurred twice if we concentrate on movements on the left-right self-placement scale (1985-1988 and 1998-2002) and three times on the left-right issue-based scale (1988-1994, 1998-2002, and 2002-2006). Thus, on the left-right dimension, potentially elite-driven processes are more frequent than potentially mass-driven processes.

4.11 Dynamic representation from above

In a representative democracy like the Swedish one, opinion movements across time on politicized issues are most often parallel among politicians and citizens. When policy opinions change, in most cases they change in the same direction among lawmakers as well as among voters. But most often, our results do *not* indicate that people lead and elected politicians follow. Most frequently it is the other way around – elected representatives lead and citizens follow. Potentially elite-driven opinion movements are more common than potentially mass-driven. Our results are better modeled as dynamic representation run from above than as dynamic representation run from below.

The lesson opinion-policy research can draw from our results is that public opinion in many cases may not be as exogenous as it is often assumed in the mainly American research tradition. The public opinion that supposedly influences policy can in turn have been influenced by politicians. What appears to be representation from below, from opinion to policy, might thus instead be representation from above – from elite opinion via mass opinion to policy. Appearances can be deceiving.

Representative democracy has a leadership component. Legislators are not only supposed to behave as delegates reacting to shifts in public opinion. They are also expected to act as trustees shaping public opinion. The old Rooseveltian truth is still relevant. Theodore Roosevelt said: "I simply made up my mind what they (the people) ought to think, and then did my best to get them to think it" (quoted from Ragsdale 1997: 229-230). And the power of the presidential 'bully pulpit' should

not be underestimated (Nye 2008). Political leadership and opinion molding from above ought not to be forgotten when we study representative democracy and opinion-policy relationships. Elite-driven opinion formation is a viable process. Dynamic representation from above is very much part of the picture.

Notes

- 1 The data used in this article originate from a series of Swedish representation studies performed in the years 1968/69, 1985, 1988, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2002 and 2006. In all instances, the studies consist of a survey with all members of the Swedish Riksdag and interviews with a sample of the electorate. The Riksdag member surveys were done in cooperation with the *Swedish National Election Studies* (SNES), which is responsible for the mass surveys. The 1968/69 Riksdag study involved personal interviews with all members of the Second Chamber; the response rate was an impressive 97 percent. The Riksdag surveys since 1985 have been done using mail questionnaires sent to all members of the now unicameral Riksdag. The response rate has in all cases been at least 90 percent. The SNES interview surveys with eligible voters comprise samples of approximately 3,000-4,000 persons each election year with response rates around 70-80 percent (Holmberg 1974, 1989, 1994; Esaiasson and Holmberg 1996; Brothén and Holmberg 2009).
- 2 In the 1968/69 study, the left-right average for the Riksdag as a whole was 6 units *to the left* of where the electorate was positioned. In 1985, 1988, and 1994 the average left-right location of the Riksdag and the electorate were *identical* (+/- 1 unit each year). The more recent studies in 1998, 2002, and 2006 exhibit in each case a Riksdag average 3 units *to the right* of the electorate.

5 Is Governing Becoming more Contentious?

Peter Mair

5.1 Introduction

FOR A VARIETY OF REASONS, SOME MORE COMPLEX THAN OTHERS, AND some of which have also been explored in Mair and Thomassen (2010; see also Mair 2009), political parties in European democracies are now more likely to be judged on how they govern rather than on the substantive policy programmes that they advocate. In other words, and to paraphrase Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002), voters are increasingly likely to be concerned with the process of governing rather than with substantive issues, and hence are more likely to evaluate parties in terms of how they perform rather than on what they promise. When it comes to winning votes in contemporary elections, claims to accountability are more likely to tip the balance than claims to representation (see also Andeweg 2003).

This also implies that elections will grow to be more about the competition between governments than about the competition between parties. In two party systems, of course, this is one and the same thing, and hence to choose parties in the UK, for example, is usually also to choose governments. In multi-party systems, on the other hand, any shift from choosing parties to choosing governments is bound to pose distinct challenges. In multi-party systems, or at least in those that lack a dominant party, and in which every actor is a minority player, politics has usually been about representation. Parties in these circumstances have tended to stand for groups of voters, and to have entered parliament and government as the voice of these voters. As Rokkan (1970: 93) once noted: “in some countries elections have had the character of an effective choice among alternative teams of governors, in others they have simply served to express segmental loyalties and to ensure the right of each segment to *some* representation, even if only a single portfolio, in a coalition cabinet.” To move from the choice of parties to the choice of governments in such a setting is therefore to move from a political culture that emphasises voice and representation to one that emphasises choice and accountability, and that

thereby approximates much more closely to the Schumpeterian model in which democracy is seen as the method in which voters choose between potential teams of leaders.

5.2 Changing patterns of competition: marginalizing the Dutch model

How is this shift realized? The most obvious answer is through a process of systemic adaptation in which the multi-party offer becomes reorganized into a two-bloc competition. That is, and with perhaps some fringe exceptions, the various parties downplay their exclusive representative role and instead combine into two competing pre-electoral coalitions, thereby combining the benefits of multi-partyism with the electoral appeal that ensues from offering voters a clear choice between alternative governments. In other words, the systems become Frenchified or Italianized, and so present their traditionally expressive voters with the opportunity to act instrumentally.¹

Such transitions are of relatively recent origin. In the 1960s, when the study of comparative European politics was taking off, and when forms of coalition government and government alternation were first beginning to be studied, it was suggested that three different types of party system or even political system were to be found (e.g., Almond 1960). There was, first, the adversarial Anglo-American model with a two-party alternating format, and which in Europe could be found in the UK and nowhere else. Second, there were the so-called 'working' multi-party systems, in which one large party tended to confront and sometimes alternate with a coalition of smaller parties, and which tended to be characterized by a reasonably widespread consensus about policy-making and a reasonably centripetal style of competition. Norway and Sweden were the most obvious examples of such a system, with Denmark approximating quite closely. In each of these systems, the dominant party was on the center-left. Ireland, then largely an unknown case, was similarly structured, although in the Irish case, and exceptionally so, the dominant party was on the center-right. The third conventional model was the so-called 'continental' party system, containing more fragmented and more ideologically driven parties, and having a more or less unstable and unpredictable set of coalition alternatives.² What was also particularly distinctive in this latter category, however, was the absence of full-scale government alternation. There was rarely competition between 'Ins' and 'Outs' in the sense required by Rose and McAllister's (1992) instrumental form of voting, but instead a frequent and hokey-cokey style of reshuffling of coalition partners. Following an election, one or more of these coalescing parties usually stayed in office, while one or more left to make room for new partners. This obviously reduced the clarity of responsibility, turning back-room negotiations rather than the electoral process itself into the decisive forum for determining government formation. Among the democracies in which this model tended to prevail were

Belgium and the Netherlands, as well as Germany, Italy, Finland, and Luxembourg, with Austria (a grand coalition) and Switzerland (the magic formula) being, in their different ways, also systems in which elite strategies served to confound the capacity of elections to be decisive in establishing the executive. In Europe in the 1960s, in other words, with relatively few democracies to speak of, the 'continental' style of coalition building and partial alternation was the single most dominant form.

Looking at the political landscape of twenty-first century Europe, by contrast, it is striking to see the sheer number of systems that now fall out with this pattern. In part, this is because systems have changed. As indicated above, the French and Italian systems are the most striking examples of this transformation. France shifted from the quite extreme fragmentation and very unpredictable reshuffling of coalitions that characterized the 14th Republic to a more stable two-bloc system in the 5th Republic, not least as a result of contagion from the electoral competition for the Presidency. In the wake of a series of key electoral reforms, on the one hand, and following the destruction and remaking of the party system, on the other, Italy also went bipolar, and has so far retained this pattern through the 1990s and beyond. Other cases also shifted, albeit less dramatically and less consistently. Elections in Austria in the late 1990s and early 2000s were bipolar in character, pitting a new coalition of Christian Democrats and Freedomites against a putative alliance of Social Democrats and Greens. In Germany also, a red-green coalition confronted an alliance of the center right, before the polity switched back to a grand centrist coalition. Denmark has also become more clearly bipolar, with the decline of the traditional center parties and the growth in the far right permitting a much sharper competition between left and right.

The change has also been wrought by newcomers, however, with the new democracies of southern and later east central Europe proving predominantly bipolar in character. Greece, Portugal and Spain are both bipolar and essentially two-party, and, together with Malta, now approximate more closely to the traditional British pattern than any other system in Europe. In post-communist Europe, bi-polarity also prevails, although in these polities it has usually taken the form of discontinuous electoral coalitions formed within multi-party contexts. In this sense the pattern of competition in the latter region is much less stable than in southern Europe, but nevertheless usually permits voters to make a choice between 'Ins' and 'Outs.'

What had been the modal 'Dutch-style' pattern of party competition in the 1960s – characterized by multi-party contests without a dominant party and with governments being formed through the reshuffling of coalitions – has therefore now been driven to the margins. Today, this pattern continues to prevail only in Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg, as well as in the fragmented and highly unstructured Finnish system. In Switzerland, the traditional pattern also prevails, but here the coalitions are not even reshuffled.

5.3 Governing as a dimension of competition: some hypotheses

What we see here, then, is evidence supporting our – as yet unstated! – *first hypothesis*: As parties lose their representative role, and as they are increasingly judged on how they govern, party competition tends to become bipolar. Non-representative parties tend to promote a Schumpeterian model of democracy. Moreover, to the extent this remains a real world trend, and to the extent it constitutes a genuine systemic response to the changing nature of both parties and voting, it will increase pressure on the as yet unadapted systems to modify their forms of electoral offer. Among other effects, this means that the Dutch system in particular will be pressured to change, not least by voters, who might look with envy on the decisiveness of elections in other polities. Belgium might have good reason to maintain its traditional pattern as a way of overcoming the deep linguistic division, while Switzerland will be under less pressure to transform its electoral process since it already has a more or less decisive system of direct democracy. The depillarized Dutch have no good reason to maintain the present style of government formation, however, and for this reason the pressure for change is likely to be felt more acutely.

When systems become bipolar, and when elections turn into contests between Ins and Outs, we can expect the government-opposition dimension to become the dominant dimension of competition. This is the *second hypothesis*. That is, we can expect an increase in the number of votes that are traded across the government-opposition divide, and – the third hypothesis – we can expect these votes to constitute an ever greater share of the total number of traded votes.

Within the scope of this brief chapter, it is impossible to do a thorough or even sophisticated test of these hypotheses or their components. Suffice it for now simply to look at the trends in the aggregate data, and to see the direction of movement in the different democracies. For ease of comparison over time, the overview presented here is restricted to the long-established democracies of Western Europe.

Let me look first at the second hypothesis mentioned above: the government-opposition divide becomes an increasingly important dimension competition. The argument underlying this hypothesis is simple enough. As parties lose their representative role, and as they become more involved in procedural competition, the voter will become less and less interested in what a party stands for, and will become instead more concerned with where it stands, whether in government or in opposition.

There are different ways of testing this hypothesis with aggregate data. One way is to look at the electoral performance of governments, as Narud and Valen (2009) have recently done and to chart change in these figures over time. Indeed, the trend here is quite unmistakable. Through to the 1960s, governments tended to lost support at elections, but the losses were relatively limited and there was also significant variation in the outcomes. This is also what Rose and Mackie (1983) had concluded in an earlier paper: analyzing data from the late 1940s to the late 1970s, they found

that the vote for outgoing governments had fallen in two-thirds of cases, while in two-thirds of the cases of coalition government, the record was mixed, with one partner losing while another partner gained. Since the late 1970s, however, the situation for governments has become much worse. According to Narud and Valen's (2009: 380) figures, more than 80 percent of outgoing governments in the 1990s lost electoral support, with the average loss across all cases being 6.3 percent. This compares to an average loss of 3.4 percent in the 1980s, and 2.1 percent in the 1970s. On these figures alone, it seems we can confirm the second hypothesis: a larger share of votes is now traded across the government opposition divide.

Table 5.1 offers a closer look at these data, which have been recalculated on the basis of country means. Here again, the answer is clear. In the 1950s, governments in some countries tended to gain and in others to lose, with the country average falling precisely on the 0. The pattern worsened for governments in the 1960s, worsened further in the 1970s and 1980s, and fell dramatically in the 1990s, when the country average fell to almost 5 percent below zero, and when only Norway and Switzerland – both, needless to say, characterized by prosperous voters and prosperous governments – recorded an average gain for the outgoing governments. By the end of the 1990s, in other words, governments almost everywhere in Western Europe had

Table 5.1 Electoral performance of outgoing governments, 1950-2000

	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s
Austria	+2.3	+1.0	-0.3	-0.6	- 6.3
Belgium	-3.1	-7.5	-0.4	-3.2	-6.1
Denmark	-0.4	-2.7	+0.2	-1.0	-1.7
Finland	+0.9	-1.7	-8.4	-0.9	-4.7
France	+1.7	+12.2	-8.1	-4.5	-12.5
Germany	+8.1	-1.3	+1.0	+0.4	-4.0
Ireland	-5.9	-0.9	-3.1	-4.5	-5.8
Italy	-3.6	-2.6	+0.1	-0.5	-4.8
Luxembourg	-4.2	-7.1	-4.1	-5.6	-2.1
Netherlands	+1.9	-3.0	-2.2	-3.1	-8.9
Norway	+1.3	-1.9	+2.2	-4.5	+0.4
Sweden	-1.0	+1.3	-2.0	-3.2	-6.5
Switzerland	+0.5	-2.6	-0.5	-3.2	+3.0
U.K.	+0.6	-1.1	-3.4	-0.8	-5.7
Mean	0.0	-1.3	-2.1	-2.6	-4.7

Bold = peak

Source: Müller and Strom 2000

become very unpopular electorally, and the scale of their losses had reached almost record levels. Only in Belgium, Denmark and Luxembourg in the 1960s, Finland in the 1970s, and Norway and Switzerland in the 1980s, did governments lose votes on a greater scale than occurred in the 1990s.

Let us pursue a bit further. The issue here is not really whether governments are popular or unpopular, but whether the government-opposition dimension – the incumbency dimension – has become a more important dimension of competition. For this reason, gains in votes are at least as important as losses in votes, and what matters is the level of aggregate vote-trading as such. This latter aspect is easily measured by treating the governing party or parties as a single bloc at each election, and treating the opposition party or parties as a separate bloc, and then measuring the inter-bloc volatility along this incumbency dimension.³ Following the second hypothesis (above), the expectation is that levels of incumbency volatility will increase over time.

The results of this simple test are reported in Table 5.2, and the original hypothesis is at least partially confirmed. The peaks in incumbency volatility tend to occur in the 1990s, as does the overall peak in the country mean. Across all the long-established democracies, incumbency volatility rises and falls between 3.5 and 5 per-

Table 5.2 Incumbency volatility, 1950-2000

	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s
Austria	2.1	1.0	1.2	1.8	6.6
Belgium	3.1	7.6	3.1	2.8	6.8
Denmark	0.9	2.7	7.8	3.9	2.2
Finland	0.7	1.3	4.4	4.4	4.7
France	10.1	3.2	12.9	2.9	13.4
Germany	3.3	1.9	4.8	2.0	5.0
Iceland	2.8	1.3	8.1	8.3	5.0
Ireland	5.1	3.6	3.6	5.1	5.8
Italy	5.8	3.3	0.2	1.2	15.0
Luxembourg	8.1	7.2	4.1	5.5	2.1
Netherlands	2.3	3.0	3.2	3.2	12.1
Norway	1.3	1.9	4.8	4.7	2.3
Sweden	3.1	1.6	2.0	3.3	6.6
Switzerland	0.9	3.0	2.4	3.2	4.7
U.K.	1.7	5.0	8.9	0.8	5.7
Mean	3.4	3.2	4.8	3.5	6.5

Bold = peak

cent in the period from the 1950s to the 1980s, and then jumps to 6.5 percent in the 1990s. Levels in a large majority of the individual countries also peak in the 1990s, with the exceptions being Luxembourg in the 1950s; Belgium in the 1960s; Denmark, Norway and the UK in the 1970s; and Iceland in the 1980s. In other words, and as suggested by the second hypothesis, the incumbency dimension of competition became more pronounced at the end of the century, with the trading of votes across the government-opposition divide reaching their highest levels at the end of the twentieth century.

Table 5.3 Aggregate electoral volatility, 1950-2000

	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s
Austria	4.1	3.3	2.7	5.5	9.4
Belgium	7.6	10.2	5.3	10.0	10.8
Denmark	5.5	8.7	15.5	9.7	12.4
Finland	4.4	7.0	7.9	8.7	11.0
France	22.3	11.5	8.8	13.4	15.4
Germany	15.2	8.4	5.0	6.3	9.0
Iceland	9.2	4.3	12.2	11.6	13.7
Ireland	10.3	7.0	5.7	8.1	11.7
Italy	9.7	8.2	9.9	8.6	22.9
Luxembourg	10.8	8.8	12.5	14.8	6.2
Netherlands	5.1	7.9	12.3	8.3	19.1
Norway	3.4	5.3	15.3	10.7	15.9
Sweden	4.8	4.0	6.3	7.6	13.8
Switzerland	2.5	3.5	6.0	6.4	8.0
U.K.	4.3	5.2	8.3	3.3	9.3
Mean	7.9	6.9	8.9	8.9	12.6

Bold = peak

So far, so good. But there is also a problem here, for not only does the incumbency dimension record greater levels of volatility in the 1990s, but so also do the systems as a whole. Indeed, total volatility more generally also peaks in the 1990s, and voters in general prove much more mobile. This can be seen in Table 5.3, which reports levels of total volatility by decade, and where the trend towards greater instability emerges much less equivocally. Following four relatively steady-state decades from the 1950s through to the 1980s, the mean national level of total volatility increases by almost half to 12.6 percent in the 1990s. It also peaks in 11 of the 15 individual democracies, the exceptions being France and Germany in the 1950s, Denmark in

the 1970s, and Luxembourg in the 1980s. In other words, there is a lot more electoral movement out there in the 1990s, and hence the growth in incumbency volatility may not represent any specific trend that is worth marking out. The incumbency dimension may provoke more vote trading in itself, but this does not mean that the dimension has become relatively more important within the system as a whole. Indeed, given the sharp growth in levels of overall volatility, it might even turn out that the incumbency dimension, though more volatile, has become relatively less important over time. This would be a disappointing result, of course, so let us remain for now with a more positively framed *third hypothesis*: the dimension of competition constituted by government-opposition divide becomes *relatively* more important over time.

This is easily tested by adapting the notion of cleavage salience proposed in Bartolini and Mair (1990: 44-45), which measures the proportion of bloc volatility – in this case, incumbency bloc volatility – over the total level of volatility, expressing this in percentage terms. The higher the percentage of bloc volatility, the more salient is the particular dimension of competition. Relatively more votes are being traded across this divide than across other putative divides within the system. Conversely, the lower the percentage, the lower the salience, and this suggests that relatively more votes are crossing other divides and dimensions.⁴

Table 5.4 Percentage incumbency volatility, 1950-2000

	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s
Austria	58.0	27.4	68.7	37.7	73.6
Belgium	45.4	65.2	63.9	30.1	55.0
Denmark	21.5	30.1	50.0	37.1	19.2
Finland	14.5	15.2	40.8	54.2	41.2
France	43.5	59.6	100.0	21.6	85.0
Germany	36.3	18.6	95.9	23.2	61.1
Iceland	40.0	31.1	60.0	69.7	43.0
Ireland	49.4	58.3	51.3	51.3	53.7
Italy	55.6	40.7	4.6	14.1	56.6
Luxembourg	43.9	75.4	33.4	36.2	35.5
Netherlands	52.0	37.8	39.7	39.8	58.6
Norway	47.1	34.8	31.7	45.4	14.5
Sweden	65.2	37.5	30.4	43.0	47.5
Switzerland	31.1	59.1	34.5	43.9	58.1
U.K.	41.3	95.4	55.4	28.2	43.1
Mean	43.0	45.7	50.7	38.4	50.1

Bold = peak

The results of a simple over-time test of the changing salience of the incumbency dimension are reported in Table 5.4. These make clear that there is no real support for the third hypothesis. The proportion of incumbency volatility with respect to total volatility varies substantially between countries and overtime, and reveals no clear trend. Taking all countries together, the average salience peaks marginally in the 1970s, and reaches its second highest level in the 1990s. In both decades, the exchange of votes across the government-opposition divide adds to roughly half the total exchange of votes in the systems as a whole. The figures are slightly lower – the mid-40s – in the 1950s and 1960s, and substantially lower in the 1980s. Across the individual countries, the distribution of values seems almost random. Norway and Sweden peak in the 1950s; Belgium, Ireland, Luxembourg, Switzerland and the UK in the 1960s; Denmark, France and Germany in the 1970s; Finland and Iceland in the 1980s; Italy and the Netherlands in the 1990s. In some polities, the salience of the incumbency dimension is very high in a given decade, in others, and in the same decade, it is very low. In other words, there appears to be a lot of noise and even randomness in these data, and certainly no evidence of a trend towards the growing relative importance of the government-opposition divide.

5.4 Conclusion

So what do we conclude from these brief and simple tests? First, we can conclude that party competition in most systems in Europe has adapted in ways that allow voters to make a clear choice between alternative governments. In ways that seemed quite inconceivable in the 1960s, the modal form of competition in contemporary Europe is now bipolar, thereby enhancing the role for accountability in electoral processes. This is a major change. Second, and with almost no caveats at all, we can conclude that governments are indeed becoming less popular, in that they are losing steadily more and more support at the end of their terms in office. Third, we can also conclude that the incumbency dimension is growing in importance, in that most of the long-established democracies have recorded a steady growth in the volume of votes traded across the government-opposition divide. However, fourth, despite the growing importance of this divide, it is clear that it is not becoming *relatively* more important, in that the exchange of votes in the system as a whole has now grown to a level that effectively smothers the growth incumbency volatility as such. The government-opposition dimension has certainly not declined in relative importance, but is instead characterized by relatively trendless fluctuations.

In other words, governing is becoming more contentious in electoral terms, but so also is everything else. The result is that even the government-opposition divide fails to stand out as the key dimension of competition.

Notes

- 1 On the distinction between instrumental and expressive voting, see Rose and McAllister (1992).
- 2 In Almond's (1960) treatment, this third model was defined as 'immobilist' and was restricted to the cases of France and Italy, two of the then 'pattern states.'
- 3 On explaining and measuring bloc volatility, and for an application to the left-right dimension of competition, see Bartolini and Mair (1990).
- 4 Of course it may also be the case that the government-opposition divide, which is defined here in procedural terms, coincides with other more substantive divides.

Part II

The Citizen Perspective

6 Democratic Congruence Re-Established The Perspective of 'Substantive' Democracy

Christian Welzel and Hans-Dieter Klingemann

“The substantive concerns are the abiding ones.”
— *Verba* 1965: 513

6.1 Introduction

SOME 2,400 YEARS AGO, ARISTOTLE (1995 [350 B.C.]) REASONED IN BOOK IV of *Politics* that democracy emerges in middle-class communities in which the citizens share an egalitarian participatory orientation. Since then theorists claimed repeatedly that the question of which political regime emerges and survives depends on the orientations that prevail among the people. Very explicit on this point, Montesquieu (1989 [1748]: 106) argued in *De L'Esprit des Lois* that the laws by which a society is governed reflect the people's dominant mentality: whether a nation is constituted as a tyranny, monarchy or democracy depends, respectively, on the prevalence of anxious, honest or civic orientations. Likewise, Tocqueville (1994 [1835]: 29) postulated in *De la Démocratie en Amérique* that the flourishing of democracy in the United States reflects the liberal and participatory orientations among the American people.

In modern times, the failure of democracy in Weimar Germany was the most flagrant illustration of the idea that political regimes rest on compatible orientations among their people. Because this failure had such catastrophic consequences as the Holocaust and World War II, it troubled social scientists, psychologists, and public opinion researchers alike. Much of the research inspired by this break with civilization shared the premise that democracy is fragile when it is a “democracy without democrats” (Bracher 1971 [1955]). In this vein, Lasswell (1951: 473, 484, 502) claimed that democratic regimes emerge and survive where most of the population believes in the idea of people power that inspires democracy. Similarly, when Lipset (1959: 85-89) speculated why modernization is conducive to democracy he

concluded that this is so because modernization changes mass orientations in ways that make people supportive of democratic principles, such as popular control over power. More recently, Huntington (1991: 69) argued that a rising desire for democratic freedoms is the mediating mechanism explaining why modernization has nurtured democratizing mass pressures in scores of countries in recent decades. Evidence for this mediation model has been presented by Welzel (2007: 417).

Most influential on this topic, Almond and Verba (1963: 498) and Eckstein (1966: 1) introduced the term ‘congruence’, claiming that political regimes become stable only to the extent to which their authority patterns satisfy people’s authority beliefs – “regardless of regime type,” as Eckstein (1998: 3) notes. According to this logic, authoritarian regimes are stable to the extent that people believe in the legitimacy of absolute authority, as much as democratic regimes are stable to the extent that people believe in popular control over political authority (Almond 1998: vii).

Inglehart and Welzel (2005: 187) have extended these propositions to suggest that in order to become stable, political regimes have to supply democracy at levels that satisfy the people’s demand for democracy. According to these authors, this pattern should be visible in a strong cross-sectional correlation between the level at which elites supply democracy and the strength of the masses’ demand for democracy.

However, in contradiction to these ideas, Inglehart (2003: 54) shows that the correlation between institutionalized democracy and mass preferences for democracy is remarkably weak, so weak indeed that democratic mass preferences explain only a minor proportion of the cross-national variation in democratic institutions. Similar results are reported by Hadenius and Teorell (2005) who raise skepticism against any explanation of democracy that invokes mass orientations. These findings suggest the abandonment of the assumption of a close link between political regimes and mass beliefs, and an alignment with elite theorists who have for a long time claimed that democracy emerges and survives when elites agree on it, not when the masses want it (O’Donnell and Schmitter 1986; Higley and Burton 2006).

Before accepting such a far-reaching conclusion, we examine another possibility. This possibility is hinted at by the literature on “democracies with adjectives” (Collier and Levitsky 1997). This literature suggests that standard measures of institutionalized democracy tend to overrate the actual supply of democracy, for these measures largely disregard the power practices, in particular rule of law, that set the freedoms that define democracy into effect (Diamond 2002; Zakaria 2003; O’Donnell 2004). On the demand-side, the literature on “democrats with adjectives” (Schedler and Sarsfield 2007) goes in the same direction, implying that standard measures of democratic preferences tend to overrate people’s actual demand for democracy, as these measures overlook the mass values that make people appreciate democracy for the freedoms that define it (Bratton and Mattes 2001; Rose and Shin 2003; Mattes and Bratton 2006; Shin and Tusalem 2007).

Thus, standard measures of both the supply and demand of democracy could be largely spurious. They might lack ‘substance’, in that they fail to tap genuine

commitments to the freedoms that define democracy. If this is so and standard measures of democratic institutions and democratic preferences are indeed devoid of substance, congruence should be evident in significantly greater strength when one substantiates supply-side and demand-side measures of democracy, qualifying them for the governance practices and mass values that involve genuine commitments to the freedoms that define democracy. The point then is not a lack of congruence but a lack of substance in standard measures with which congruence is examined.

The article proceeds in the following steps. First, we outline in theory under which premises congruence should work, arguing that a focus on substantive democracy is needed to understand the limits within which congruence is likely to operate. Then we show that standard measures of both institutionalized democracy and public preferences for democracy lack substance in the sense that they fail to tap genuine commitments to the defining freedoms of democracy, in terms of power practices on the part of elites and in terms of firm beliefs on the part of the masses. Using indicators of ‘enlightened’ power practices to substantiate supply-side measures of democracy, and indicators of ‘emancipative’ mass beliefs to substantiate demand-side measures of democracy, we find congruence to be strikingly evident: substantive supplies of democracy satisfy substantive demands for it to 72 percent. Elaborating on this finding, we find that substantive demands for democracy emerge for other reasons than the prior exposure to democracy and that once such demands are present, they translate into expressive actions that make these demands felt to those in power. We interpret this as evidence that congruence emerges as a supply-side response to mass demands for democracy, provided these demands are substantive. We conclude that a focus on ‘substantive democracy’ re-establishes a too prematurely dismissed idea: democratic congruence.

6.2 Theory

6.2.1 Why congruence?

Scholars in the tradition of congruence theory assume a close association between the level at which democracy is institutionalized and the extent to which people prefer it. This association constitutes the ‘structure-culture link’ that is thought to stabilize political regimes (Almond and Verba 1963: 246). Inglehart and Welzel (2005: 186-91) conceptualize this link as a “supply-demand relation with regard to democratic freedoms,” arguing that the institutionalization of democracy constitutes the supply of democratic freedoms while mass preferences for democracy constitute the demand for these freedoms. In a supply-demand logic, congruence means that institutional supplies of democratic freedoms are under selective pressures to satisfy the public demands for these freedoms (Inglehart and Welzel 2005: 187).

This assumption is informed by the legitimacy framework formulated by Eckstein (1979), Gurr (1974) and Eckstein and Gurr (1975). Accordingly, congruence shapes the evolution of political regimes by determining the amount of mass support a given regime can rely on and, vice versa, the amount of mass opposition it risks provoking. By definition, congruent regimes are in accordance with a population's prevailing legitimacy beliefs and thus receive more mass support than incongruent ones. By contrast, incongruent regimes dissatisfy a population's legitimacy beliefs and because of this risk more mass opposition than congruent ones. While mass support helps to stabilize given regimes, mass opposition is a risk factor that increases the probability of regime termination. These conditions favor congruent regimes in making them more supported and less opposed than incongruent ones. Thus, congruent regimes outlive and, at any point in time, outnumber incongruent ones. This should be reflected in a significant cross-national correlation between given regimes' actual authority structures and the respective populations' beliefs about what forms of authority are legitimate. With respect to democratic freedoms, this implies a significant correlation between the amount of freedoms institutionalized by a regime and the amount of freedoms desired among the population. In a strong formulation of congruence theory, we expect that variation in national populations' demands for democratic freedoms explains most of the regime variation in the supply of these freedoms.

Few scholars doubt that supply-demand congruence is indeed a factor that matters for the survival of *democratic* regimes (Rose et al. 1998; Diamond 1999; Bratton and Mattes 2001; Rose and Shin 2001; Mishler and Rose 2002; Dalton 2004; Bratton et al. 2005; Shin and Wells 2005; Mattes and Bratton 2007; Shin and Tusalem 2007). This is plausible because when, in a democracy, the public does not really value democratic freedoms and instead prefers strong leaders and some version of authoritarian rule, anti-democratic forces are more easily voted into office and little opposition from the public will emerge when power holders compromise or abandon democratic freedoms (Diskin et al. 2005).

For authoritarian regimes, the case is often seen differently. Unlike democracies, authoritarian regimes can use repression to silence opposition (Tarrow 1998: 83-87). Leaving opposing mass demands unsatisfied does not, in this view, affect the stability of authoritarian regimes. Repression allows them to endure, even if the masses find their preferences 'falsified' (Kuran 1991).

However, most authoritarian regimes did not have to prove their ability to repress mass opposition. Many of them were not confronted with widespread mass opposition throughout most of their time (Wintrobe 1998: 20; Francisco 2005: 58). This might be partly because a credible *threat* of repression alone keeps people from openly opposing a regime. However, for the credibility of repression to be the key factor in silencing opposition, there must be a predominantly opposing attitude in the first place. A fundamental source of opposing attitudes is the belief in the illegitimacy of authoritarian rule, yet this belief might not always be widespread. In fact, as Huntington (1991: 143) notes, most of the authoritarian regimes that were swept

away by mass opposition late in the twentieth century, were *initially* “almost always popular and widely supported.” Obviously, as long as authoritarian regimes are supported, people do not consider authoritarian rule illegitimate. Only when people find appeal in the freedoms that define democracy, do they consider authoritarian rule illegitimate (Feng and Zak 1999: 163). Only then can the threat of repression become a relevant factor in stabilizing authoritarian rule.

Yet, even a credible threat of repression does not guarantee the survival of an authoritarian regime when people desire democratic freedoms. Instead, there is ample evidence from the non-violent, pro-democratic mass upheavals of recent decades that when a population begins to long for freedoms, mass opposition does emerge – despite repressive threats (Karatnycki and Ackerman 2005; Schock 2005; Welzel 2006, 2007).

The point is that the desire for democratic freedoms and the corresponding belief in the illegitimacy of dictatorial powers are variables, not constants. When these variables grow strong, they provide a powerful motivational force for the mobilization of mass opposition in authoritarian regimes (Oberschall 1996: 97, 102; Welzel 2006: 874; 2007: 399). Repression cannot isolate authoritarian regimes from the destabilizing effect of eroding legitimacy and rising mass demands for democracy (Tarrow 1998: 85). Hence, congruence does matter for authoritarian regimes as it does for democracies. Authoritarian regimes are congruent as long as their lacking supply of democratic freedoms corresponds with weak demands for these freedoms among the masses. But when these demands grow strong, authoritarian regimes become incongruent and face a greater likelihood of emerging mass opposition, which implies a greater risk of collapse.

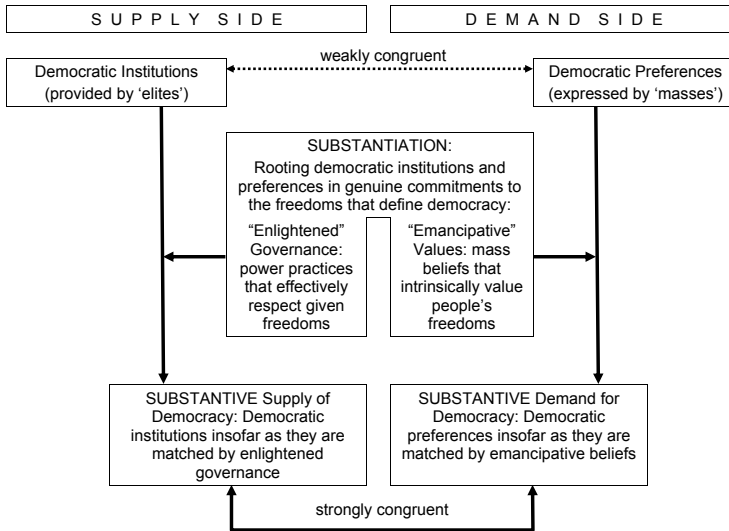
The selective mechanism supposed to favor congruent over incongruent regimes is the amount of mass support a given regime is generating, or respectively, the amount of mass opposition it is risking. Regimes whose authority patterns are in accordance with most people’s legitimacy beliefs generate regime support, which is helpful to regime survival. Regimes whose authority patterns are in discordance with most people’s legitimacy beliefs are, by definition, unpopular. Incongruent regime unpopularity is a risk factor, which increases the likelihood of termination by anti-regime mobilization and mass upheavals. The higher risk of termination on the side of incongruent regimes creates a tendency towards the prevalence of congruent regimes.

Congruence theory suggests that institutionalized authority patterns tend to be in accordance with the legitimacy beliefs of most of the population in a country. Thus, people’s authority beliefs should – at any given point in time – be a powerful predictor of the institutionalized authority patterns. Applied to democratic freedoms, congruence means that mass demands for democratic freedoms are of high predictive power for the institutional supply of these freedoms. One possible measure of congruence, then, is the extent to which people’s demand for democratic freedoms predicts the institutional supply of these freedoms.

6.2.2 Why a focus on 'substantiveness'?

Democracy has a supply side and a demand side. On the supply side it becomes manifest when power holders institutionalize democratic freedoms. On the demand side it becomes manifest when ordinary people want and value democratic freedoms. An essential quality of both the supply of democracy and the demand for it is 'substantiveness.' With substantiveness we denote *the extent to which power holders and ordinary people are committed to the freedoms that define democracy*. On the supply side, such a commitment requires that elites *effectively* respect democratic freedoms in the daily practice of power. To the extent they do so, the supply of democracy is substantive. On the demand side, a genuine commitment requires the masses to value democracy *intrinsically* for the freedoms that define it. To the extent this is the case, demands for democracy are substantive. 'Substantiation' then is the *process by which democracy becomes effectively respected on the supply-side and intrinsically valued on the demand-side*. Figure 6.1 summarizes this conception of substantive democracy.

Figure 6.1 Substantiating democracy on the supply and demand side



Based on this conceptualization we hypothesize that demands for democracy exert selection pressures on the supply of democracy if – *and only if* – these demands are substantive. Let us explicate this qualification.

Power holders opt to supply democracy for various reasons, not all of which are a response to a public demand for democracy. For instance, foreign powers

might push a country's leaders to introduce democracy and when the respective country depends on foreign aid such pressures might be successful (Burnell 2008; Mansfield and Pevehouse 2008). But insofar as democracy is supplied in absence of corresponding demands, power holders are under little domestic pressure to respect democratic freedoms in the daily practice of power. As a consequence, power-holders' power-maximizing interests remain unchecked, making it easy to corrupt formally enacted democratic freedoms. In this case, the supply of democracy is devoid of substance.

When ordinary people for their part prefer democracy, they might do so for various reasons, not all of which reflect an intrinsic valuation of the freedoms that substantiate democracy. People may prefer democracy because they hope that it makes their country prosperous or because they see democracy as a means to redistribute wealth from the rich to the poor. In this case, people are interested in the economic output of democracy, not in the freedoms that substantiate democracy (Bratton and Mattes 2001). Public pressures on power holders to effectively respect democratic freedoms are unlikely to emerge in this case. Such pressures are likely to emerge only when people value democracy for its substantiating freedoms. Consequently, the supply of democratic freedoms should become subject to demand-side pressures only to the extent that these demands are substantive.

In summary, our main hypothesis is that a focus on substantively supplied and demanded democracy is needed to discover congruence in its real strength, for *the selection pressures that generate congruence should only emanate from substantive demands only.*

6.3 Analysis

6.3.1 Incongruent democratic supplies and demands

It became standard to tap mass demands for democracy by asking people about their regime preferences. The *Global Barometer Surveys* and the *World Values Surveys* ask people around the world how strongly they agree with the idea of 'having a democratic system.' However, Bratton and Mattes (2001), Mishler and Rose (2002), Shin and Wells (2005) and others emphasize that regime preferences for democracy are meaningless unless they go together with a rejection of authoritarian alternatives to democracy. Thus, Klingemann (1999) measures people's democratic preferences by coupling their support for democracy with their rejection of authoritarian alternatives, like the idea of "having the army rule" or "a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliaments and elections." Only respondents who agree to have a democratic system *and at the same time* disagree with authoritarian alternatives, show a consistent preference for democracy.

We use *World Values Surveys* data because these surveys cover regime preferences for by far the widest array of countries and because these are the only data that include measures of values as we need them for our purposes.¹ Depending

on whether respondents prefer democracy strongly or fairly and at the same time reject authoritarian alternatives strongly or fairly, their commitment to democracy is measured on a nine-point scale with minimum 0 and maximum 100. Scores above 50 indicate the extent to which people prioritize democracy over authoritarian rule, while scores below 50 indicate the reverse.

We operationalize the strength of an entire society's democratic preference using the population mean on the just described scale. Population mean-levels can obtain any value between 0 and 100.² Applying congruence theory to this measure one would expect that cross-national variation in democratic preferences is strongly related with variation in institutionalized democracy, such that the more a public prioritizes democracy over authoritarian rule, the more democratic a country is in its institutional structures.

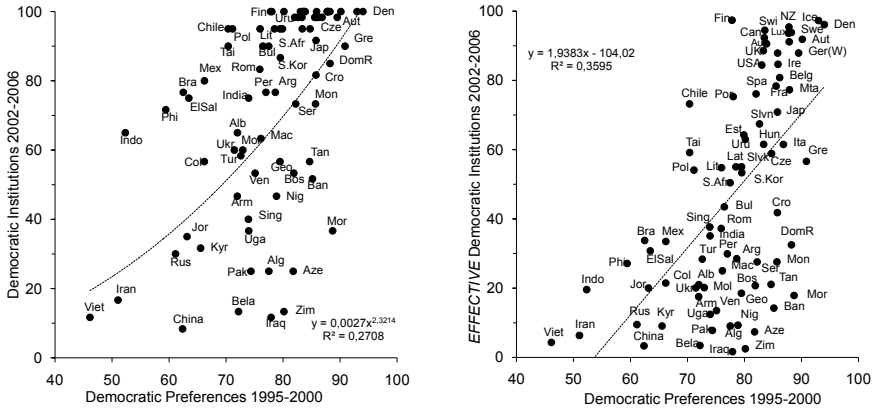
The most widely used indicators to measure the level at which countries supply democracy are the Freedom House ratings of civil and political freedoms (Freedom House 2007).³ We follow this practice and use these measures, too, but we reverse the 1-7 Freedom House ratings for civil and political freedoms such that higher numbers indicate more freedom. We standardized the resulting scale to a maximum of 100 and a minimum of 0.

How much congruence is there between unsubstantiated indicators of democratic institutions and democratic preferences? Updating Inglehart's (2003: 49) findings on a broader basis, the left-hand diagram in Figure 6.2 shows a statistically significant link between a society's democratic institutions in 2002-06 and its democratic preferences in 1995-2000. Even though this link is positive, its most striking property is its weakness. Most of the variation in the supply of democracy (73 percent to be precise) remains *unexplained* by the demand for democracy.

The obvious weakness of congruence is not a methodological artifact of the Freedom House ratings. Using instead the democracy-autocracy scores from the Polity project (Marshall and Jaggers 2008), the correlation between the demand for democracy and the institutional supply of democracy drops to $r = .33$ (compared to $r = .55$ when Freedom House is used). Using a combination of the Freedom House and Polity scores does not do a better job in depicting congruence either. Different indicators point to the same conclusion: there is much more incongruence than congruence between the supply of democracy and the demand for it.

There are two ways to read this finding. Either the link between democratic supply and demand is indeed as weak as we have seen. Or congruence is limited to substantive democratic supplies and demands and simply does not show up in its real strength with unsubstantiated measures. The following sections show that the second possibility holds true.

Figure 6.2 Democratic preferences and democratic institutions I



Note: Country abbreviations are listed in the appendix of Chapter 2.

Sources: World Values Survey (WVS), 1995-2000, and other sources (see text for details)

6.3.2 Substantive supply: effectively respected democratic freedoms

A growing literature suspects that democracy often lacks substance in the sense that democracy's defining freedoms are not effectively respected in the elites' daily practice of power (Collier and Levitsky 1997; Diamond 2002; Zakaria 2003; Rose 2009). Because democratic freedoms are institutionalized through constitutional laws and rights, democratic freedoms cannot take effect when the elites do not respect legal norms in their daily practice. Democratic freedoms are effectively respected to the extent that elites abide to the rule of law (Rose 2009). To the extent that rule of law is absent, it disables democratic freedoms (O'Donnell 2004). Corruption is a key indicator of violated rule of law, involving illegal practices like financial misappropriation, bribery, patronage, clientelism and nepotism (Sandholtz and Taagepera 2005). These mechanisms disable democratic controls over public spending and personnel recruitment, the two core areas of democratic politics (Warren 2006). Undermining democratic controls disempowers the people. And because people's empowerment is what democracy is about, the disempowering effects of corruption and rule of law violations bereave democracy of its substance. To supply democratic freedoms in substantive ways, elites must respect these freedoms through lawful and uncorrupt – in a word: 'enlightened' – power practices.

The Freedom House freedom ratings do by no means absorb power practices that indicate how effectively elites indeed respect given freedoms. As shown by Welzel and Alexander (2011), this is obvious from the weak link between the freedom ratings and rule of law data, such as those provided by the World Bank's 'good governance' indicators. If the freedom ratings indeed measure effectively respected

Table 6.1 Substantive supply (effective democratic institutions)

<i>Effective Democratic Institutions</i>		
CONCEPTS	Democratic Institutions	Substantiation Factor
MEANINGS	Institutionalization of democratic freedoms	“Enlightened” Governance: power practices that respect institutionalized freedoms effectively
INDICATORS	Combined FH Civil and Political Freedom Ratings	Combined WB Rule of Law and Control of Corruption Ratings
SCALES	Percentage Scale (0 to 100 range)	* Weighting Scale (fractions of 1.0)
Weighted Percentages		

Table 6.2 Substantive demand (intrinsic democratic preferences)

<i>Intrinsic Democratic Preferences</i>		
CONCEPTS	Democratic Preferences	Substantiation Factor
MEANINGS	Preferences for democracy over authoritarian alternatives	“Emancipative” Values: mass beliefs that value intrinsically the freedoms underlying democracy
INDICATORS	WVS Klingemann-index of democratic regime preferences	WVS Inglehart/Welzel index of “self-expression values”
SCALES	Percentage Scale (0 to 100 range)	* Weighting Scale (fractions of 1.0)
Weighted Percentages		

freedoms, the freedom ratings must absorb rule of law differences so that countries with the same freedom rating show very little variation in rule of law. However, countries with the same freedom rating show great variation in rule of law. To be precise, 60 percent of the cross-national variation in rule of law is unabsorbed by the freedom ratings (Welzel and Alexander 2011). In light of this evidence, the Freedom House ratings measure the supply of democratic freedoms in a way that is not sufficiently substantiated by rule of law. It is a largely unsubstantiated measure of the supply of democracy (Rose 2009).

As described in Table 6.1, we combine information on the institutionalization of democratic freedoms with information on enlightened governance, depreciating

democratic freedoms to the extent that enlightened governance is absent. Technically, we use the Freedom House ratings of civil and political freedoms, transformed into a percentage scale from 0 to 100, and weigh these percentages by fractions from 0 to 1.0 indicating the degree of lawful and uncorrupt governance (1.0 representing the known maximum and 0 representing the known minimum of lawful and uncorrupt governance). The source of the latter data are the World Bank's 'rule of law' and 'anticorruption' indices, which are averaged into a combined index of 'enlightened governance' as the two scores correlate anyway at $r = .95$ (Kaufman et al. 2005).⁴ We interpret the resulting index as measuring *effective* democratic institutions, which indicates a 'substantive' supply of democracy.

A validity test of the index of effective democracy is provided by Welzel and Alexander (2011). These authors deal with the sometimes raised criticism that countries obtain more favorable rule of scores when they are more effectively repressive, but the authors dismiss this criticism on the basis of evidence showing that, even in the context of authoritarian regimes, the 'rule of law' scores correlate strongly negatively with human rights violations and state repression.

We define the supply of democracy as the extent to which countries institutionalize democratic freedoms, no matter how much these freedoms are substantiated by power practices that respect them. The *substantive* supply of democracy is the institutionalization of democratic freedoms *insofar* as they are effectively respected in the elites' practice of power. A substantive supply of democracy involves a genuine commitment to democratic freedoms on the part of the power holders.

The right-hand diagram in Figure 6.2 retains the unsubstantiated measure of democratic mass demands on the horizontal axis but displays the substantiated measure of democratic institutions on the vertical axis. Weighted for enlightened governance, democratic institutions now show greater congruence with a population's democratic preferences. Statistically, the substantiated measure of democratic institutions is explained to 36 percent by variation in mass preferences for democracy, in contrast to 27 percent for the unsubstantiated measure. Comparing the two diagrams in Figure 6.2, it is obvious that supply-side substantiation reveals more congruence because it deflates the supply of democracy where the unsubstantiated measure shows an over-supply relative to people's demand. This pattern reveals an important regularity: whenever democratic institutions seem to be supplied in excess of people's demand for democracy, unlawful and corrupt power practices bereave these institutions of their substance.

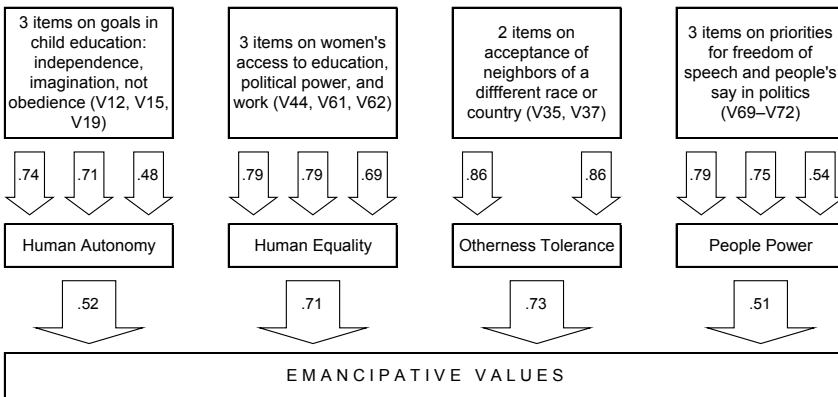
6.3.3 Substantive demand: intrinsically valued democratic freedoms

The recent literature underlines the need to come to a more qualified understanding of what is behind people's demand for democracy (Thomassen 1995; Klingemann 1999; Rose and Shin 2001; Diamond 2003; Dalton 2004; Bratton et al. 2005; Shin and Tusalem 2007). To accomplish this one has to go beyond mere regime preferences, tapping the values that motivate people to demand democracy (Schedler and

Sarsfield 2007). Doing so enables one to identify ‘intrinsic’ preferences for democracy (Bratton and Mattes 2001). In contrast to ‘instrumental’ preferences, which support democracy as a means to other ends, such as prosperity, intrinsic preferences value democracy for the freedoms that define it. Thus, an intrinsic valuation of democracy requires people to adopt emancipative values that prize the freedoms of the people (Inglehart and Welzel 2005: 270).

Using wvs data Welzel (2006, 2007) operates with different versions of ‘emancipative values,’ of which we employ the one we consider the most convincing in conceptual terms. As shown in Figure 6.3, this version comprises four key orientations: (1) an *emphasis on people power* reflected in priorities for the voice of the people; (2) an *emphasis on human equality* reflected in support for the equality of women to men; (3) a *toleration of otherness* reflected in an acceptance of neighbours of different origin; and (4) an *emphasis on human autonomy* reflected in support for ‘independence’ and ‘imagination’ against ‘obedience’ as goals to teach children.

Figure 6.3 A concept of emancipative values



Note: Numbers in arrows are factor loadings obtained from an exploratory factor analysis. 11 items go into 4 sub-indices, which in turn go into one encompassing index. Cronbach's alpha for the 11 items is 0.62. KMO-measure for the four-dimensional solution at the first-level factor analysis is 0.68. KMO for the one-dimensional solution at the second-level factor analysis is 0.60.

These four orientations can be summarized into an overall index of emancipative values following either a ‘reflective’ or a ‘formative’ logic (Baxter 2009). In reflective logic, one summarizes items because, empirically, they are found to ‘reflect’ largely inter-changeable components of the same underlying dimension. Results from a hierarchical factor analysis are reported in Figure 6.3 and demonstrate that this strategy would be justified here. On the first level, the 11 items reflect four distinct sub-dimensions, representing the four key orientations outlined above. But when one allows these sub-dimensions to be correlated (using an oblique rotation), they

reflect one overarching dimension at the second level, representing emancipative values.

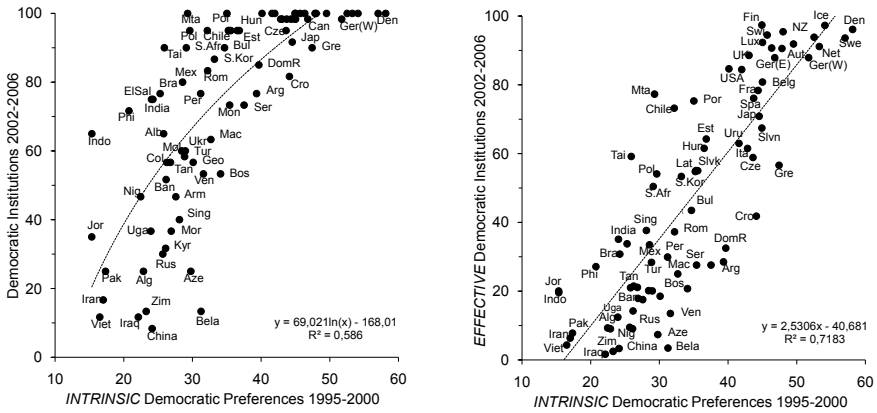
In a formative logic, one summarizes items precisely because they are *not perfectly* inter-changeable but instead have unshared variances that complement each other within the definitional range of an overarching concept, such as emancipative values. We prefer this formative logic and summarize the eleven items because they have unshared variances that complement each other within the definitional range of emancipative values, that is, a valuation of human freedom. In formative index construction, one adds components with equal weight rather than using 'reflective' factor weights. Accordingly, we build the index of emancipative values in a two-level procedure as shown in Figure 6.3. First, each item is coded from 0 to 1.0 in such a way that 0 indicates the least emancipative and 1.0 the most emancipative position. Then, the items are averaged into the four sub-indices shown, which finally are averaged into the overall index of emancipative values. This is a multi-point index with minimum 0 (for someone taking the least emancipative position in all four orientations) and maximum 1.0 (for someone taking the most emancipative position on all four orientations). Because of their focus on ordinary people's freedoms, emancipative values are of substantiating quality for democratic regime preferences.⁵

The level of emancipative values determines how much a democratic preference of given strength is tied to an intrinsic valuation of the freedoms that substantiate democracy. Thus, we weight a person's democratic preference, measured in percentages, by this person's emphasis on emancipative values, measured in fractions. This produces weighted percentages that yield *intrinsic* preferences for democracy. To have a strongly intrinsic preference for democracy a person must both have a strong preference for democracy and hold strong emancipative values. To measure an entire society's intrinsic democratic preferences we calculate the national average on the index of intrinsic democratic preferences, as depicted in Table 6.2.

The demand for democracy is the extent to which people prefer democracy, no matter how much these preferences are rooted in emancipative values. The *substantive* demand for democracy is that part of democratic preferences which is rooted in emancipative values. Only substantive demands reflect a genuine commitment to democratic freedoms on the part of ordinary people.

The left-hand diagram of Figure 6.4 plots the unsubstantiated supply measure against the substantiated demand measure. Comparing this diagram with the two diagrams in Figure 6.2, it becomes obvious that demand-side substantiation reveals even more congruence than supply-side substantiation: after demand-side substantiation the variation in democratic institutions that is explained by democratic mass preferences increases from 27 to 59 percent. Comparing the left-hand diagram in Figure 6.4 with the left-hand diagram in Figure 6.2 evidences an important reason why demand-side substantiation shows more congruence: whenever the supply of democracy seems to under-satisfy the people's demand for democracy, the demand turns out to be without substance, lacking the values that make people prize democracy for its defining freedoms.

Figure 6.4 Democratic preferences and democratic institutions II



Sources: WVS 1995-2000 and other sources (see text for details)

6.3.4 Congruence re-established

These findings show that where democratic freedoms are supplied on a level that seems to over-satisfy people's demand for democracy, these freedoms are not effectively respected by power holders. In substantive terms, there is no over-saturation in these cases. And where democratic freedoms are supplied on levels that seem to under-satisfy people's demand for democracy, these demands lack an intrinsic valuation of democracy's defining freedoms. In substantive terms, there is no undersaturation. In a substantive perspective, elites neither greatly over-satisfy nor undersatisfy the public demands for democracy.

This becomes obvious in the right-hand diagram of Figure 6.4, which plots effective democratic institutions against intrinsic democratic preferences, revealing an astounding degree of congruence: intrinsic mass preferences for democracy explain the level at which elites effectively institutionalize democracy to 72 percent. Clearly, substantiation changes the picture dramatically in favor of congruence. This in itself is an important and genuinely new finding. It implies that some adjustment mechanism must be at work to bring substantive democratic supplies and demands into congruence. But how does this mechanism operate? The temporal order in which we arranged independent and dependent variables suggests that elites satisfy mass demands for democracy to the extent that these demands are substantive. To give this interpretation credibility, one has to demonstrate that (a) the effect of intrinsic mass preferences for democracy on effective democratic institutions is statistically independent and (b) there is a causal mechanism explaining this effect.

6.3.5 Establishing statistical independence

To make credible that the effect of an earlier measure of one variable on a later measure of another variable is causal, one has to demonstrate that this effect is statistically independent (a) from alternative causes and (b) from reverse causality (Bollen 1984).

To begin with alternative causes, modernization is the most widely discussed cause in the promotion of democracy (for an overview see Boix 2003). Thus, we tested the effect of intrinsic democratic preferences in 1995-2000 on effective democratic institutions in 2006 (the latest available measure) against a host of modernization indicators, each measured at the beginning of the period over which we measured democratic preferences, that is, in and about 1995.⁶ But regardless which indicator we use, the effect of preferences on institutions remains always strongly positive and highly significant. In the worst case, under control of the advancement of a society's knowledge economy, the effect yields a partial correlation of $r = .49$, significant at the .001-level ($N = 79$).⁷

Considering reverse causality, we isolate that part of intrinsic democratic preferences which is independent of effective democratic institutions at the beginning of the time when the preferences are measured (in 1996 to be precise, the earliest available measure of effective democratic institutions). Because this part of intrinsic democratic preferences is free from an influence of effective democratic institutions, it is free from reverse causality. We test whether this independent part of intrinsic democratic preferences is still associated with effective democratic institutions in 2006. But to do that we isolate that part of these institutions that is unrelated to their level in 1996. This reduces effective democratic institutions to the part that is not self-perpetuating over time. Thus, controlling for effective democracy in 1996, we still find a positive partial correlation of $r = .30$ (significant at the .008-level, $N = 78$) between intrinsic mass preferences for democracy in 1995-2000 and effective democracy in 2006. Including as an additional control the strongest modernization indicator we could find, the knowledge economy in 1995, the partial correlation decreases to $r = .26$ but remains significant at the .024-level (the knowledge economy's own partial association with effective democracy is $r = .08$ and insignificant). One has to add that this is a very conservative estimate of the truly exogenous effect of intrinsic mass preferences for democracy on effective democracy. It is conservative because it operates under the assumption that the variation that prior democracy takes away from intrinsic preferences is fully attributable to prior democracy, which disregards any partial dependence of prior democracy on mass preferences of an even earlier period.

At any rate, these findings establish that the positive effect of intrinsic mass preferences for democracy in 1995-2000 on effective democratic institutions in 2006 is statistically independent (a) from alternative causes and (b) from reverse causality. But temporal order and statistical independence are only necessary but not sufficient conditions to establish causality. In addition, one must specify a plausible

causal mechanism and demonstrate its operation. By what mechanism could substantive mass demands for democracy affect the substantive supply of democracy?

6.3.6 Congruence mechanisms

As we argued in the theory section, substantive mass demands for democracy should affect the level at which elites supply democracy substantively because these demands provide a source of mass pressures to democratize. For this to be the case, two mechanisms must be in operation. First, there must be a *demand creating mechanism* through which people adopt intrinsic democratic preferences and this mechanism must work independent of the prior endurance of democracy. Otherwise intrinsic preferences for democracy could not become a source of democratizing pressures under absent democracy. Second, there must be a *demand activating mechanism* through which intrinsic democratic preferences translate into expressive mass actions that make these preferences felt to those in power. This link must hold against state repression. Otherwise intrinsic democratic preferences could not be a source of democratizing mass pressures when power holders issue repressive measures against expressive actions.

Let us consider the demand creating mechanism. The crucial question is whether there are factors that make the utility of democratic freedoms so obvious that people begin to value these freedoms independent of having experienced them. From the viewpoint of institutional learning (Rustow 1970), one would deny this possibility and argue that an intrinsic preference for democracy can only emerge after one has experienced democracy by prolonged exposure to it. In contrast to this ‘experience logic,’ Welzel and Inglehart (2008) favor a ‘utility logic.’ The key point is that, even if people have gained no experience with democratic freedoms, the idea of exerting freedoms can become intuitively appealing to them. People do not need to have freedoms in order to imagine how useful they can be. Yet, the utility of freedoms is perceived more easily in cognitively mobilized societies in which high levels of education and an advanced knowledge economy equip people with more intellectual resources. These resources widen people’s action repertoire and their awareness of it. Widened repertoires and awareness increase the actual as well as the perceived utility of democratic freedoms: the actual utility increases because people with a wider repertoire can do more with freedoms; the perceived utility increases because people with more awareness recognize more easily what use they have of freedoms. Actual and perceived utility determine how strongly people wish freedoms to be established when they are denied and how strongly they wish to protect them when they are supplied.

Now consider the demand activating mechanism. Here the question is whether intrinsic preferences for democracy translate into expressive actions that make these preferences felt. This is an evident question because state repression might block preferences from action. If this were the case, intrinsic preferences for democracy could not be a source of mass democratizing pressures in repressive regimes. However, “value-expectancy theory” (Klandermans 1984; Opp 1999), “intrinsic value theory” (Axelrod 1986), and “expressive utility theory” (Kuran 1993) suggest that preferences lead to

action even in the presence of repression – if these preferences are intrinsic. Superficial preferences that are not anchored in deeply held beliefs have little ‘intrinsic value.’ Such preferences are easily discouraged from action and ‘falsified.’ But this is different for intrinsic preferences. By definition, intrinsic preferences are internalized so that people believe in their legitimacy (Axelrod 1984: 1104). Intrinsic preferences inspire people with a sense of what is morally their right. Goals that appeal to people by an ethos of justice have extra mobilizing power because of their ‘expressive utility’ (Kuran 1993: 183). People who have deeply internalized an ideal, such as freedom, obtain ‘expressive benefits’ from taking action for this ideal – irrespective of the success of this action. Goals with a high expressive value are less susceptible to collective action problems because the benefits are unavailable to people who free-ride on others’ action. Only the ones who act will benefit. Expressive utility, thus, increases readiness for action and this effect can trump the discouraging effect of repression.

In summary, two mechanisms must operate for intrinsic democratic preferences to become a source of democratizing mass pressures. First, there must be a demand creating mechanism, such as cognitive mobilization, that allows intrinsic democratic preferences to emerge independent of a society’s experience with democracy. Second, there must be a *demand activating* mechanism that translates intrinsic democratic preferences into expressive mass actions that make these preferences felt, even in the presence of repression.

To test the first proposition, we use Gerring’s “democracy stock” variable as of 1995 (Gerring et al. 2005). This variable adds up the democracy scores a society has accumulated over time on the Polity IV autocracy-democracy index but depreciates scores from past years by one percent for each year they are preceding the reference year 1995. This index reflects a society’s accumulated experience with democracy with a premium on recent experience.⁸ In addition we use the World Bank’s above described “knowledge index” in 1995. This index measures the advancement of a society’s knowledge economy, which we consider a suitable proxy of the cognitive mobilization with which the utility of freedoms is supposed to increase.

Intrinsic democratic preferences are a micro-level attribute of individuals but become relevant through their overall strength at the macro-level of entire societies. To examine the micro-macro link in shaping intrinsic democratic preferences, Table 6.3 uses multi-level models.⁹ We are interested in the generality of the utility logic that might shape intrinsic democratic preferences. At the macro-level, we assume the utility of democratic freedoms to increase with the advancement of the knowledge economy. Accordingly, a society’s base level of intrinsic democratic preferences should grow with the advancement of the knowledge economy. But if the experience logic trumps the utility logic, the advancement of the knowledge economy would increase a society’s base level of intrinsic democratic preference only in connection with a sizeable democratic experience. In this case, the effect of the knowledge economy would turn insignificant taking a society’s democracy stock into account. At the micro-level, education is a major vehicle of cognitive mobilization that should increase the perceived utility of democratic freedoms. For this reason, education should strengthen

intrinsic democratic preferences. But if the experience logic holds, the democracy stock might moderate the preference effect of education. Perhaps education strengthens intrinsic democratic preferences only in societies with a sizeable democracy stock.

Model 1 in Table 6.3 seems to confirm the experience logic. As one can see under 'societal-level effects,' the democracy stock has a significantly positive effect on a society's base level of intrinsic democratic preferences, accounting for some 45 percent of the cross-national variation in the base level of these preferences. And looking under 'cross-level interactions,' one can see that the strength of education's effect on intrinsic democratic preferences is moderated positively by the size of a society's democracy stock: the effect of education on intrinsic democratic preferences grows stronger with the endurance of democracy. In fact, the democracy stock moderates the effect of education so strongly that this moderation accounts for about 37 percent of the cross-national variation in the strength of education's preference effect. And yet, democracy stock does by no means entirely moderate the preference effect of education. Education helps to strengthen intrinsic democratic preferences even in societies with small

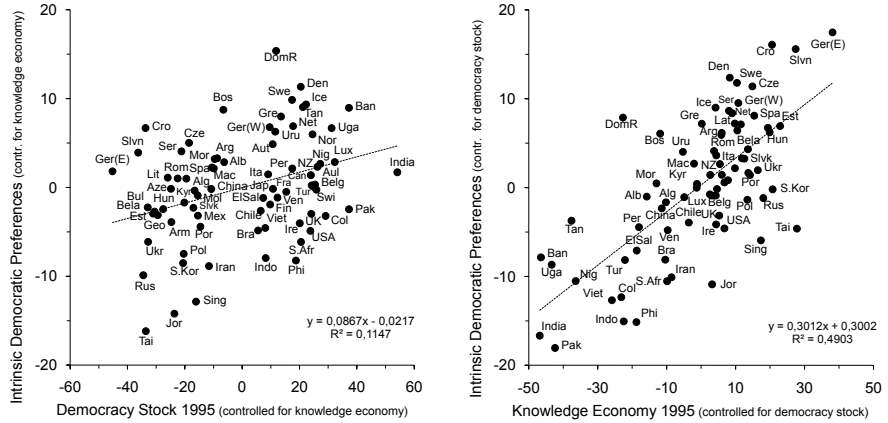
Table 6.3 Examining the demand creating mechanism

PREDICTORS:	DEPENDENT VARIABLE:	
	Model 1	Model 2
Intercept	.34 (41.66)***	.34 (56.49)***
<i>Societal-level Effects:</i>		
· Democracy Stock 1995	.24 (9.83)***	.10 (3.79)***
· Knowledge Economy 1995		.27 (7.82)***
<i>Individual-level Effects:</i>		
· Biological Age 1995-2000	-.08 (-7.56)***	-.08 (-7.55)***
· Political Interest 1995-2000	.04 (8.13)***	.04 (8.13)***
· Education Level 1995-2000	.12 (25.40)***	.12 (26.30)***
· Democracy Stock	.11 (7.01)***	.04 (2.35)*
· Knowledge Economy		.11 (5.93)***
<i>Explained Variances:</i>		
Within-society variation of DV	12.1%	12.1%
Between-soc. variation of DV	44.5%	69.5%
Variation in effect of education	36.7%	50.6%
N	200,449 respondents in 87 societies	

Note: Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients with *T*-ratios in parentheses. Individual-level variables are centered on society means; society-level variables are centered on the global mean. Models calculated with HLM 6.01. Explained variances calculated from change in random variance component relative to 'null model.' Data are from WVS III (1995-97) and IV (1999-2000). Significance levels: **p*<.10; ***p*<.01; ****p*<.001.

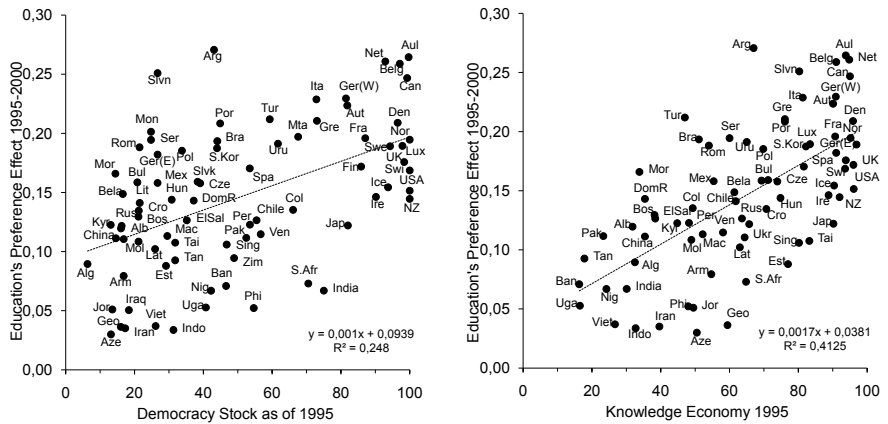
democracy stocks. This is obvious from the fact that, controlling for age and political interest,¹⁰ the individual level effect of education on intrinsic democratic preferences remains strongly positive, even taking the moderation of this effect by democracy stock into account.

Figure 6.5 Intrinsic democratic preferences as a function of democracy stock and the knowledge economy



Sources: WVS 1995-2000 and other sources (see text for details)

Figure 6.6 Education's effect on intrinsic democratic preferences as a function of democracy stock and the knowledge economy



Sources: WVS 1995-2000 and other sources (see text for details)

Table 6.4 Examining the demand activating mechanism

PREDICTORS:	DEPENDENT VARIABLE:	
	Expressive Action Tendency 2000-2005	
	Model 1	Model 2
Intercept	.29 (26.34)***	.29 (39.75)***
<i>Societal-level Effects:</i>		
· State Repression 2000-05	-.27 (-5.97)***	Not significant
· Intrinsic Preferences (base levels)		.99 (10.08)***
<i>Individual-level Effects:</i>		
· Biological Age 2000-05	-.04 (-2.31)*	-.04 (-2.31)*
· Political Interest 2000-05	.20 (26.08)***	.20 (26.07)***
· Education Level 2000-05	.12 (15.71)***	.12 (15.71)***
· Intrinsic Preferences 2000-05	.28 (18.33)***	.28 (19.70)***
* State Repression	-.39 (-5.34)***	Not significant
* Intrinsic Preferences (base levels)		.99 (4.96)***
<i>Explained Variances:</i>		
Within-society variation of DV	15.2%	15.2%
Between-society variation of DV	28.6%	68.4%
Variation in effect of preferences	47.4%	59.6%
N	194,414 respondents in 88 societies	

Note: Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients with T-ratios in parentheses. Individual-level variables are centered on society means; society-level variables are centered on the global mean. Models calculated with HLM 6.01. Explained variances calculated from change in random variance component relative to 'null model.' Data are from WVS IV (1999-2000) and V (2005). Significance levels: * $p < .10$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Model 2 adds a society's advancement in the knowledge economy as a determinant of the base level of intrinsic democratic preferences and as a moderator of the preference effect of education. This changes the picture decisively. At the societal-level, much more than the democracy stock, the knowledge economy turns out to be a determinant of intrinsic democratic mass preferences. Together, the democracy stock and the knowledge economy explain almost 70 percent of the cross-national variation in the base level of intrinsic mass preferences for democracy. But as Figure 6.5 documents, 49 percent of the variation are accounted for by the knowledge economy and only 11 percent by the democracy stock (another 9 percent are accounted for by the inseparable overlap between the two). The situation is similar when comparing the democracy stock and the knowledge economy as moderators of the preference effect of education. As Figure 6.6 illustrates, the democracy stock moderates the preference effect of education in a positive manner, accounting for

25 percent of the cross-national variation in the strength of education's effect on intrinsic democratic preferences. But the knowledge economy moderates the preference effect of education even more strongly, accounting for 41 percent of its variation. When one controls the two moderations against each other, the democracy stock becomes an almost insignificant moderator while the knowledge economy remains a highly significant moderator of education's preference effect (see under 'cross-level interactions' in Model 2).

The fact that we find the preference effect of education to be moderated by the knowledge economy is in line with the logic of utility. Higher education provides some advantage in each society and thus has some utility everywhere. But the utility of education amplifies with the advancement of knowledge economies because an abundance of knowledge-based activities provides more opportunities to utilize education. Since the preference effect of education is supposed to derive from the utility of education, it is logical that this effect amplifies when the utility of education itself grows.

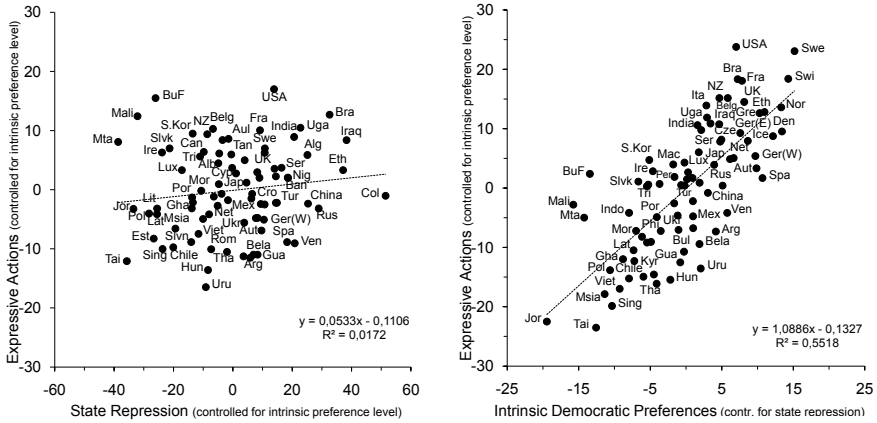
What about the demand activating mechanism? Do intrinsic democratic mass preferences translate into expressive actions that make these preferences felt to those in power? Again we are interested in the generality of the utility logic that might activate intrinsic democratic preferences. Because a preference has high 'expressive utility' when it is intrinsic, intrinsic democratic preferences should nurture expressive actions that make these preferences felt. But the deterrence effect of repression might trump the utility logic. In this case, state repression would moderate the activation of intrinsic democratic mass preferences, perhaps to an extent that intrinsic democratic preferences are entirely blocked from expressive action when state repression is severe.

To test these propositions, we use Gibney et al.'s (2008) "political terror scale" as a measure of the level of state repression (Davenport 2007).¹¹ As our dependent variable, we use Welzel's (2007) index of expressive actions based on wvs data. This index measures participation in such expressive actions as petitions, boycotts, and demonstrations on a 20-point scale as footnoted.¹²

Again we use multi-level models to examine the micro-macro interplay in activating intrinsic democratic preferences.¹³ Model 1 in Table 6.4 shows that state repression has a significantly negative effect on a society's base level of expressive actions, explaining about 29 percent of the variation in base levels of expressive actions. In addition, state repression moderates negatively the otherwise positive effect of intrinsic democratic preferences on expressive actions: with more severe state repression the activation effect of intrinsic preferences diminishes and about 47 percent of this diminishment is explained just by state repression.

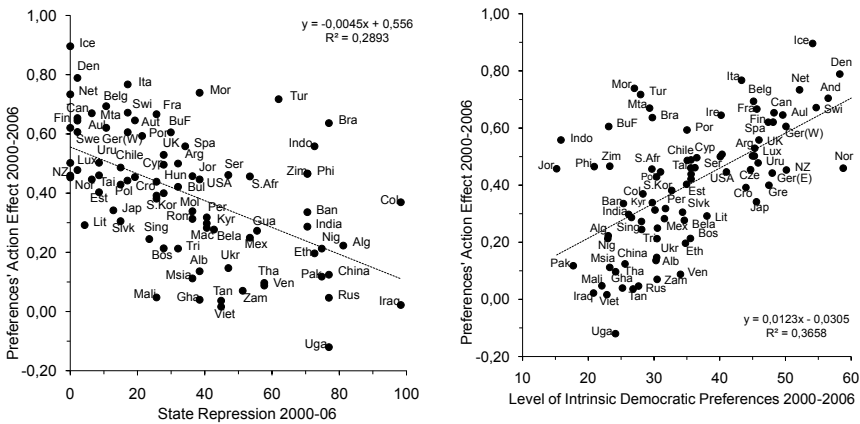
Yet, when we take the base level of a society's intrinsic democratic preferences into account, the role of state repression as a depressor of expressive action turns out to be fully insignificant. This is obvious from Model 2. At the societal-level, the explained variance in the base level of expressive mass actions rises from 29 to 68 percent when we include the base level of a society's intrinsic democratic prefer-

Figure 6.7 Expressive actions as a function of state repression and the level of intrinsic democratic preferences



Sources: WVS 1995-2000 and other sources (see text for details)

Figure 6.8 Intrinsic democratic preferences' effect on expressive actions as a function of state repression and the level of these preferences



Sources: WVS 1995-2000 and other sources (see text for details)

ences. Controlling for these preferences' positive effect on expressive actions, the negative effect of state repression becomes insignificant. Figure 6.7 visualizes this finding. Of the 68 percent explained variance in base levels of expressive actions, an insignificant 2 percent are accounted for by state repression, while fully 55 percent

are accounted for by the base level of intrinsic democratic preferences (another 11 percent are accounted for by the inseparable overlap between the two). Looking at moderations, Figure 6.8 confirms that state repression diminishes the activation effect of intrinsic democratic preferences at the individual level. This negative moderation accounts for 29 percent of the cross-national variation in the size of the activation effect. But stronger than the negative moderation by state repression is the positive moderation by a society's base level of intrinsic democratic preferences. The latter accounts for 37 percent of the cross-national variance in the activation effect. Controlling the two moderations against each other (see Model 2 under 'cross-level interactions'), only the positive moderation by a society's base level of intrinsic democratic preferences proves significant.

That a person's intrinsic democratic preferences increase this person's tendency to take action more strongly when a society's base level of intrinsic democratic preferences is higher, makes sense. And again, it makes sense in the utility logic: it shows that the utility of expressing intrinsic preferences varies as a result of 'social proof,' a well-known confirmation mechanism in social psychology (Cialdini 1993). Accordingly, when one sees more people in one's society holding one's own intrinsic preferences, one feels socially confirmed in these preferences. Social confirmation encourages action for these preferences, increasing their 'expressive utility' when more people share them.

These findings demonstrate, first, that the mechanism that shapes intrinsic democratic preferences is not primarily conditioned by the endurance of democracy. Instead, intrinsic democratic preferences are shaped by a utility logic that operates independent of democracy. Second, the mechanism that activates intrinsic democratic preferences is by no means disabled by state repression. The very intrinsicness of these preferences gives them such high 'expressive utility' that even repression does not block them from expressive action. In summary, intrinsic democratic preferences are shaped and activated by a utility logic whose operation neither requires the presence of democracy nor the absence of repression. In combination, these two conditions make the emergence of mass pressures to democratize possible.

6.4 Conclusion

Democracy is a supply-demand phenomenon. On the supply side it becomes manifest in that power holders institutionalize democracy. On the demand side it is reflected in ordinary people's preference for democracy. Substantiveness is an essential aspect of both the supply of democracy and the demand for it, raising the question "To what extent do given democratic supplies and demands indicate a genuine commitment to the freedoms that define democracy?"

On the supply-side, genuine commitments to democratic freedoms require elites to adopt enlightened power practices that effectively respect the democratic freedoms that are formally enacted. Hence, we specify substantive supplies of

democracy by depreciating institutionalized democracy for the absence of enlightened governance. On the demand-side, genuine commitments to democratic freedoms require the masses to embrace emancipative values that prize democracy intrinsically for the freedoms that define it. Thus, we specify substantive demands for democracy by depreciating overt preferences for democracy for the absence of emancipative values.

Unsubstantiated measures of supply-side and demand-side democracy are largely incongruent, showing many cases in which elites apparently over-supply democracy relative to what the masses demand, and even more cases in which they seem to under-supply democracy. In substantive terms, however, elites rarely over-supply democracy. In most cases where this seems to be the case, the supplies are devoid of substance, evidencing that formally enacted democratic freedoms are not effectively respected in practice. Likewise, elites hardly under-supply democracy relative to people's demands. In all cases where this seems to be true, mass demands for democracy lack substance, reflecting the absence of values that prize democracy for its intrinsic freedoms. In substantive terms, then, elites tend to supply democratic freedoms at levels that satisfy the people's demand for them.

Further evidence suggests that mass demands for democracy become substantive when cognitive mobilization increases the actual and perceived utility of democratic freedoms. This effect is independent of whether and how long democracy is already in place in a country. Democracy itself is not needed to produce a substantive demand for it. Moreover, once demands for democracy have become substantive, their intrinsicness gives them expressive utility and so they nurture expressive actions that make these demands felt, even in the face of repression. Congruence in substantive terms is unlikely to exist simply because the masses internalize the regime choices of elites. It is more likely to emerge because the elites satisfy mass demands – provided these demands become substantive. In conclusion, the perspective of 'substantive democracy' demonstrates and explains a too prematurely dismissed idea: democratic congruence.

Notes

- 1 For information on the *World Values Surveys* visit the website: <http://www.worldvalues-survey.org>. We use data from the third to fourth waves (1995-2000) of the *World Values Surveys*. For countries for which more than one measurement point is available we averaged the available measures.
- 2 As an alternative we calculated per country the percentage of respondents falling into the upper half, third, and quarter of this scale, respectively. Using these measures instead of the mean scores did not alter the results reported throughout this article.
- 3 Using the Freedom House ratings is applying a 'liberal' concept of democracy that defines democracy by the personal and political freedoms that empower people to govern themselves. This understanding is probably the most consensual one. Its theoretical underpin-

nings can be found in the mutually overlapping concepts of “self-governance” (Brettschneider 2007), “human development” (Sen 1999), “democratic autonomy” (Held 2006) and “democratic emancipation” (Welzel 2006). As Dalton et al. (2007) show, when ordinary people around the world are asked to define what democracy means to them, most people emphasize personal and political freedoms. One should be aware, however, that understanding democracy in terms of freedoms does not automatically mean a high valuation of these freedoms.

- 4 To create its anticorruption and rule of law scores, the World Bank gathers data from various sources. We transformed the data available for 2002 to 2006 into normalized scales with minimum 0 (the lowest empirical anticorruption and rule of law levels) and maximum 1.0 (the highest empirical levels). Then we averaged the two scores, keeping the resulting index within the 0-1 range.
- 5 In reflective logic, index quality is measured by internal reliability, using Cronbach's alpha and other measures of overlapping item variance. Because in formative logic, items are actually required to have non-overlapping variance, the quality criterion shifts from internal reliability to external validity, that is, explanatory power of a created index. As our analyses show, emancipative values have external validity because they dramatically increase the explanatory power of mass demands for democracy.
- 6 As control indicators we used 1995 measures of the ten-component “modernization index” by Hadenius and Teorell (2006), the “social progress index” by Estes (1998), the “human development index” of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP 2000), a measure of “capital mobility” used by Boix (2003), the “white settler mortality rate” (logged and non-logged versions) used by Acemoglu and Robinson (2006), per capita GDP in purchasing power parities (logged and non-logged versions), the “index of power resources” by Vanhanen (2003) and the World Bank’s “knowledge index.” We also used 1995 measures of the “Gini-index” to control for the effect of income equality as well as Alesina et al.'s (2000) “ethnic fractionalization index.” Furthermore, we controlled for percentages of denominational Protestants, Catholics, and Muslims in a society as of the mid 1990s, based on data from the Encyclopedia Britannica.
- 7 To measure advancement of the knowledge economy we use the World Bank’s “knowledge index” (K1) as of 1995, which indicates “a society’s ability to generate, adopt and, diffuse knowledge. The K1 is the simple average of the normalized scores of a society on the key variables in the three knowledge economy pillars: education, innovation, and ICT (World Bank 2008).” The knowledge index combines data on education (using indicators like the tertiary enrollment ratio), on innovation (using indicators like the number of patents per 10,000 inhabitants), and on information technology (using indicators like the number of internet hosts per 1,000 inhabitants). The index is scaled from 0 to 1.0, with higher values indicating a stronger knowledge economy. A description of index construction and data are available for download at: http://info.worldbank.org/etools/kam2/KAM_page5.asp.
- 8 We thank John Gerring for his generosity in sharing his data with us.
- 9 In all multi-level models, variables were entered on a scale range from 0 for the lowest and 1.0 for the highest possible value. Then we followed the standard procedure in multi-level

- modeling (Bryk and Raudenbusch 2002) and centered all micro-level variables on the mean of the respective society and all macro-level variables on the global mean.
- 10 Age and political interest are included as standard controls in political preference models. Of course the effect of education is also positive and significant without controlling for age and political interest. The age measure is taken V237 of the wvs and measures biological age in years. Political interest is taken from V95 of the wvs, which asks: "How interested would you say you are in politics?" We coded 'not at all interested' 0, 'not very interested' .33, 'somewhat interested' .66 and 'very interested' 1.0.
 - 11 For each year, the political terror scale measures human rights violations by the state on two five-point scales, one based on information by Amnesty International, the other based on information by the US State Department (both scales correlate at $r = .94$). We average the five-point scales for each year and then the yearly measures over the period 2002-06. The resulting index is transformed into a normalized scale with minimum 0 and maximum 1.0 and centered on the global mean as entered in the multi-level models. Data and study description available at: www.politicalterrorsscale.org.
 - 12 V96 to V98 of the wvs ask whether people 'would never do,' 'might do' or 'have done' the following: 'signing petitions,' 'joining boycotts,' 'attending peaceful demonstrations.' We coded 'would never do' 0, 'might do' .30, and 'have done' 1.0 for each of the three actions. The scores are added over the three actions and averaged, yielding a 27-point scale with minimum 0 (would never do any of the three) and maximum 1.0 (have done each of them). Readiness to act is coded less than a third than actual action in order to keep intention and action apart (even three intended actions do not add up to one actual action). Yet, intention is given some recognition rather than none because intention provides a pre-disposition to act that can be mobilized. For those who suspect that coding intention 'spoils' our findings, we can assure that the multi-level models yield the same results when one dichotomizes actual action against everything else and analyzes this binary variable in logistic multi-level models.
 - 13 We chose to present the models in Table 6.3 and Table 6.4 in sequential temporal order to signify that we think the demand creating mechanism tested in Table 6.3 to precede the demand activating mechanism tested in Table 6.4. However, our results do not rest on this temporal specification. Instead, when calculating the models in Table 6.3 in the temporal specification of the models in Table 6.4, and vice versa, we obtain identical results.

7 Does Democratic Satisfaction Reflect Regime Performance?

Pippa Norris

7.1 Introduction

THE LITERATURE SEEKING TO EXPLAIN THE POLITICAL LEGITIMACY OF democratic governance has expanded in scope and sophistication in recent years, including both cultural and institutional approaches (see, for example, Thomassen 1999; Aarts and Thomassen 2008; Thomassen 2009b; Thomassen and Van der Kolk 2009). Evaluations of the regime have long been regarded as central to ideas of political legitimacy and Eastonian conceptions of system support. As Thomassen emphasizes, the legitimacy of liberal democracy is derived from public evaluations of the performance of government, as well as from issues of identity, representation and accountability (Thomassen 2009c). The idea that regime performance matters, at least at some level, for public satisfaction with the workings of democratic governance, is the explanation favored by rational choice theories. This study considers the underlying assumptions and claims embodied in both the process and policy versions of these accounts. At first sight, the rational choice argument appears straightforward, but what criteria might the public use to evaluate government performance? Is the contemporary record of the regime compared against public expectations or independent indices? Party manifestos and leadership promises or the past performance of successive administrations? Neighboring countries or global conditions? There is no consensus in the research literature and several alternative factors may prove important in this regard, each generating certain testable propositions.

The first part of this study focuses upon *process* accounts which emphasize that judgements of regime performance are based primarily upon retrospective evaluations of the quality of underlying democratic procedures, exemplified by the perceived fairness of elections, the responsiveness and accountability of elected representatives, and the honesty and probity of public officials (paragraph 7.3). This goes

beyond discontent with particular decisions or outcomes to tap more deep-rooted perceptions about how democracy works. The second part considers alternative *policy* accounts, suggesting that retrospective evaluations of the overall substantive policy record of successive governments are important, such as whether citizens experience effective public services for schools and health care, rising living standards, and domestic security (paragraph 7.4). This study reviews and unpacks the assumptions underlying each of these accounts in the literature and then lays out the empirical evidence using multilevel analysis and performance indicators suitable to test each of these claims in almost fifty societies worldwide. The study concludes that process performance, measured by aggregate indicators of the quality of democratic governance, shape public satisfaction with the way that government works. Among the policy indices, economic development and a subjective sense of well-being also proved equally important, although most of the narrower economic, social and environmental policy performance indicators were not significant.

7.2 Rational choice theories of system support

The primary account of citizen satisfaction with democratic governance is based on rational choice theories. Scholars working within this tradition have focused most attention upon explaining the concept of social and political trust, but the general arguments and underlying premises of the rational choice approach can be applied to understand many dimensions of system support. Russell Hardin, one of the leading proponents of this perspective, theorizes that the basis of trust is cognitive, dependent upon knowledge about the *motivations* and the *competencies* of other people (Hardin 1996, 1999, 2004, 2006). In this conception, as Hardin notes: “To say we trust you means we believe you have the right intentions toward us and that you are competent to do what we trust you to do” (Hardin 2006: 17). The more that citizens know, Hardin argues, the more reliably citizens can evaluate whether politicians have benevolent intentions, whether they are competent, and thus whether they are worthy of trust. If politicians or governments are usually demonstrably corrupt, inept, or self-serving, or perceived to be so, then rational citizens should conclude that they have become untrustworthy. Moreover the default option for watchful citizens is to remain agnostic or skeptical in their judgements, suspending positive assessments (equivalent to the Popperian null scientific hypothesis) if lacking dependable information to evaluate the record and performance of elected representatives or leaders, if they have little awareness about how government agencies and processes work, or if they cannot fathom the effectiveness and impact of complex public policies.

Political trust is often conceptualized in this perspective as an individual relationship operating at the more specific levels of system support, typically shaping the dynamics of public approval of the us president and confidence in members of Congress. But a similar logic can be applied to explain orientations towards the

political system at more diffuse Eastonian levels, including evaluations of the collective government, the regime, and even general orientations towards the nation-state. From this perspective, satisfaction with the democratic performance of any regime is expected to reflect an informed assessment about the cumulative record of successive governments, whether judged by normative expectations about democratic decision-making processes, or by the achievement of certain desired policy outputs and outcomes. Hence in terms of process criteria, rational citizens who expect regimes to meet certain democratic standards – such as being transparent accountable, equitable, and responsive to society’s needs – should have little reason for satisfaction if the regime is perceived as failing to meet these benchmarks. Similarly in terms of public policy outcomes, if politicians are elected on a platform promising to maintain security at home and abroad, improve living standards, and provide equitable welfare services, and if successive governments lack the capacity or will to fulfill these pledges, then again rational citizens should gradually become more critical of the regime’s overall performance. If experience matters, however, this still leaves open the question about how the public forms judgements about regime performance and about how democracy works.

7.3 Process performance

Working within this general theoretical framework, process accounts emphasize that citizens focus upon the intrinsic quality of democratic governance, or the quality of governance by the people, exemplified by the state’s record in respecting fundamental freedoms and universal human rights, expanding inclusive opportunities for public participation for women and minorities, and providing equitable and timely access to justice (Andrain and Smith 2006). During the third wave era, the record of countries which transitioned from autocracy has proved extremely varied, with some far more successful than others (Freedom House 2009). States such as the Czech Republic, Ghana, South Africa, and Chile have rapidly consolidated the full panoply of democratic institutions during the third wave era, holding a series of free and fair competitive multiparty elections which have met international standards of transparency and openness. These contests paved the way for building the capacity and effectiveness of other core institutions of liberal democracy, including strengthening parliament, the judiciary, and public sector bureaucracy, as well as building effective political parties, the independent media, and civil society organizations. Many other states, including Russia and Venezuela, have stagnated in an ambiguous grey zone, however, with multiparty elections allowing limited competition, which legitimate the power of the ruling party or leader, but without effective checks on the powers of the executive or rule of law. Such states often suffer from pervasive problems of corruption and clientelism in the public sector, and occasional outbreaks of violent conflict. Still other cases such as Thailand and Fiji have enjoyed a brief democratic honeymoon period, but then floundered and reverted

back to autocracy (Zakaria 1997; Carothers 2002; Diamond 2002; Levitsky and Wayand 2002; Wayand and Levitsky 2006). Moreover a few regimes have proved largely impervious to global waves of democratization, beyond some strictly limited rhetorical gestures, retaining rule by absolute monarchies (Saudi Arabia), military juntas (Burma), personal dictatorships (Libya), or one-party states (Vietnam).

Beyond democracy, broader indicators of the quality of governance also vary substantially around the globe, whether in terms of perceived levels of corruption, rule of law, political stability and conflict, or public sector management. Process theories predict that rational citizens will be more satisfied with democratic performance where regimes perform well against the standard indicators of democratic governance, such as the expert evaluations provided by the Freedom House, Polity IV, and the World Bank Institute. By contrast, dissatisfaction will be far stronger in states where governments routinely perform poorly, exemplified by repressive regimes which employ rigid coercion, abuse basic human rights and imprison opponents, profit from endemic corruption and crony capitalism, and govern by arbitrary rule.

A series of empirical studies, in younger and older democracies, have provided some evidence favoring this general argument. Hence Bratton and Mattes compared political attitudes in Ghana, Zambia and South Africa, reporting that satisfaction with democracy in these countries is based on an appreciation of political reforms, perceptions of government responsibility and honesty, and guarantees of civil liberties, voting rights, and equal treatment under the law, as much as by perceptions of material benefits, improved living standards, and the delivery of economic goods (Bratton and Mattes 2001). A study among post-Communist states in Central Europe during the mid-1990s by Evans and Whitefield also found that political experience influenced democratic satisfaction more strongly than the expansion of economic markets (Evans and Whitefield 1995; Whitefield and Evans 1999). In Europe, Wagner and colleagues analyzed a series of *Eurobarometer* surveys from 1990 to 2000, demonstrating that quality of governance indicators for rule of law, well-functioning regulation, and low corruption strengthened satisfaction with democracy more strongly than economic considerations (Wagner et al. 2009). Similarly multilevel analysis comparing forty nations, based on the *CSES Module II* survey, also concluded that political goods such as freedom, accountability and representativeness, were more important sources of democratic satisfaction than narrower indices of policy performance (Huang et al. 2008; see also Bishin et al. 2006). Moreover process explanations can also be applied to help account for contrasts within particular countries; for example, Hibbing and Theiss-Morse argue that the US Congress is unpopular relative to the other branches of the federal government because its decision-making processes are often bitterly partisan and divisive (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 1995, 2002). Nevertheless several cases appear to challenge process accounts, exemplified by relatively high levels of satisfaction with the performance of democracy expressed in some countries with limited political rights and civil liberties, such as Vietnam and Jordan (Norris forthcoming). Counter examples, where relatively low democratic satisfaction was expressed in some

long-standing democratic states, can also be observed, such as in Italy, the US and UK. This general theory therefore deserves further scrutiny and it can be tested most effectively where public opinion is compared across a broad range of countries, rather than within a single global region, in order to maximize variance in historical experiences, cultural traditions, and types of regimes.

7.3.1 Process performance indicators

There are, however, certain difficulties in measuring the process performance of regimes. At the micro-level, public opinion data allows satisfaction with democracy to be compared against subjective attitudes towards other dimensions of governance, such as the perceived quality of human rights or institutional confidence. This approach has been employed in the research literature but, even where a close association exists, it remains challenging, or even impossible, to disentangle the direction of causality from cross-sectional surveys, for example to determine whether national pride is driving, or following, democratic satisfaction (Shi 2000, 2001). Moreover, unless independent evidence allows public judgements to be corroborated, the rationality of any subjective evaluations cannot be determined; for example systematic perceptual biases are likely to arise in states where state propaganda and censorship proves effective in strengthening regime support and restricting explicit criticism of the government. In this context, as well, in places such as Zimbabwe, Belarus, China, and Saudi Arabia, survey respondents may be afraid of expressing negative views about the regime, for fear of official reprisals, generating a 'spiral of silence.' Awareness about democracy varies systematically worldwide according to historical experience of democracy, so that people with little knowledge of this form of governance in countries such as Jordan, Iraq and Ethiopia will lack the capacity to form a rational assessment.

A more satisfactory strategy, also used in other previous studies, is to compare macro-level satisfaction with democracy, monitored by public opinion in any state, against independent 'objective' indicators of the quality of governance in each country (see, for example, Newton and Norris 2000; Wagner et al. 2009). Accordingly, for this study macro-level evidence is drawn from the burgeoning array of diagnostic tools monitoring the quality of governance which have become available in recent decades (Norris 2010).¹ Political indicators are now widely used by the international community, by national governments and by advocacy groups to evaluate needs and determine policy priorities, to highlight problems and identify benchmark practices, and to evaluate the effectiveness of programmatic interventions. Some of the earliest indicators, which became widely adopted in the academic and policy research communities, were developed to measure the state of civil liberties and political rights by Freedom House in 1972, as well as the Polity I data collection by Ted Robert Gurr and Harry Eckstein focusing upon patterns of democratic and autocratic regime change. Since then, dozens of indicators, of varying quality and coverage, have become widely available to gauge the quality of democracy in

general, as well as multiple measures of 'good governance' and human rights (UNDP 2007b).²

Given the numerous measures of the performance of democratic governance which are now available, which should be selected for analysis? Indicators can be set aside which are restricted in the number of states and regions they cover, the frequency of the measures, or the time-period. Publicly-available indicators, widely used in the comparative literature, also reflect the prevailing consensus among researchers, excluding more idiosyncratic approaches. Using these criteria whittles down the myriad choices to a selected list of standard elite-level indicators of democratic governance, each reflecting differing conceptions of the essential features of democracy, good governance, and human rights.

(i) *Democracy: Freedom House*

The Gastil index of civil liberties and political rights produced annually by Freedom House is one of the best known measures of liberal democracy, and one of the most widely used in the comparative literature. The index provides comprehensive coverage of nation-states and independent territories worldwide, as well as establishing a long time-series of observations conducted annually since 1972. Despite methodological differences in the data collection, construction, and methodology, the Freedom House indices correlate strongly with those estimated independently by Polity IV ($R = .90^{**}$) (see Norris 2008). Previous comparative studies have also reported that macro-level satisfaction with democracy is primarily affected by the age of each democracy (Aarts and Thomassen 2008). To examine this proposition, the multivariate models control for the historical index of democratization. This index reflects the accumulated years which citizens have lived under different types of regimes.

(ii) *Good governance*

Many of the available indicators of good governance, political risk, and corruption are based on perceptual assessments, using expert surveys and subjective judgements. The most ambitious attempt to operationalize and measure 'good governance' concern the indices generated by Kaufmann-Kraay and colleagues for the World Bank Institute. The Kaufmann-Kraay indicators (also known as 'The Worldwide Governance Indicators') have quickly become some of the most widely-used measures of good governance. Compiled since 1996, these composite indices measure the perceived quality of six dimensions of governance for 213 countries, based on many data sources produced by more than two-dozen organizations. The underlying data are based on hundreds of variables and reflect the perceptions and views of many types of 'experts', as well as mass survey respondents, on various dimensions of governance. The World Bank does not generate these separate assessments; rather it integrates them into composite indices. The measures specify the margins of error associated with each estimate, allowing users to identify a range of statistically likely ratings for each country.

The Worldwide Governance Indicators measure the quality of six dimensions of governance: *Voice and accountability*: the extent to which a country's citizens are able to participate in selecting their government, as well as freedom of expression, freedom of association, and free media. *Political stability and absence of violence*: perceptions of the likelihood that the government will be destabilized or overthrown by unconstitutional or violent means, including political violence and terrorism. *Government effectiveness*: the quality of public services, the quality of the civil service and the degree of its independence from political pressures, the quality of policy formulation and implementation, and the credibility of the government's commitment to such policies. *Regulatory quality*: the ability of the government to formulate and implement sound policies and regulations that permit and promote private sector development. *Rule of law*: the extent to which agents have confidence in and abide by the rules of society, and in particular the quality of contract enforcement, the police, and the courts, as well as the likelihood of crime and violence. *Control of corruption*: the extent to which public power is exercised for private gain, including both petty and grand forms of corruption, as well as 'capture' of the state by elites and private interests. The six indicators can also be combined into an integrated measure of good governance. The Kaufmann-Kraay indices are widely employed, especially in the econometric literature, in part due to their easy availability and geographic scope (see, for example, Wagner, Schneider and Halla 2009). Unfortunately, these measures also face a number of criticisms. The core concept of 'good governance' remains under-theorized, especially compared with the long tradition of work developing the concept and indices of democracy (Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith 2005). Moreover as Grindle has emphasized, the 'good governance' agenda is often poorly-focused, over-long and growing ever longer (Grindle 2004).

(iii) *Human rights*

Another dimension which is important concerns universal human rights. The Cingranelli-Richards (CIRI) Database covers a wide range of human rights using standards-based quantitative information covering 191 countries annually from all regions of the world (Cingranelli and Richards 2004). The index seeks to measure government human rights practices, not human rights policies or overall human rights conditions (which may be affected by non-state actors). It codes physical integrity rights – the rights not to be tortured, summarily executed, disappeared, or imprisoned for political beliefs – as well as civil liberties and rights. Out of all the CIRI items, factor analysis was used to select six measures falling into a single dimension. The CIRI Human Rights index included for comparison used a 10-point scale measuring freedom of movement, freedom of religion, freedom of association, freedom of speech, and political participation rights, all core components of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Lastly, the UNDP's Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) is also included for comparison to measure one important aspect of human rights, namely how far women have achieved equality in the public sphere. GEM evaluates progress in advancing women's standing in political and eco-

conomic forums. It examines the extent to which women and men are able to actively participate in economic and political life and take part in decision making. GEM measures political participation and decision-making power (the ratio of women to men in parliamentary seats), economic participation (female share of positions in management, administration and professional positions), and command over resources (male and female ratio of earned income) (see UNDP 2007b: 355-361).

7.3.2 Basic correlation results

Accordingly, how do these indices of democracy, good governance, and human rights compare with public satisfaction with democracy, monitored by the *World Values Survey*? Assuming the accuracy and reliability of these indices, a strong correlation, where the underlying views of citizens within each state reflect elite-level estimates, would support the claim that public satisfaction is based upon a rational assessment of the process performance of regimes. On the other hand, any lack of correlation suggests the null hypothesis, either because of measurement error and noise, or because other affective or evaluative factors are influencing citizens' judgements. As the appropriate time period for comparison remains uncertain, to provide alternative tests of the evidence, the elite level indices are compared for three periods: (i) *contemporary indices*, matching the period of fieldwork for the 5th wave *World Values Survey* conducted in 2005-2007; (ii) indices with 5-year-lags, and also (iii) indices with 10-year lags, monitored roughly a decade earlier, to reflect the effect of cumulative experiences during this period. Any contemporary measure is inevitably fairly noisy, for example specific events can push these up or down, but the lagged indices are expected to present a more stable relationship. We can first compare the simple macro-level correlations before then developing the multivariate models with the full battery of controls.

Table 7.1 presents the simple correlations between democratic satisfaction and the contemporary and lagged indices of democracy, good governance, and human rights in the roughly fifty nations under comparison. The results, without any prior controls, highlight that democratic satisfaction is significantly and positively correlated with nearly all the contemporary and lagged indices; hence, for example, citizens are usually far happier with how democracy works in regimes which experts rate as highly stable, clean, effective, and governed by rule of law. Previous work by Wagner et al., based on time-series analysis of countries in Western Europe during the 1990s, also found that high-quality institutions, such as low corruption and effective rule of law, had a positive impact upon satisfaction with democracy (Wagner et al. 2009). The findings in this study provide further confirmation of these patterns and allow us to generalize more broadly well beyond established European democracies. Attitudes were also significantly related to most of the available indices of democracy and human rights; in particular, people were more satisfied with the democratic performance of their government in states with a more liberal record of gender empowerment and freedom of the press. Democratic satisfac-

Table 7.1 Process performance and democratic satisfaction, 2005-2007

Indicators	Source	Performance measured with a 10-year lag (mid-1990s)		Performance measured with a 5-year lag (2000)		Performance measured with no lag (2005)	
		R	Sig.	R	Sig.	R	Sig.
DEMOCRATIZATION							
Liberal democracy	Freedom House	.364	*	.335	*	.257	
GOOD GOVERNANCE							
Voice and accountability,	Kaufmann-Kraay	.296	*	.316	*	.362	*
Political stability	Kaufmann-Kraay	.430	**	.377	**	.475	**
Government effectiveness	Kaufmann-Kraay	.500	**	.435	**	.447	**
Regulatory quality	Kaufmann-Kraay	.539	**	.465	**	.360	**
Rule of law	Kaufmann-Kraay	.451	**	.450	**	.459	**
Corruption perceptions	Kaufmann-Kraay	.444	**	.410	**	.419	**
Summary good governance	Kaufmann-Kraay	.489	**	.430	**	.443	**
HUMAN RIGHTS							
Gender empowerment	GEM, UNDP	.500	**	.562	**	.529	**
Human Rights	CIRI	.286		.260		.253	
Freedom of the press	Freedom House	.315	*	.378	**	.365	**

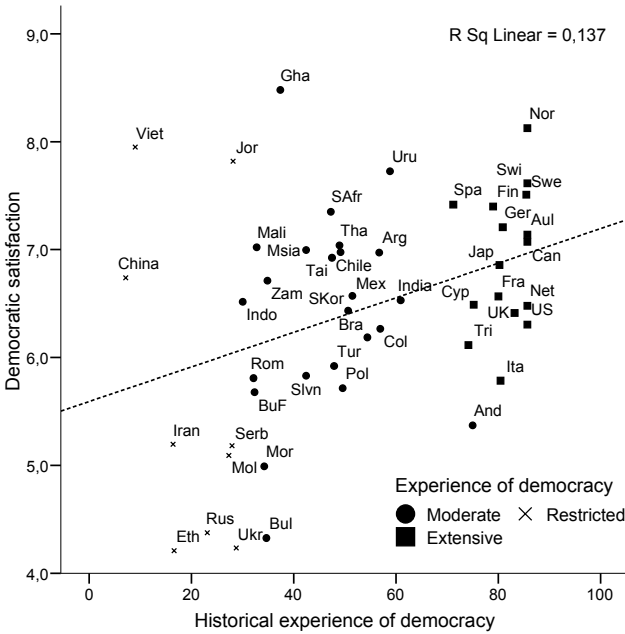
Notes: The macro-level correlation coefficients measure the strength of the link between the democratic satisfaction scale in 2005-2007 and the process indices monitoring the quality of democratic governance, with each time-period lag. * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level; ** correlation is significant at the 0.01 level. Number of nations compared, 46-50.

Sources: World Values Survey 2005-2007; Freedom House. 2010. *Freedom in the World 2010*. Washington, DC: Freedom House. www.freedomhouse.org; Monty Marshall and Keith Jagers. 2003. *Polity IV Project: Political Regime Characteristics and Transitions, 1800-2003*. <http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/polity/>; Daniel Kaufmann, Aart Kraay, and Massimo Mastruzzi. 2007. *Governance Matters VI: Aggregate and Individual Governance Indicators, 1996-2006*. Washington DC: The World Bank, Policy Research Working Paper. www.worldbank.org; David L. Cingranelli and David L. Richards 2004. The Cingranelli-Richards (CIRI) Human Rights Database Coder Manual. <http://ciri.binghamton.edu/>

tion was significantly related to the lagged, but not to the contemporary, Freedom House measures of democracy.

To examine some of these patterns in more detail, Figures 7.1 and 7.2 illustrate levels of democratic satisfaction compared with each society's experience of democracy and good governance. Figure 7.1 highlights the considerable variations in democratic satisfaction among long-standing democracies, notably the relative contentment expressed in Norway and Switzerland, compared with more critical attitudes displayed in Italy and the United States. Among the states with moderate historical experience of democracy during the third wave era, once more marked contrasts

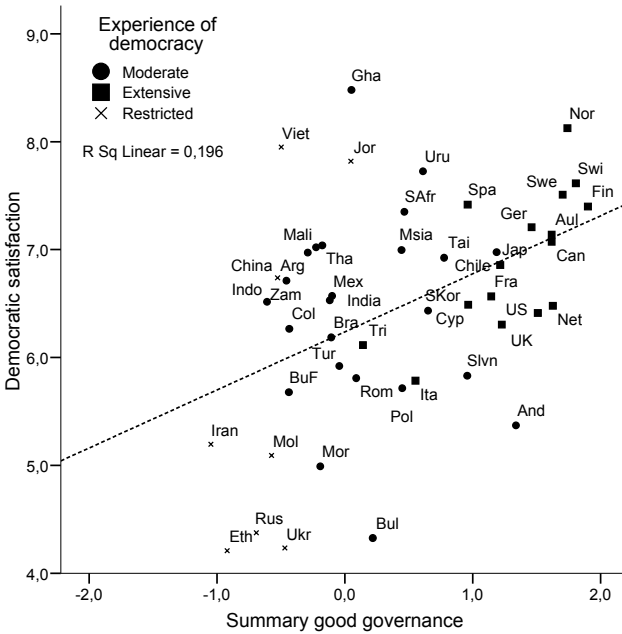
Figure 7.1 Democratic experience and democratic satisfaction, 2005-2007



Note: Democratic satisfaction: V163. "And how democratically is this country being governed today? Again using a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means that it is "not at all democratic" and 10 means that it is "completely democratic," what position would you choose?" The historical experience of democratization is measured by the cumulative Freedom House index for political rights and civil liberties 1972-2006, standardized to a 100-point scale. For comparison, these items were standardized to 100-points. Country abbreviations are listed in the appendix of Chapter 2. Sources: World Values Survey (WVS), 2005-2007, and Freedom House index

can be observed between countries, such as the positive attitudes found among Africans in Ghana and South Africa, compared with the levels of deep discontent evident in post-communist Bulgaria and Moldova. The remaining countries, with little or no historical experience of democracy, showed the greatest variance, although again some of the countries in post-communist Europe proved the most disillusioned with how their government worked. Three cases, China, Vietnam and Jordan, also illustrate the considerable disparity between the poor record of civil liberties and political rights, as estimated by Freedom House and by CIRI, and how the public in these societies evaluated how their country was being governed. For comparison, Figure 7.2 illustrates how levels of democratic satisfaction relate to the composite good governance index, showing a slightly closer fit, especially among both the autocracies and the longer established democracies. Countries such as Norway, Switzerland and Germany score well on both indices, while by contrast, in the lower left-hand corner, Ethiopia, Russia and Ukraine cluster together, showing a poor performance.

Figure 7.2 Good governance and democratic satisfaction, 2005-2007



Note: Democratic satisfaction: V163. "And how democratically is this country being governed today? Again using a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means that it is "not at all democratic" and 10 means that it is "completely democratic," what position would you choose?" The summary good governance index is created by summing the six items (listed in Table 7.1) contained in the Kaufmann-Kraay indices, 2005.

Source: WVS, 2005-2007, and Kaufmann-Kraay index

Many other macro and micro-level factors may be influencing democratic satisfaction, however, such as education, income, and age. More rigorous scrutiny requires multiple controls. Rational choice theories emphasize that knowledge is the basis for informed judgements, and thus the roles of higher educational attainment is expected to reinforce the link between citizens' satisfaction with democracy and the actual performance of the regime. Knowledge about democracy is also predicted to strengthen the linkage between satisfaction with democracy and independent indicators of the quality of governance. Standard demographic variables, such as age, sex, and income, also commonly influence political attitudes. The process performance indicators are therefore added to multilevel models to see whether these measures contribute to democratic satisfaction, controlling for standard social and demographic characteristics. Since the process performance indices are strongly inter-correlated, separate regression models are run for each dimension.

The results in Table 7.2 demonstrate that after applying the battery of controls, *process performance indices prove strong and significant predictors of democratic satisfaction*; indeed these measures were each more strongly linked with democratic satis-

faction than any of the other demographic and socioeconomic indices, outweighing the effects of income. This confirms rational choice process theories; people are indeed happier with how democracy works in states characterized by good quality governance, where regimes respect the rule of law, prove effective in managing the delivery of public goods and services, and are open and transparent in policymaking processes. Democratic satisfaction is not simply an affective cultural orientation learnt through the socialization process.

Table 7.2 Process performance and democratic satisfaction, 2005-2007

		Model A: Democracy	Model B: Good governance
CONTROLS			
Demographic characteristics			
	Age (in years)	.486*** (.102)	.524*** (.103)
	Sex(male = 1)	-.189* (.092)	-.183* (.093)
Socioeconomic resources			
	Household income 10-pt scale	2.20*** (.109)	2.15*** (.110)
	Education 9-pt scale	-.470** (.112)	-.514*** (.113)
	Democratic knowledge	.447*** (.106)	.499*** (.107)
PERFORMANCE INDICES			
	Liberal Democracy, 2006 (Freedom House)	3.24* (1.53)	
	Good governance index, 2006 (Kaufmann-Kraay)		4.94** (1.50)
	Constant (intercept)	63.6	63.6
	Schwartz BIC	504,283	494,148
	N. respondents	55,953	54,817
	N. nations	44	43

Note: The dependent variable is the 100-point democratic satisfaction scale. All independent variables were standardized using mean centering (z-scores). Models present the results of the REML multilevel regression models including the beta coefficient, (the standard error below in parenthesis), and the significance. Significant coefficients are highlighted in **bold**. Models were checked through tolerance statistics to be free of problems of multi-collinearity.

Source: WVS 2005-2007

7.4 Policy performance

The results of these models need to be compared against alternative rational choice accounts suggesting that citizens' evaluations rely upon more instrumental criteria based on the regime's perceived record of policy outputs and outcomes over successive governments, or government for the people. Many studies of voting behavior and electoral choices have emphasized the role of retrospective evaluations of the economic record of successive governments, as well as prospective expectations of future economic conditions arising from party platforms (Beck 1988; Clarke et al. 1992). Similarly, the general policy performance of governments has been seen as explaining the dynamics of confidence in government and satisfaction with democracy (Finke et al. 1987; Weatherford 1987; Clarke et al. 1993; Anderson 1995; McAllister 1999). Such accounts emphasize that the public responds to the capacity of the state when managing the delivery of public goods and services demanded by citizens.

Performance has usually been conceptualized and operationalized fairly narrowly in the research literature as primarily economic, for example where the public judges the governments' record favorably when expanding GDP and living standards, maintaining full employment, and keeping prices low. Contemporary accounts give greater emphasis to a more complex and diverse policy agenda, however, where the public also cares about issues such as the quality of public services, the management of cultural diversity, immigration, and environmental protection, as well as foreign policies maintaining security at home and defending the country's interests abroad. Where successive governments have generally succeeded in meeting public expectations of peace, welfare, and prosperity, and representatives have responded sensitively to shifting public preference for 'more' or 'less' spending on different issues, it is believed that this record gradually builds a reservoir of generalized support towards the regime, which anchors support for democratic governance throughout bad times as well as good.³

Contemporary theorists have also emphasized that the heart of any problem of growing public disaffection in established democracies lies in the shrinking state; for example Colin Hay emphasizes that processes of globalization and privatization have depoliticized many issues, reducing the role, power and accountability of elected officials, representative bodies, and national governments (Hay 2007). Moreover, Dalton builds upon the performance-based explanation by emphasizing the growing complexity and fragmentation of multiple issue publics in contemporary post-industrial societies, which he believes has increased the difficulties faced by political parties when trying to satisfy public expectations (Dalton 2004). For this reason, if politicians genuinely seek to serve the public interest, Dalton argues that state capacity to deliver has diminished, making governments appear less trustworthy. Moreover the growing complexity of contemporary issue agendas, the more fragmented information environment in the digital age, the growth of multilevel governance, and the weakening of partisan cues, he suggests, makes it harder for

even well-informed and attentive citizens to evaluate government and regime performance.

In North America and Western Europe, a series of empirical studies in political economy have used time-series data to predict confidence in governance and satisfaction with democracy based on national level indicators of economic conditions, as well as individual-level retrospective and prospective evaluations of the economy (see Finke et al. 1987; Weatherford 1987; Newton 2006). The evidence provides some support for the policy performance account; hence an early study by Clarke, Dutt and Kornberg examined pooled *Eurobarometer* time-series data for eight countries from the late-1970s to mid-1980s, reporting that economic conditions affected feelings of satisfaction with democracy, although the effects were limited (Clarke et al. 1993). McAllister reviewed the comparative evidence among two dozen affluent postindustrial nations, also concluding that individual-level attitudes towards economic performance play a modest role in shaping confidence in political institutions in these countries, although the impact of policy performance is negligible compared with the effect of other factors, such as political culture and historical circumstances (McAllister 1999). Moreover Lawrence examined the evidence for how far the economic record of successive governments in the United States mirrored trends in political trust, concluding cautiously that any links are not straightforward (Lawrence 1997). For example, it might be expected that the groups who were most affected by the loss of jobs from global labour markets, NAFTA, and free trade would have become significantly less trusting, but from 1958 to 1994 the erosion in the ANES trust in government index was widespread across different occupations, ages and regions, rather than being associated with poorer households, blue-collar workers, or union households.

The policy performance theory may also be more strongly related to democratic satisfaction if a wider range of non-economic aspects of government performance are included in the equation, including salient issues such as security and defense, crime and justice, social services and welfare policies, and expressive moral values (Andrain and Smith 2006). In poorer societies, for example, performance could be monitored by a nation's success in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, a range of internationally-agreed specific targets covering issues such as poverty, schooling, gender-equality, and health. Given the plethora of alternative indices and criteria which are available to gauge success, however, especially in any cross-nationally comparison among rich and poor nations, it becomes far harder to define any independent and objective balanced scorecard of government 'performance' (Bok 1997; Roller 2005). One of the most comprehensive attempts to monitor the performance of advanced industrialized economies, by Roller, uses a series of fourteen performance indices, based on outcome measures covering four policy dimensions: domestic security (e.g. rates of violent and property crime), economic policy (e.g. GDP, rates of inflation and unemployment), social policy (e.g. infant mortality and poverty rates), and environmental policies (e.g. emission of carbon dioxide and rate of water consumption). It is true that many of the indicators chosen by Roller

are indeed universal standards concerning certain desirable goals in any society; which state would not want to achieve lower crime, infant mortality and rates of poverty? Nevertheless the selection and operationalization of the core indices, the relative priority which should be given to each of these, and the exclusion of other policy dimensions, cannot avoid the ideological nature of any judgements about government performance. Many central issues in politics also relate less to the overall goals than the policy means by which to achieve these.

An alternative approach to understanding the influence of policy performance on system support focuses upon comparing the dynamics of 'before' and 'after' case studies of the shocks arising from periods of severe and prolonged economic downturn, such as the 1997 Asian financial crisis, the 2001 debt crisis in Argentina, or the 2008 banking crisis in Iceland. Each of these provides potentially important natural experiments, where the economic performance thesis suggests that after these shocks, public dissatisfaction with governments and the regime should rise steeply. The contrary pattern should also be observed where living standards expand sharply in emerging markets, such as in Vietnam, Taiwan and China, with a sustained period of economic growth encouraging positive assessments about the performance of the overall political system. At the same time, there remain grounds for caution, since certain case studies suggest that economic performance, by itself, may provide only a poor fit to account for trends in political trust observed in many countries. Among post-industrial societies, for example, both Italy and Japan experienced rapid economic growth during the post-war era, although we have already observed that political disaffection in both countries remains pervasive and enduring (Morlino and Tarchi 1996; Pharr 2000). Moreover American confidence in government declined throughout the 1960s, despite the prosperous US economy during this decade (Lawrence 1997). If the policy performance thesis is correct, then satisfaction with democracy should be predicted at macro-level by a range of economic and social policy indicators, and further explained at micro-level by public satisfaction with economic and political performance.

The choice of policy performance indices is clearly important for the interpretation of the analysis. There is no consensus about the most appropriate choice of indices in the research literature, although one of the most comprehensive studies, by Roller, suggests that any normative criteria for performance effectiveness should be multidimensional, involving the shared political goals of international security, domestic security, wealth, socioeconomic security and equality, and environmental protection (Roller 2005). The most comprehensive strategy therefore suggests that a wide range of empirical performance indicators should be compared against democratic satisfaction, first with simple correlation analysis, and then tested more rigorously through regression models using multiple controls. The literature in evaluation studies also suggests that subjective perceptions and independent outcome indices provide the most reliable cross-national measures of regime effectiveness, reflecting how far public policies achieve, or are perceived to have achieved, commonly agreed goals, rather than output instruments, such as patterns of govern-

Table 7.3 Policy performance indices and democratic satisfaction, 2005-2007

	Sources	N.	Year	R	Sig
ECONOMIC					
Economic development	World Bank, GDP per capita in Purchasing Power Parity	47	2004	.369	**
Economic Growth	World Bank, GDP annual growth rate (%)	46	2000-2005	-.354	**
Economic Growth	World Bank, GDP annual growth rate (%)	46	2004	-.308	*
Unemployment rate	World Bank, as % of total labor force	41	2004	-.158	
Inflation rate	World Bank, Consumer Price Index	46	2004	.346	*
GINI Index	UNDP, measures income inequality	45	2004	-.003	
Human poverty index	UNDP, % population living below the specified poverty line	21	2004	-.325	
Tax revenue	Tax revenue as % of GDP	35	2004	.256	
Public expenditure	Central government expenditure as % of GDP	40	2005	-.089	
SOCIAL POLICY					
Human Development Index	UNDP, Human Development Index	46	2004	.216	
Infant mortality	World Bank, Rate (0-1 year) per 1000 live births	48	2000	-.032	
Life expectancy	UNDP, average years at birth	46	2000-2005	.080	
Literacy rate	UNDP, Adult literacy (15+)	46	2004	-.205	
Education	Combined gross enrollment ratio for primary, secondary & tertiary schools	47	2002	.222	
HIV	Prevalence of HIV, total % pop aged 15-49	45	2003	.064	
Measles	UNDP, One-year olds fully immunized, %	48	2002	.037	
Health spending	Public health expenditure (% of GDP)	48	2001	.233	
ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY					
Carbon emissions	World Bank, per capita metric tons	47	2003	.044	
Commercial energy use	World Bank, per capita energy use, oil equivalent	44	2004	.134	
SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING					
Life satisfaction	World Values Survey, 10-pt scale (V20)	49	2005-2007	.585	**
State of health	World Values Survey, 4-pt scale (V11)	49	2005-2007	.566	**
Subjective happiness	World Values Survey, 4-pt scale (V10)	49	2005-2007	.581	**
Financial satisfaction	World Values Survey, 10-pt scale (V68)	49	2005-2007	.660	**
Subjective well-being index	Combined life satisfaction, health, happiness, and financial satisfaction	49	2005-2007	.684	**

Notes: The macro-level correlation coefficients measure the strength of the link between the democratic satisfaction scale in 2005-2007 and the policy performance indices. * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level; ** correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

ment expenditure or the passage of legislation (see, for example, Esping-Andersen 1990; Castles et al. 1998; Adolino and Blake 2003; Roller 2005). Hence comparative studies of political economy commonly use micro-level subjective measures of well-being, such as financial satisfaction and happiness, as well as macro-level policy outcome measures, including national levels of growth, employment and inflation rates. Similarly cross-national health care studies routinely employ international

developmental indices, such as rates of infant mortality, incidence of HIV/Aids, and average life expectancy, as well as self-reported health. The policy mechanisms used to achieve common goals vary in each country, such as whether health care is delivered through private insurance providers versus a national health service, or some mix of the two, but the standardized outcome measures are more comparable across nations. The performance-based indicators are lagged at least a year prior to levels of democratic satisfaction monitored subsequently in the 5th wave *World Values Survey*. Checks using alternative lags did not substantially alter the interpretation of the results, suggesting that they remain robust irrespective of the particular year selected.

Accordingly, following this strategy, Table 7.3 presents the results of the simple correlations across a series of selected macro-level output performance indicators of economic development, human development, and environmental sustainability, as well as survey-based measures of subjective well-being in each society, including life and financial satisfaction, self-reported health and happiness, and a combined subjective well-being index. The results demonstrate that *most (but not all) of the macro-level objective indicators usually prove poor predictors of democratic satisfaction*. The important exceptions to these patterns concern levels of per capita GDP and the Consumer Price Index, both of which were significantly associated with more positive political attitudes. The measure of the average growth of GDP also proved significant, although in the contrary direction to that expected theoretically; people proved more satisfied with the performance of democracy in countries with lower rates of economic growth, and the results proved robust, whether measured for a single year or the accumulated rates of growth over a five-year period. Nearly all the other standard indicators of economic, social and environmental policy performance, including rates of unemployment, the human development index, and levels of income inequality, were not significantly linked with greater democratic satisfaction. By contrast, the subjective indices in each society were strongly and significantly related to democratic satisfaction, including life satisfaction, self-reported state of health, subjective happiness, financial satisfaction, and the summary subjective well-being index. Thus those who were content with many aspects of their lives were also usually happier about how government works.

Accordingly for more rigorous tests, levels of economic development, human development, and the subjective well-being index were entered into the models developed earlier, as shown in Table 7.4. The results in Table 7.4 confirm that economic development and subjective well-being continue to prove important even after controlling for other factors in the models. By contrast, human development appears to have no direct impact upon political orientations. The effects of subjective well-being on democratic satisfaction are particularly strong; those who feel happiest, healthiest, well-off and most satisfied with life also prove most content with the way that democratic governance works. The role of subjective well-being has generated a growing popular and scholarly literature in social psychology and economics during the past three decades (see, for example, the literature review in Diener

Table 7.4 Policy performance and democratic satisfaction, 2005-2007

	Economic Development	Human development	Subjective wellbeing
CONTROLS			
Demographic characteristics			
Age (in years)	.484*** (.103)	.458*** (.105)	.618*** (.102)
Sex (male = 1)	-.199* (.093)	-.172 (.095)	-.096 (.093)
Socioeconomic resources			
Household income 10-pt scale	2.15*** (.110)	2.14*** (.112)	.596** (.117)
Education 9-pt scale	-.507*** (.113)	-.546* (.116)	-.665*** (.112)
Democratic knowledge	.450*** (.107)	.468*** (.109)	.433*** (.106)
PERFORMANCE INDICES			
Economic development,	3.24* (1.39)		
Human development index, 2005		1.86 (1.29)	
Subjective well-being index			4.45*** (.116)
Constant (intercept)	63.3	64.0	63.4
Schwartz BIC	495,565	474,666	438,254
N. respondents	54,987	52,676	54,494
N. nations	43	41	44

Note: The dependent variable is the 100-point democratic satisfaction scale. All independent variables were standardized using mean centering (z-scores). Models present the results of the REML multilevel regression models including the beta coefficient, (the standard error below in parenthesis), and the significance. Significant coefficients are highlighted in **bold**. Models were checked through tolerance statistics to be free of problems of multi-collinearity.

Source: WVS 2005-2007

feelings about government, as an affective orientation acquired in early childhood from parents, family and friends. In this view, also, people's personalities can have an important long-term influence on whether they are happy or unhappy, understood as inborn or learnt traits (Kahneman et al. 1999). Alternatively, if the measure of subjective well-being taps into cognitive evaluations about living conditions and social circumstances, reflecting how people evaluate their own state of happiness, health, and financial security, then it can be interpreted as a rational evaluation of regime performance. After all, many people may often find it hard to judge the

outcome and impact of specific government decisions and public policy processes, especially in younger regimes, in societies with limited access to the independent news media, and in complex political systems with multilevel agencies of decision-making. It also often proves difficult to evaluate the overall state of the national or local economy, and societal (socio-tropic) conditions of levels of unemployment or poverty. For example, an extensive literature on political knowledge in the US has demonstrated that when asked about basic awareness about standard performance indices, such as the current rate of unemployment, or the size of the public debt, few Americans manage to produce accurate estimates. Moreover despite the growth of educational attainment, and the proliferation of information and communication technologies, American knowledge about politics has not risen in recent decades (The Pew Center on the People and the Press 2008). By contrast, however, people are likely to be the best judge of their own life satisfaction. Subjective well-being can depend upon government performance for many reasons. For example, Helliwell argues that many services crucial to individuals and families, ranging from education and health to justice and transportation, are regulated and provided by governments (Helliwell 2003). He also suggests that a sense of human security depends considerably on the confidence with which people can rely on government services being available when and where they are needed. Understood in this light, subjective well-being can be interpreted as providing support for the rational choice perspective, where those most satisfied with their lives are also observed to be happiest with how democratic governance works.

7.5 Conclusions and implications

This study examines rational choice approaches which seek to explain satisfaction with democracy in terms of the process and the policy performance of governments. This explanation, emphasizing how citizens evaluate the way that governments perform, counterbalances the demand-side emphasis provided by cultural accounts. An accumulating research literature has explored these issues but no consensus has yet emerged about the most significant performance factors which help to explain system support and thus the democratic deficit at the heart of this study. One reason for the lack of agreement is the varied range of performance indicators which can be examined, along with the intellectual division of labor, so that different disciplines have focused upon different elements. Hence institutionalists have often tested the ‘winners and losers’ thesis, while political economists have focused attention upon some of the economic measures of good governance, such as the need for transparency, anti-corruption, rule of law and property rights.

The results of the more comprehensive comparison of alternative measures presented in this research suggests two main findings. First, process performance, including both measures of the quality of democracy and good governance, does count for how content people are with the way that government works. In this

regard, there is indeed a rational basis for public evaluations. Among the policy indices, economic development and a subjective sense of well-being also proved equally important for satisfaction, although most of the narrower economic, social and environmental performance indicators were not significant. In this regard, this study concludes by returning to the idea, first suggested by David Easton, that affective loyalties towards the authorities should be modified by our accumulated experience of how regimes work: “Members do not come to identify with basic political objects only because they have learned to do so through inducements offered by others – a critical aspect of socialization processes. If they did, diffuse support would have entirely the appearance of a non-rational phenomenon. Rather, on the basis of their own experiences, members may also adjudge the worth of supporting these objects for their own sake. Such attachment may be a product of spill-over effects from evaluations of a series of outputs and of performance over a long period of time. Even though the orientations derive from responses to particular outputs initially, they become in time disassociated from performance. They become transformed into generalized attitudes towards the authorities or other political objects” (Easton 1975: 446). Clearly many other factors may contribute towards public evaluations, including the institutional structure of regimes and the pattern of winners and losers, and the impact of enduring political traditions and religious cultures, issues explored in more depth elsewhere (Norris forthcoming). This limited study needs to be supplemented with many other perspectives for a more comprehensive understanding of all the causes of political legitimacy. Nevertheless rational choice accounts emphasize that the way that people experience democratic governance leads them to express negative or positive assessments of the way that the regime works in their own country, and this research presents considerable support for this thesis.

Notes

- * This study forms part of a larger research project examining the reasons for the gap between democratic aspirations and satisfaction with performance. For more details, see Pippa Norris. 2011. *Democratic Deficits*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- 1 The University of Goteborg’s Quality of Governance Institute has developed a dedicated website and an integrated dataset collecting these indicators. See <http://www.qog.pol.gu.se/>; see also UNDP (2007a).
- 2 See also the University of Goteborg’s Quality of Governance dataset <http://www.qog.pol.gu.se/>
- 3 For a detailed account of the links between public preferences and policy responsiveness, see Soroka and Wlezien (2010).

8

Citizens' Views about Good Local Governance

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8.1 Introduction

GOOD GOVERNANCE IS AN INCREASINGLY POPULAR TERM IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE. Since the 1990s various international organizations, like the International Monetary Fund, the United Nations and the World Bank, have employed this concept as the basis for evaluating the effects of development aid programs in Third World Countries (see, for example, Kaufmann et al. 2008). But the term has also been adopted for use in the context of states in the Western world. In 2002, for example, the influential German Bertelsmann Stiftung, together with municipalities from various Western countries, developed a set of criteria for assessing the quality of local governance (Pröhl 2002; Wegener 2002). Typically, the criteria for good (local) governance provide a mix of standards that focus on both the input side and the output side of the political (sub)system.¹ On the input side good governance is associated with Lincoln's notion of 'democracy by the people', which implies an essentially *procedural* requirement, that is, that "collectively binding decisions should derive from the authentic expression of the preferences of the constituency in question" (Scharpf 2000: 103). On the output side good governance, as an expression of Lincoln's 'democracy for the people', implies a *functional* requirement, that is, that the system is effective and efficient in dealing with the collective problems and needs of the constituency (Scharpf 2000).

Although the above illustrates that there is an extensive literature about what policymakers and academics would like to consider as good governance, there is little direct empirical evidence about what citizens consider important in evaluating their systems of governance. This is remarkable because there is widespread consensus that citizens' views should provide a primary reference point in defining

the quality of governance in a democratic system. In this chapter we will therefore first ask:

1. *How important are procedural and functional considerations for people's assessments of the quality of local governance?*

In answering this question we will not only gain some insight into central tendencies in people's assessments, but also into the variations, if any, that may be found with respect to such assessments. In the second part of the chapter we will try to explain any such variations, focusing on our second research question:

2. *What factors explain variations in how citizens think about and assess good local governance?*

We will answer these questions on the basis of evidence from two national surveys conducted in the Netherlands and Norway as part of a broader international research project about the quality of local government. In these surveys citizens were asked how important they considered various conditions or characteristics of good local governance to be, conditions pertaining both to the procedures of local political decision making and to functional criteria regarding the outputs of local government. The reasons for concentrating on the Netherlands and Norway are primarily pragmatic – namely the availability of data. It would be presumptuous to make any strong claims based on findings for these two countries alone, not least because they are rather atypical in a number of respects. Both Norway and the Netherlands are small democracies, they have a rather similar political culture, they are characterized by a high degree of post-materialism (cf. Inglehart 1977, 1997), and have rather comparable systems of local government (see Sellers and Lidström 2007). Both countries also rank high in various international comparisons with respect to aspects of good governance as well as public satisfaction with democracy and the provision of public goods and services (see, for example, Campbell and Pözlbauer 2010). Although it is therefore hard to say exactly what the answers to our research questions will tell us about citizens' ideas about local governance more generally, results from our inquiry will at least provide a starting point for further empirical research into this largely unknown territory.

8.2 Citizens' views about governance: normative perspectives

Thomassen (1995), based on previous work by Sabine (1952) and Pennock (1979) among others, has distinguished between two normative theories that are relevant for conceptualizing good democratic governance: collectivism and individualism. Differences between these two normative theories relate to a number of dimen-

sions (Thomassen 1995: 386). In the following we focus on two of these dimensions. The first dimension refers to how democracy is conceived. In the collective view 'true' democracy is essentially direct or participatory democracy. In the individualist conception, by comparison, democracy is essentially representative democracy and politics should in general "be left to politicians" (Thomassen 1995: 390). This first distinction, in other words, pertains to the proper procedures of (democratic) governance.

The second dimension relates to what is the proper role of government. In the collectivist view the goals of government pertain to the broad aims of "directing societal development and taking care of people's welfare" (Thomassen 1995: 389). In the individualist view, on the other hand, "government intervention should be limited to a minimum" (Thomassen 1995: 389). During the rise of the welfare state this latter position was not very widely endorsed, but after the rise of neo-liberalism as manifested by Reaganomics and Thatcherism in the 1980s, this minimalist view of the scope of government appears to have grown in popularity.

On the basis of these two dimensions we seek to describe citizens' views on good (local) governments in terms of the following two perspectives:

- 1 how the notion of 'government by the people' should be institutionalized either as representative or as participatory democracy (the procedural dimension);
- 2 what 'governance for the people' should mean: a minimal state that only takes care of a limited number of key tasks or a welfare state that is responsible for the solution of community problems and provides goods and services to enhance the welfare of its citizens (the functional dimension).

In the political science literature different arguments can be found regarding the dominance of views on good governance among mass publics. For citizens' views regarding the *procedural dimension*, there are at least two interpretations. On the one hand there is the widely held view that due to individual modernization, citizens have developed new participatory demands whereby they seek more direct channels of political involvement (see, for example, Inglehart 1977; Fuchs and Klingemann 1995a, 1995b; Dalton et al. 2003). On the other hand Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002) have argued that this idea is misguided. They argue that – at least US citizens – are rather politics-averse: "The last thing people want is to be more involved in political decision making. They do not want to make political decisions themselves; they do not want to provide much input to those who are assigned to make these decisions" (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2002: 1). In other words: "their ideal system is one in which they themselves are not involved, but where they can be confident that decision makers will be motivated by a desire to serve the people" (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2002: 227).

One also finds considerable disagreement in the literature regarding the *functional dimension*. On the one hand there is the view that people's evaluations of political officeholders and political institutions critically depend on their evalu-

ations of the actual *performance* of governments and whether societal conditions are favorable (see, for example, Crozier et al. 1975; Norris 1999; Pharr and Putnam 2000; Denters et al. 2007). This view implies that citizens are primarily interested in the outputs of the political process rather than in the quality of the process as such. Hibbing and Theiss-Morse again hold a dissenting view. These authors argue that the empirical evidence in support of a performance-based perspective is scarce (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2002: 25). Alternatively, they claim that people's inclinations are primarily to view and evaluate politics in *procedural* rather than in substantive, policy-oriented terms (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2002: 39). For Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, moreover, procedural standards do not include stipulations regarding extensive citizen involvement. Rather they argue that citizens, based on a strong dislike of politics as they see it – that is, as being discordant, oriented to special interests and self-serving – have preferences that emphasize the character of politicians, politicians who should preferably be “empathetic, non-self-interested decision makers (ENSIDS)” (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2002: 216).

8.3 Citizens' views about governance: empirical evidence

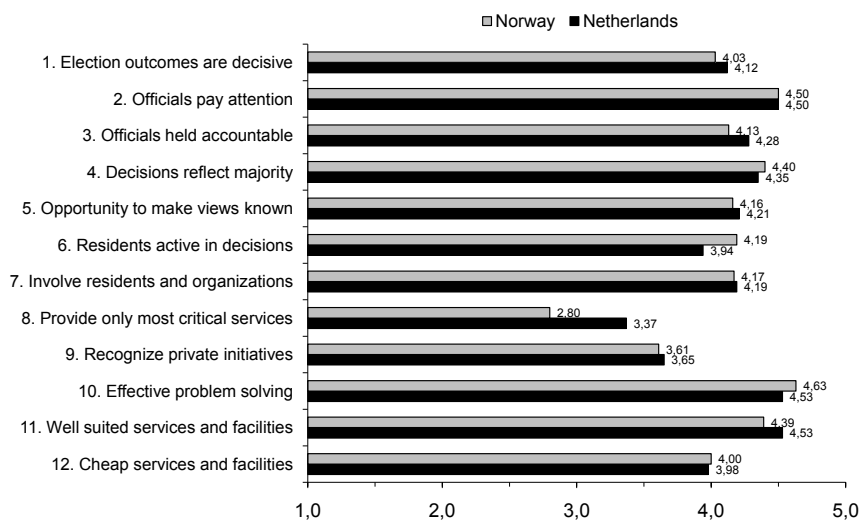
The national surveys conducted in Norway and the Netherlands in 2001 contained questions which allow us to explore citizen views on good local governance. Using two batteries of items, citizens were asked how important they considered key elements of local democracy to be and how local governance should be conducted on a day-to-day basis. Of interest for our present purposes are the following twelve items contained in these two batteries:²

- 1 that the outcome of local elections is decisive for determining municipal policies;
- 2 that local elected officials pay attention to the views of residents;
- 3 that local (elected) officials can be held accountable to residents for their actions and decisions;
- 4 that municipal decisions reflect a majority opinion among residents;
- 5 that all residents have ample opportunity to make their views known before important local decisions are taken;
- 6 that residents participate actively in making important local decisions;
- 7 that the municipality seeks to involve residents, voluntary organizations and private business in finding solutions to local problems;
- 8 that the municipality provides only the most critical services and leaves the provision of additional services to others;
- 9 that the municipality recognizes that for many problems private initiatives provide better solutions than government;
- 10 that the municipality is effective in solving local problems;

- 11 that the municipality provides services and facilities that are well suited to the needs of residents;
- 12 that the municipality seeks to provide services and facilities as cheaply as possible.

The mean values of responses to these items given by citizens in both countries are presented in Figure 8.1. Two observations are in order regarding the results displayed. First, virtually all of the considerations are typically perceived to be of relatively high importance by citizens in both countries. On a response scale ranging from 1 ('of little importance') to 5 ('very important'), the means values are, with only two exceptions, roughly 4 or higher. The two exceptions are items 8 and 9, both of which are items relating to the distribution of responsibility for service provision between public and private actors. But even for these items the mean values are typically around 3 or above. Second, with only one exception, responses of citizens in both countries are very much alike.³ Only with respect to views on the extent to which municipalities should only provide the most critical services and leave the provision of additional services to others is there a marked (and statistically significant) difference, with Norwegians on average seeing this as being less important than Dutch citizens.

Figure 8.1 Mean values of citizen views on 12 characteristics of good local governance by country



Note: Scale values range from 1 ('of little importance') to 5 ('very important').

Source: National surveys in Norway and the Netherlands

A next step in the analysis is to move from consideration of the individual items to the underlying dimensional structure which these items may tap. In light of Thomassen's conceptualization of relevant democratic value orientations, we expected to find that the twelve items could be grouped into four distinct (though not necessarily mutually exclusive) sets of normative citizen orientations vis-à-vis local government. Thus, with respect to *procedural orientations* we expected to find a distinction between:

- *voter* orientations: based on normative expectations in which the desirability of representative democracy with decisive elections is emphasized (items 1-4); and
- *activist* orientations: based on normative expectations in which the desirability of broader non-electoral, participatory democracy is emphasized (items 5-7).

Similarly with regard to *functional orientations* we expected to find a distinction between:

- *privateer* orientations: based on normative expectations in which the desirability of limited (or minimal) government intervention is emphasized (items 8-9); and
- *consumer* orientations: based on normative expectations in which the desirability of effective and efficient public policies and services is stressed (items 10-12).

Principal components factor analyses essentially corroborate this fourfold categorization of the twelve items.⁴ We therefore constructed four additive indices based on these subsets of items and these indices are used in the analyses reported in the remainder of this chapter.⁵ Descriptive statistics for these indices are presented in Table 8.1.

The conclusions to be drawn on the basis of Table 8.1 reflect in large part trends already observed with respect to the individual items. First, as indicated by mean values of more than four, citizens in both countries typically assign a great deal of

Table 8.1 Distribution characteristics for 4 scales regarding citizen views of good local governance, by country (1 = Of little importance, 5 = Very important)

Scale	Norway			Netherlands		
	Mean	Std. dev.	N	Mean	Std. dev.	N
Voter	4,27	,641	1575	4,32	,681	988
Activist	4,17	,724	1600	4,11	,723	995
Privateer	3,22	1,088	1564	3,52	,948	959
Consumer	4,34	,583	1603	4,35	,632	1021

importance to three of the four dimensions of good governance identified here. This is the case for representative democracy (voter dimension), participatory democracy (activist dimension) and for effective and efficient governance (consumer dimension). The idea of 'limited government' (privateer dimension), by comparison, is not nearly as strongly endorsed as the other three value orientations, but even in this instance the mean index value is above 3 for citizens of both countries.

Second, the rank order of the aggregate value priorities among citizens in the two countries is essentially the same. Consumerist values rank first and are closely followed by voter orientations in both countries (in the Netherlands the aggregate mean values for these two orientations are virtually equal) whereas activist or broader based participatory orientations rank third and what we have termed a 'privateer' value orientation is clearly deemed to be of least importance. Differences in the between country means for these indices are only statistically significant for the 'Activist' dimension (somewhat more important among Norwegians than among the Dutch) and 'Privateer' dimension (clearly more important for the Dutch than for the Norwegians). These findings serve among other things to refute the conjecture of Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002), who claim that citizens would not appreciate opportunities for direct civic participation. Although the 'activist' orientations are somewhat less strongly endorsed than the 'voter' orientations, citizens in both countries not only expect a well-functioning representative democracy, but at the same time also see opportunities for non-electoral modes of civic engagement as being important for good local governance.

Third, we can also observe that within country variation for these dimensions, especially for the three most important orientations, is modest at best. Not only is the relative variation for the 'consumer', 'voter' and 'activist' indices small in each country, it is also quite similar when compared for each index across the two countries. Only for the fourth 'privateer' index is the relative variation larger, especially in the case of Norway, but even here the variation is not overwhelming.⁶ It is important to keep this limited variation in mind when, in the second part of this contribution, we focus on the explanation of these variations.

In combination these findings confirm the results from other recent research on a related topic, viz. citizens' conceptions of good citizenship (see Rose 1999; Rose and Pettersen 2002; Denters et al. 2007; Van Deth 2007; Dalton 2008). Most critically the findings indicate that citizens in both countries hold a mix of value orientations (value pluralism), a mix in which individualist ('voter') and collectivist ('activist' and 'consumer') value orientations are most predominant.⁷ Moreover, these findings also imply that citizens, when evaluating the political process, are not one-sided: they do not markedly emphasize functional, output-related criteria as some have apprehensively suggested (see, for example, Habermas 1994), nor are they biased towards more procedural criteria as assumed by Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002).

That citizens should see all of the considerations as being relatively important is of course not entirely surprising. There is a well-known Winnie the Pooh effect

(“Yes, thanks, both milk and honey”) with respect to a series of rating items, all of which may be of a positive character (see, for example, Sniderman et al. 1991: 22). Clearly most, if not all of the characteristics involved in the individual items have a positive valence. It is, therefore, not illogical or inconsistent for citizens to express favorable attitudes regarding all of these characteristics. What is more noteworthy is the apparent homogeneity of citizen value orientations across the two countries, at least at the *aggregate* level. The question that remains is whether or not there, nonetheless, are differences to be found with respect to value orientations at the *individual* level, and if so, whether any such differences are common to the residents of both countries.

8.4 Explaining differences in orientations: a theoretical model

Citizen norms and values are not innate ideas; they are the result of processes of political socialization. In understanding political socialization it is generally assumed that the conditions prevailing in the period individuals grew up are of crucial importance. Based on this presumption, Inglehart has developed his well-known theory of value change laid out in his book *The Silent Revolution* (1977). Since then many scholars have explored the impact of generational differences on norms and value orientations (see, for example, Van Deth and Scarbrough 1995; Rose and Houlberg 2002; Rossteutscher 2004; Denters et al. 2007; Denters and Van der Kolk 2008). Expectations regarding generation effects rest on the presumption that sharing common historical experiences has an impact on people’s understandings, valuations and orientations. In an increasingly internationalized world such crucial historical events (or watersheds) tend to be transnational rather than nation-specific, coinciding with major wars and the ups and downs of the world economy. To explore this thesis in this chapter we have adapted Rossteutscher’s fourfold classification of generations in which three historical watersheds in recent European history serve as generational ‘breaking points’: the end of the Second World War, the ‘Cultural Revolution of 1968’, and the crisis of the welfare state marked by the watershed election of Margaret Thatcher as prime minister in the UK in 1979 (Rossteutscher 2004; see also Denters and Van der Kolk 2008).⁸ Based on these events we distinguish between four generations:

- 1 War Generation (those born before 1935): the generation that experienced World War II;
- 2 Children of the Revolution (those born after 1935 but before 1958): the generation that experienced the ‘cultural revolution’ of the late 1960s;
- 3 Lost Generation (those born in 1958 or thereafter, but before 1969): the generation that experienced the crisis of the welfare state, the economic crisis of the 1980s and the rise of neo-liberalism;

- 4 New Kids on the Block (those born in or after 1969): the generation living in the period of economic recovery and the end of the Cold War.

Thus, whereas there may be a general consensus among Norwegian and Dutch citizens, a number of interesting questions remain. For example, do more recent generations increasingly take representative democracy for granted and do they therefore place less importance on indirect democratic criteria ('voter' value orientations) than the war generation? Is firm support for 'activist' values a distinguishing feature of the 'children of the revolution' that sets this cohort apart from previous and subsequent generations, or is a high degree of support for activist values also characteristic for subsequent generations? Likewise, one can ask whether the neo-liberal era has left a (unique) stamp on value orientations of the 'lost generation' in the sense that they, more than other generations, endorse privateer values. And what about 'consumerist' orientations? Are these functionally oriented values especially important for the 'materialists' of the war generation, or are such orientations also embraced by later generations? Are the children of the revolution, for example, not as demanding or even more demanding in making claims on their governments as problem-solvers?

But generational affiliation is by no means the only factor that might have an effect on variations in citizens' conceptions of good local governance. In our analyses we also consider three other clusters of factors. First, it is important to recognize that political socialization is not restricted to people's younger days but continues in later life in a variety of social contexts. In the literature, three contexts are regarded to be of crucial importance: associational networks, the workplace and the school. In recent years the relevance of people's inclusion in *associational networks* of associations and voluntary organizations has in particular received much attention (e.g. Denters et al. 2007; Denters and Van der Kolk 2008). It has been argued that such networks provide a training ground for acquiring values, norms and civic skills that are essential for a well-functioning democracy (De Tocqueville 1994 [1837]; Almond and Verba 1963; Verba et al. 1995). Putnam (1993, 2000) has revived this traditional idea in his social capital theory. In this theory, people's involvement in social networks provide them with trust in their fellow citizens and inculcate norms of reciprocity that are essential for making democracies work. On the basis of such arguments we include a number of variables in our analytical models: associational membership, active engagement in voluntary work, active involvement in religious communities, and trust in one's fellow citizens (social trust).

In addition to these factors we also investigate the effect of employment and education. *Employment* not only provides people with a work-related social environment, but is also an important form of social inclusion, linking individual citizens in a meaningful way to society and providing a context for acquiring civic skills as well as sharing and testing civic orientations with others. As for *education*, educational opportunities, the content of public education and rates of educational achievement have obviously changed over time. In one respect, therefore, education,

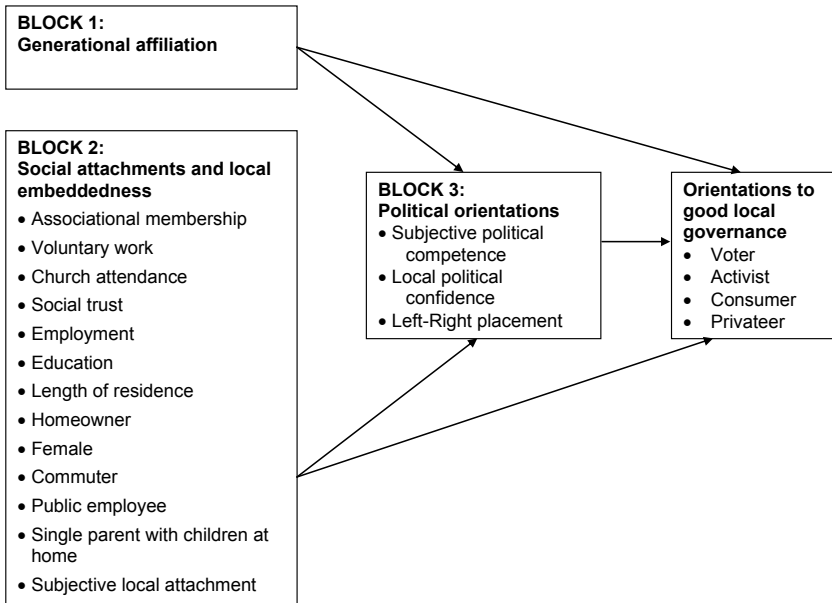
especially on the aggregate level, contains a certain generational component in its own right. But for the individual, education is every bit as much a life-cycle phenomenon, offering an important context for acquiring civic values, norms and orientations and acquiring civic skills. Hence, in order to identify generational effects as distinct from life-cycle effects, education must also be taken into account.

Factors like associational involvement, employment and education may actually have a twofold effect. On the one hand these settings provide contexts in which a set of general civic norms, values and civic skills are acquired and developed. On the other hand they also provide links through which citizens are included in social life and hence serve as forms of social inclusion that can have a more specific impact on people's orientations towards the political community and its governments. In the latter sense there may be a number of additional factors that link citizens to their local communities and help shape their views on good local governance by providing them with relatively strong *objective and subjective attachments to the local community* and its government. It is commonly assumed, for example, that objective attachments to the locality are stronger for people who have spent a larger part of their life living in the locality (length of residence as a percentage of age), who are homeowners (rather than tenants), and who do not commute outside the municipality to their place of work. Moreover it is also assumed that women, because of their traditional gender role, are more strongly attached to their place of residence (e.g. Hayes and Bean 1993; Verba et al. 1997). Similarly those who are likely to be more reliant on public services (such as single parents with children in the household) or who are employed in the public sector may also develop specific orientations towards (local) government. In addition to these objective factors it is also reasonable to include people's subjective sense of attachment to the municipality as a potentially relevant factor in our model.

Third, we also consider the relevance of three political orientations. These orientations may either act as intervening variables in the relation between some of the previously discussed factors and our dependent variables, or have an effect that is independent of these factors. For one thing, we assume that people's political self-confidence (*subjective political competence*) matters. This confidence refers to both their belief about being able to understand (local) politics and government and their perceived capacity to act competently in this context. In the same vein it is also important to consider how citizens perceive local government. People who are generally confident about the responsiveness, integrity and competence of local government (*local political confidence*) may well have different views on what constitutes good governance than do others. Finally, we also expect that ideological orientations in terms of left-right self placement may have an effect on notions of good (local) governance. A political ideology, after all, provides a general conception of the good society and the most important means (including government policies) to achieve such a society (see e.g. Downs 1957: 96).

These various factors are summarized in the analytical model presented in Figure 8.2.

Figure 8.2 An analytical model regarding citizen orientations to local government



8.5 Explaining differences in orientations: empirical findings

In order to analyze the relative impact of the three major blocks of explanatory factors, we estimate three versions of the empirical model in a block wise fashion. In step 1 only the generational dummy variables are included, using the oldest, pre-1935 generation as a reference category. Social attachment and local embeddedness factors are subsequently added in step model 2, and finally the political orientations variables are included in step 3. In order to assess whether the impact of these different factors are similar in the two countries, two separate sets of OLS regression analyses have been carried out, one for each of the two countries. Results from these analyses for each of the four dependent variables are displayed in Tables 8.2 to 8.5.⁹

Findings presented in Tables 8.2 to 8.5 provide the basis for a number of general observations. To begin with, the explanatory power of the full models (found in the columns for model 3) for all four dependent models is very limited. The adjusted R^2 ranges from 6 percent ('voter' and 'consumer' orientations) to 18 percent ('privateer' orientation) in Norway and from 5 percent ('consumer' orientation) to 10 percent ('privateer' orientation) in the Netherlands. Only for 'privateer' orientations in both countries does the adjusted R^2 clear a 10 percent hurdle. These results are by no means exceptional. In previous work on citizen views on good citizenship, R^2 values

Table 8.2 OLS regression results for a voter orientation index

	Norway (N = 1200)						Netherlands (N = 568)					
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	beta	p	beta	p	beta	p	beta	p	beta	p	beta	p
Generation 2	-,14	,002	-,08	,129	-,09	,087	,006	,931	,05	,578	,04	,603
Generation 3	-,19	,000	-,16	,004	-,16	,003	,004	,955	,02	,764	,04	,668
Generation 4	-,17	,000	-,16	,001	-,16	,001	-,072	,213	-,03	,653	-,01	,861
Membership			-,04	,267	-,03	,302			,05	,321	,05	,293
Volunteering			-,06	,066	-,06	,063			-,06	,174	-,09	,066
Church attendance			,00	,942	,01	,768			,10	,018	,11	,013
Social trust			-,07	,019	-,05	,106			-,01	,894	,01	,853
Paid employment			-,08	,020	-,08	,029			-,06	,251	-,07	,194
Education (medium)			,04	,265	,04	,264			,07	,151	,06	,280
Education (high)			-,02	,633	-,02	,622			,05	,370	,03	,603
Local attachment			,07	,029	,08	,013			,06	,159	,06	,196
Gender			,12	,000	,12	,000			,12	,005	,14	,001
Single parent			,01	,686	,02	,618			-,02	,631	-,02	,667
Public sector worker			,01	,687	,02	,625			,05	,238	,05	,262
Length of residence			-,06	,056	-,06	,046			-,04	,334	-,04	,363
Homeownership			,01	,802	,00	,959			-,02	,640	-,02	,734
Commuter			,05	,113	,04	,133			-,05	,273	-,04	,361
Internal efficacy					,04	,233					,11	,016
Political confidence					-,10	,001					-,14	,001
Left-right					,03	,324					,05	,278
Adjusted R ²	2%		5%		6%		0%		3%		6%	

have also been in the same range of magnitude (see Denters et al. 2007; Denters and Van der Kolk 2008).

A second observation pertains to the contribution that various blocks of variables make to the overall explanation of variation in citizen conceptions of good local governance. The contribution that generational differences make to an explanation, for instance, is very small – indeed no more than three percent at best. When block 2 variables reflecting different aspects of social inclusion and local embeddedness are included in the model, we observe that they tend to increase the explanatory power of the model more in Norway than is the case in the Netherlands. The opposite, however, is true when the final block of variables tapping selected political orientations is included: these variables increase the explanatory power of the model more in the Netherlands than in Norway. Relatively speaking, in other words, political orientations seem to have a greater impact on citizen values relating to good local governance in the Netherlands than they do in Norway.

Table 8.3 OLS regression results for an activist orientation index

	Norway (N = 1200)						Netherlands (N = 568)					
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	beta	p	beta	p	beta	p	beta	p	beta	p	beta	p
Generation 2	-.05	,257	-.02	,711	-.04	,474	,00	,955	,00	,918	,01	,878
Generation 3	-.16	,000	-.11	,036	-.12	,030	-.03	,665	-.04	,604	-.00	,956
Generation 4	-.14	,000	-.09	,060	-.08	,075	-.13	,025	-.12	,066	-.08	,217
Membership			,02	,595	,01	,847			,04	,409	,02	,525
Volunteering			,04	,189	,02	,509			,05	,333	,00	,938
Church attendance			,02	,422	,03	,269			,05	,255	,08	,088
Social trust			,05	,094	,05	,070			-.04	,386	-.04	,345
Paid employment			-.02	,687	-.01	,771			,03	,592	,00	,917
Education (medium)			,00	,976	-.00	,921			,10	,058	,06	,245
Education (high)			-.06	,078	-.08	,016			-.02	,763	-.08	,165
Local attachment			,13	,000	,12	,000			,09	,050	,06	,202
Gender			,14	,000	,16	,000			,00	,907	,05	,220
Single parent			-.01	,685	-.02	,563			,04	,303	,04	,316
Public sector worker			,00	,930	-.01	,784			,04	,317	,04	,388
Length of residence			,02	,625	,02	,503			-.03	,521	-.02	,742
Homeownership			,00	,908	,00	,984			-.06	,191	-.04	,309
Commuter			,03	,401	,02	,392			-.07	,128	-.05	,314
Internal efficacy					,11	,000					,26	,000
Political confidence					-.04	,226					-.08	,055
Left-right					-.03	,244					,00	,997
Adjusted R ²	2%		6%		7%		1%		2%		8%	

If we look at the more detailed results regarding the impact of specific variables within each block of variables¹⁰ we can first of all note that except for privateer orientations, generational differences in Norway tend to have a direct effect on citizen values (see betas in the columns for model 3). Compared with the oldest generation, members of the lost generation (generation 3) and new kids on the block (generation 4) are less inclined to emphasize various criteria for good local governance as being important. These generations apparently take a well-functioning democracy (both in procedural and functional terms) for granted.¹¹ In the Netherlands, however, we do not find a similar effect. Here, the initial effects evident in betas for model 1 disappear once there is a control for variables in block 2. This suggests that the initial effects are probably related to life-cycle differences rather than generational differences.

Looking at the variables in block 2, we may first of all observe an easily overlooked ‘negative’ finding, viz. that various aspects of people’s social inclusion and socio-economic status are not systematically related to differences in their concep-

Table 8.4 OLS regression results for a consumer orientation index

	Norway (N = 1200)						Netherlands (N = 568)					
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	beta	p	beta	p	beta	p	beta	p	beta	p	beta	p
Generation 2	-,11	,014	-,09	,108	-,09	,093	-,06	,383	-,01	,897	-,01	,871
Generation 3	-,19	,000	-,14	,007	-,14	,007	-,15	,031	-,09	,252	-,08	,311
Generation 4	-,20	,000	-,14	,002	-,14	,003	-,18	,002	-,12	,068	-,10	,121
Membership			-,06	,053	-,07	,040			,01	,785	,01	,760
Volunteering			,05	,107	,04	,198			-,10	,041	-,12	,011
Church attendance			,03	,347	,03	,382			,03	,558	,04	,449
Social trust			,03	,297	,03	,343			,02	,709	,03	,507
Paid employment			,01	,737	,01	,791			-,05	,310	-,06	,240
Education (medium)			-,04	,190	-,05	,143			-,02	,743	-,04	,479
Education (high)			-,06	,070	-,08	,030			-,11	,042	-,13	,015
Local attachment			,14	,000	,14	,000			,07	,140	,06	,183
Gender			,07	,022	,08	,009			-,03	,524	-,00	,951
Single parent			-,03	,281	-,03	,286			-,00	,940	-,00	,978
Public sector worker			,07	,030	,06	,036			,04	,305	,04	,336
Length of residence			,02	,492	,03	,385			-,00	,936	,00	,999
Homeownership			,02	,588	,01	,654			,02	,601	,03	,510
Commuter			,04	,196	,04	,229			,01	,906	,02	,744
Internal efficacy					,06	,048					,12	,011
Political confidence					,02	,595					-,14	,001
Left-right					,02	,534					,05	,289
Adjusted R ²	3%		6%		6%		2%		2%		5%	

tions of good governance. This finding provides further corroboration of one of the major conclusions from this study and previous studies of a similar character – namely that value pluralism does not necessarily imply fragmentation and polarization between different social groupings. There are only a few minor exceptions. First, women in both Norway and the Netherlands are inclined to consider certain criteria somewhat more important than men in five of the eight analyses. Moreover, in both countries respondents with the highest level of education, when compared with those in the lowest educational category, consider functional or output criteria of good local government as found in the consumer and privateer value dimensions to be of somewhat lesser importance.

A further observation is also in order here. In previous studies it has been found that forms of involvement in voluntary associations and social trust (or in Putnam's words social capital) were systematically related to differences in citizen's conceptions of good citizenship (cf. Denters et al. 2007; Denters and Van der Kolk 2008). Denters and his associates, for example, concluded that "social trust and forms

Table 8.5 OLS regression results for a privateer orientation index

	Norway (N = 1200)						Netherlands (N = 568)					
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	beta	p	beta	p	beta	p	beta	p	beta	p	beta	p
Generation 2	-,10	,026	-,06	,299	-,03	,519	-,12	,092	-,06	,493	-,04	,637
Generation 3	-,10	,013	-,06	,298	-,04	,415	-,20	,005	-,12	,154	-,11	,175
Generation 4	-,07	,064	-,06	,175	-,07	,107	-,17	,004	-,08	,215	-,07	,301
Membership			-,11	,000	-,08	,006			,02	,697	,02	,680
Volunteering			-,00	,915	,02	,472			-,06	,193	-,08	,101
Church attendance			,08	,007	,05	,070			,03	,453	-,01	,805
Social trust			-,07	,022	-,04	,192			-,01	,882	,00	,913
Paid employment			-,02	,653	-,03	,334			-,05	,302	-,05	,361
Education (medium)			,01	,752	-,00	,933			-,01	,803	-,01	,780
Education (high)			-,10	,004	-,08	,011			-,14	,010	-,15	,006
Local attachment			-,03	,353	-,03	,335			,05	,266	,06	,189
Gender			,03	,378	,04	,156			,09	,039	,12	,006
Single parent			-,04	,230	-,00	,882			-,06	,123	-,06	,137
Public sector worker			-,10	,001	-,05	,064			,02	,584	,03	,499
Length of residence			,07	,021	,08	,011			,05	,276	,04	,327
Homeownership			,01	,654	-,01	,749			,04	,370	,02	,602
Commuter			,06	,044	,03	,215			-,05	,271	-,05	,248
Internal efficacy					,01	,694					,08	,081
Political confidence					-,06	,024					-,09	,031
Left-right					,34	,000					,22	,000
Adjusted R ²	1%		7%		18%		2%		8%		13%	

of associational involvement make a modest contribution to the shaping of civic norms in many of the countries under analysis” (Denters et al. 2007: 106). It is noteworthy that in the present analyses similar effects of social capital factors on citizens’ normative conceptions of what constitutes good local governance are not found.

For the third block of variables we find that in six of eight instances a high degree of subjective political competence makes people more inclined to consider criteria for good governance as (very) important. Moreover, in six of eight instances we also find that the more people have local political confidence, the *less* they are inclined to consider various criteria of good local governance as important. This suggests that Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002: 216) may be right when they claim that more than anything people basically want honest, trustworthy, and competent politicians. If they are confident that politicians indeed satisfy this one basic requirement, then other criteria apparently matter (much) less.

A final observation to be made is that the three sets of values regarding good local governance that matter most for citizens ('voter', 'activist' and 'consumer' criteria) are unrelated to the political left-right dimension. This is yet another confirmation of our earlier conclusion that differences in norms of good governance among the mass publics in both countries are essentially unrelated to major socio-economic and political cleavages. The (only) exception to this is a relatively strong ideological effect seen in both countries regarding the fourth dimension – i.e. that which we have termed 'privateer' orientations. This, however, is the dimension that was found on aggregate to be considered the least important among respondents in both countries and where the variation among respondents was found to be greatest.

8.6 Conclusions

The principal conclusion to be drawn from the results presented here is very straightforward. Despite some variation, overall the findings point to considerable value consensus among the Norwegian and Dutch populations regarding (selected) criteria for good local governance. Foremost in the minds of most individuals are criteria emphasizing values of representative local democracy and local government with high functional capacity, local government that is an effective problem solver and provider of a variety of (public) goods and services. Stated in another fashion, citizens in both countries place greatest emphasis on 'caring representative institutions' rather than more direct say in a weaker form of the local welfare state.

Such a set of value orientations, while quite logical, is highly noteworthy for at least two reasons. For one thing it is contrary to policies pursued in several European countries, such as Germany, for example, where recent reforms of local government have involved a retrenchment of the local welfare state and a weakening of local municipal councils combined with a strengthening of different forms of direct democracy (see Wollmann 2003: 91-95; Gabriel and Eisenmann 2005: 133-5). Every bit as noteworthy, however, is the fact that results from our regression analyses indicate that views regarding good local governance do not vary greatly across social and political groupings and cleavages. Whereas some have argued that a mix of individualization, social differentiation and immigration might lead to fundamental differences in key political value orientations and cultural fragmentation, in the Norwegian and the Dutch case we find widespread consensus on what citizens see as 'good (local) governance.' If there is a crisis of democratic governance in these polities, in other words, this is not a crisis that is likely to be the result of *conflicting demands* on government made by different segments of the population. Rather, the challenge of good local governance will be one of satisfying the *widely endorsed* view that government should meet both functional and procedural criteria as a condition for acquiring and maintaining both output and input legitimacy. To be sure, as Sniderman and his associates (1996) have shown, value consensus may break down

in particular situations inasmuch as the implications of values for action and choice may be interpreted differently. But to date there is little to indicate that this is happening either in Norway or the Netherlands.

Notes

- 1 It is probably more appropriate to say that the criteria not only refer to the input and output side, but also pertain to what in systems theory is referred to as the throughput dimension of the political system, referring to values of transparency and accountability. This is particularly evident in the six criteria used in the World Bank assessment procedures (Kaufmann et al. 2008; see also Haus and Heinelt 2005).
- 2 The format of the batteries and follow-up questions in which respondents were also asked to rank the relative importance of items within each of the batteries are available upon request.
- 3 It may be noted that these similarities occur irrespective of the use of rating scales or a ranking of items. When citizens were asked in follow-up questions to rank the various items by their respective importance, the findings again reflected a high degree of similarity of attitudes among citizens in the two countries.
- 4 A forced four factor solution produced results that were consistent with our theoretical expectations. In a pooled analysis eigenvalues for the four factors were 3.74 (Voter); 1.53 (Activist); 1.21 (Consumer); 0.93 (Privateer), and loadings of all items on relevant factors were > 0.40 . Results of separate country analyses revealed similar findings. The item 'involve residents, organizations and business in solving local problem solving' loaded on two factors (both 'consumer' and 'activist' factors), the loading on the first factor being somewhat higher. On the basis of conceptual considerations, however, we decided to include this item in the 'activist' dimension because it clearly refers to the process of governance (co-production or output participation) rather than to the functional (output oriented) dimension. Further details about the factor analyses are available upon request. A 13th item ("That municipal decisions are based on the best available knowledge") was also contained in the batteries of items presented, but in light of an assessment of its relevance with respect to the normative distinctions discussed here, it was ultimately set aside. This decision was confirmed by principal components analyses in which this professionalism/ technocracy item loaded weakly on all four factors.
- 5 Indices were computed as the mean value of the respective items (allowing for one missing value per case). In the light of the limited number of items per index, the internal consistency of these indices was satisfactory. Cronbach's alphas for the four dimensions were: 0.73 (Voter; 4 items); 0.66 (Activist; 3 items); 0.61 (Privateer; 2 items); 0.67 (Consumer; 3 items). In countrywise analyses similar results were found.
- 6 For assessing *relative* variation the coefficient of variation (computed as $cv = \text{standard deviation} / \text{mean}$) can be used. For the three indices the cvs were between 0.13 and 0.17. For the privateer index the cvs were .37 (Norway) and .26 (Netherlands).

- 7 This value pluralism regarding conceptions of good governance is also confirmed by the correlations between the various orientations. This indicates that in larger parts of the Dutch and Norwegian publics various notions of good local governance go hand-in-hand (see also Denters et al. 2007: 95). The bivariate correlations for the voter index were: 0.51 (with 'activist'), 0.34 (with 'consumer') and 0.18 (with 'privateer'). The bivariate correlations for the activist index were: 0.39 (with 'consumer') and 0.14 (with 'privateer'), and the bivariate correlation between 'consumer' and 'privateer' was 0.22. All these correlations were highly statistically significant
- 8 Rossteutscher, in her categorization, was interested in the German case where the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989 was obviously a watershed. For the countries under study in this chapter, however, we have assumed that the economic crisis of the 1980s and the rise of neo-liberalism may have been more important, especially for attitudes regarding the second dimension identified here regarding conceptions about proper role of government.
- 9 In order to facilitate comparisons between the four models per country we have used only those cases that had valid scores for all the four dependent variables. Therefore the country N's for all four dependent variables are identical.
- 10 In considering the effects of single factors we use an alpha of 5 percent for the Norwegian case (two-tailed test) and an alpha of 10 percent (two-tailed test) for the Dutch case. The more lenient criterion for the Dutch sample was chosen in order to compensate for the smaller N of the Dutch sample.
- 11 This interpretation of a generational effect is corroborated by the finding that initial effects (see betas in model 1) do not disappear when we control for variables in block 2 (see betas in model 2). This suggests that these initial effects are probably not an effect of life-cycle related to differences in lifestyle and prosperity.

Appendix: Operationalization of variables

Independent variables	Coding
Generation	Set of dummy variables based on the following categories: Generation 1 = born before 1935 (1 = Yes) Generation 2 = born between 1936-1958 (1 = Yes) Generation 3 = born between 1959-1969 (1 = Yes) Generation 4 = born after 1970 (1 = Yes)
Associational membership	Based on responses to a question asking respondents to indicate in how many voluntary associations, clubs or organisations (not including a political party) they were members. The variable was recoded as follows: 0 = No (none) 1 = Yes (one or more)
Volunteering	Based on responses to a question asking respondents to indicate how many hours a week they on the average used doing voluntary (unpaid) organizational work for political parties or other associations, clubs and organisations during the last 12 months. The variable was recoded as follows: 0 = None 1 = One or two hours 2 = Three or more hours
Church attendance	Based on responses to a question asking respondents to indicate how often (apart from weddings, funerals and christenings) they attend religious services. The variable is coded: 0 = Never 1 = Less than once a year 2 = At least once a year 3 = At least once a month 4 = At least once a week
Social trust	This variable is a composite index based on a the mean score of responses to the following two questions: * Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people? Indicate your opinion on a scale from 0 ('You can't be too careful') to 10 ('Most people can be trusted'). * Would you say that most of the time people try to be helpful or that they are mostly looking out for themselves? Indicate your opinion on a scale from 0 ('People mostly look out for themselves') to 10 ('People mostly try to be helpful')
Paid employment	0 = Not presently employed 1 = Employed

Education	Set of three dummy variables based on the following categories: 1 = Primary and lower secondary school 2 = Upper secondary school 3 = College/University/Postgrad
Local attachment	This variable is a composite index based on a the mean score of responses to a question asking them to indicate, using a scale from 0 to 10 where 0 means 'No attachment at all' and 10 means 'Very strong attachment', their sense of attachment to: * The neighbourhood or village in which they lived * The municipality in which they lived
Gender	0 = Men 1 = Women
Single parent	This variable indicates whether the respondent is a single parent with responsibility for children in the household. 0 = No, 1 = Yes
Public sector worker	Is respondent employed in the public sector? 0 = No, 1 = Yes
Length of residence	This variable is based on the percentage of the respondent's life (s) he has lived in the present municipality. 0 = minimum, 100 = maximum
Home ownership	0 = Rent, etc. 1 = Own
Commuter	This variable indicates whether the respondent commutes to a place of work located outside the municipality. 0 = No, 1 = Yes
Subjective political competence	This variable is measured by a composite index based on a mean score of responses to four questions, the first three of which are the following agree-disagree items: * I consider myself to be well qualified to participate in local politics. * I feel that I could do as good a job as a member of the municipal council as most other people. * I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing my municipality. The fourth question is the following: * How well informed do you feel you are regarding that which happens in municipal politics? Would you say that you are very well informed, well informed, somewhat informed, only slightly informed, or not at all informed? All questions were recoded so high scores reflected high efficacy and the index was rescaled with a theoretical scale ranging from 0 to 100.

Political confidence

Political confidence is measured by a composite index based on the mean score of responses to a total of seven questions reflecting three different sub-dimensions – perceived integrity, competence and responsiveness of elected representatives.

Two questions tapping perceived integrity are as follows:

* How often do you think that elected representatives in this municipality set their personal interests aside in making local political decisions?

* If you consider the situation in the municipality where you live, how many of the elected representatives do you think misuse their power for personal gain?

One question tapping perceived competence is the following:

* Imagine a situation where two persons (A and B) are discussing municipal politics and they present the two viewpoints below. Please indicate whether you are most in agreement with the viewpoint expressed by A or that expressed by B.

A) Most of the elected representatives in this municipality are competent people who usually know what they are doing.

B) Most of the elected representatives in this municipality don't seem to know what they are doing.

Four questions tapping perceived responsiveness are two agree-disagree items and two other questions.

* Local councilors do not care much about the views of the people in this municipality.

* Political parties in this municipality are only interested in our votes, (and) not in our opinions.

* How much do you feel that having elections makes the municipal council in this municipality pay attention to what the people think. Would you say not at all, very little, somewhat, quite a bit or very much?

* Generally speaking how much attention do you feel the mayor and aldermen (council representatives) in this municipality pay to what the people think when they decide what to do? Would you say not at all, very little, somewhat, quite a bit or very much?

Responses to all questions were recoded so high scores reflected high confidence and the index was rescaled with a theoretical scale ranging from 0 to 100.

Left-right placement

Based on responses to a question asking respondents to place themselves on a left-right scale, where 0 = 'Left' and 10 = 'Right.'

Good local government indices

These indices were constructed by taking the average of three sets of items identified by factor analyses of responses to questions posed regarding the importance respondents attached to different aspects of local democracy and how local government should operate on a day-to-day basis. Wording of the questions and response patterns for the Danish and Norwegian samples are found in the main text and relevant footnotes.

9 Patterns of Party Evaluations

Kees Aarts and Bernt Aardal

9.1 Introduction

IN THEIR COMPETITION FOR VOTES, POLITICAL PARTIES ARE CONFRONTED with two contradictory forces. On the one hand, signaling moderation and centrism in their ideological position usually helps in securing votes from the moderate and centrist voters, who typically form a large part of the electorate. On the other hand, signaling commitment to a clear ideological stance enhances the party's credibility and helps building up a strong party image (Hinich and Munger 1994).

How to deal with the tension between moderation and commitment is one of the recurring questions for political parties all over the world. Should they take moderate, centrist ideological standpoints, or should they take positions that are as clear and unambiguous as possible? From an electoral viewpoint, the latter strategy will only work when voters understand and reward those parties which choose sides. Do voters reward parties that take a clear side on the issues, or are voters on the whole more inclined to prefer the party that is merely close to their own position? And how does the political-institutional environment affect the chances of success of this strategy? These questions have been at the core of the debate on proximity versus directional models of party evaluation, which started with Rabinowitz and Macdonald's (1989) seminal *APSR* article. Since then, research on these questions has been mostly limited to single-country studies (e.g. Macdonald et al. 1991), or internationally comparative studies of a limited set of countries (e.g. Iversen 1994). In this contribution, we cover as many as 66 democratic elections from all over the world in an attempt to obtain results that are as general as possible. We will use data from Modules 1 and 2 of the *Comparative Study of Electoral Systems* (CSES), which has been conducted in many countries on different continents starting in 1996. Jacques Thomassen was involved from the very start with the CSES project, as co-author of its original stimulus paper of 1994 and as chair of its first Steering

Committee. His contributions, as all are aware who have seen CSÉS develop, were extremely important for the success of this worldwide endeavor.

However, a price is to be paid for worldwide coverage: the *tertium comparationis* – the aspects on which different elections are compared, must be so general and abstract that election-specific issues and circumstances cannot play a great role in the analysis. The *tertium comparationis* in this chapter is formed by the positions of parties and survey respondents on the left-right scale, which is often regarded as an abstract summary of the main ideology in party systems. But left-right ideology is not equally important in the political discourses of very different party systems. A secondary question of our analysis will therefore be, to which extent left-right ideology can be used as a shortcut or ideological positions in different polities.

Evaluating the dilemma of party strategy with empirical data on voters and parties is not only relevant from a theoretical perspective, but it may also have consequences for the way electoral behavior is modeled. For over 50 years, views on how voters make up their mind when deciding which party or candidate to vote for have been molded by the proximity model of political choice. The proximity model can be regarded as a decision-theoretic translation of one side of the tension referred to above, namely the tendency towards moderation. It is based on a few fundamental assumptions (Black 1958). Most importantly, the preference order of the voters for the competing parties is determined by the closeness or proximity of these parties to the voter's ideal point on the most important dimension(s) of politics. In other words, the preference curves of voters for the parties are assumed to be single-peaked. Suppose further that in a polity, parties and voters can be positioned on a single dominant, ideological dimension. Support for a political party would then be highest among those voters who occupy the same position on the ideological dimension as that party – for voters on either side of the party position, support drops off the further away voters locate themselves. The proximity approach has led to the formulation of the median voter theorem (Downs 1957; Black 1958), which states that in the case of two-party competition on a single dimension, the voter on the median position decides which party will win the election. A vast literature exists which looks at the generalizability of this rather specific result (for an overview see, for example, Mueller 1989).

Since the early 1960s, the proximity model has also been criticized because of its lack of empirical support (e.g. Stokes 1963). Since the end of the 1980s, the proximity approach has been directly challenged by an alternative theory of party support – directional theory (Rabinowitz and Macdonald 1989; Macdonald et al. 1991). Directional theory assumes that the ideological dimension is split in two directions, starting from a neutral midpoint. As in proximity theory, parties and voters occupy positions along this dimension. But in contrast to proximity theory, party support is not determined by the closeness of voter and party, but by direction and intensity instead. Direction refers to whether parties and voters are on one or the other side of the center position. Intensity refers to the exact position of party and voter, either on the left-hand or on the right-hand side of this center. The basic question for

voters in directional theory is not: “Which party is closest to my own ideological position?”, but rather: “Which party most forcefully voices my ideological leaning while remaining trustworthy?”

The introduction of an alternative, directional explanation of issue- and ideology-based party support has given rise to a lively debate on models and methods (key publications include, apart from those already mentioned: Westholm (1997); Macdonald et al. (1998); Westholm (2001); Macdonald et al. (2001); the debate has been placed into a wider theoretical perspective by Merrill and Grofman (1999)). We are not addressing that debate here. In our view, discussion about which of the two main models is correct, in the sense of corresponding to reality, rests upon the mistaken assumption that the models are mutually exclusive. Starting with Rabinowitz and Macdonald’s (1989) ‘mixed model’, empirical analyses of issue- and ideology-based voting have incorporated both proximity and directional elements. The empirical analyses show how important these two elements are for the evaluation of political parties.

In this contribution we primarily address the tenability of the single most basic assumption underlying the proximity model. This is the assumption that support for a party peaks among those voters who occupy ideological positions near the position of the party – and drops off along both sides of the party position. Listhaug et al. (1994) provided an analysis of this assumption for six northern European democracies, and found evidence in favor of the directional model (with some noteworthy exceptions). In this contribution we follow their analytical strategy, but the analysis is expanded to 66 elections in 37 different democracies on five continents, using Modules 1 and 2 of the *Comparative Study of Electoral Systems*.

The chapter proceeds as follows. First, the two competing models of party support are presented, and some testable hypotheses are developed. Second, the data and research strategy are introduced. Thirdly, the results from the empirical analysis are presented – initially for a single election in some detail, and thereafter for all other elections investigated. Fourthly, the results of the empirical analysis are used as materials for a higher-order analysis in which the estimated coefficients are used as data. The chapter concludes with a summary of findings and some implications.

9.2 Models of party support

9.2.1 Ideology and the left-right scale

Support for political parties depends on many factors. Personal characteristics of the voter, including demographic characteristics, help explain why he or she likes one party better than another. Party characteristics, including its size, age and leadership, contribute another part of the puzzle. From the viewpoint of political theory, however, the most interesting variables explaining party support are those which

refer to the political convictions of the voters and the parties: positions on political issues, government policies, and more generally ideological positions.

Ideology, according to Downs' (1957, 96) definition, is a verbal image of the good society and of the chief means for constructing such a society. Uncertainties in the world of politics make it difficult for voters to rationally compare the positions of political parties on specific issues. Ideologies can serve as decision-making shortcuts for these voters: both parties and voters can use the language of ideology to communicate their political positions to each other without getting trapped in the details.

Ideologies may be one-dimensional or multi-dimensional. The more abstract the formulation and the labels used are, the less need there will be for more than a single dimension. One of the most abstract, and perhaps as a consequence most-often used shortcuts is the position of voters and parties on the left-right scale. In many democracies, both voters and parties use the labels 'left' and 'right' (and varieties such as 'far left' or 'extreme right') to denote their basic political outlook. In spatial terminology, both the parties and the voters occupy relatively stable positions on the left-right continuum.

The left-right scale as a measure of ideological self-placement has been criticized for various reasons. One of the most important criticisms holds that left-right self-placement is a shortcut of partisan identification rather than issue positions (Inglehart and Klingemann 1976); a related criticism states that ideological positions are simply too complicated to be understood by a large part of the electorate (Converse 1964; see also Fuchs and Klingemann 1989). Self-positions on the left-right scale thus reflect a combination of elements of party identification and substantive, issue-related ideological elements. Analyzing eight West European democracies, Huber (1989) found that the partisan component does not generally dominate the issues component of these scales. More recently, studies have shown the substantive loading of the left-right scale in a variety of new democracies, including Russia (Evans and Whitefield 1998), South Korea (Shin and Jhee 2005) and other countries (Mainwaring and Torcal 2006). In this contribution, we start with the assumption that the left-right dimension does have a substantive meaning in all the elections analyzed – even though this substantive meaning may be limited to parts of the electorate with a higher education. For those who do not primarily assign a substantive meaning to left and right, the concepts are still useful as a summary of the positions of political parties and of the voter him- or herself.

9.2.2 Ideology-based party evaluation

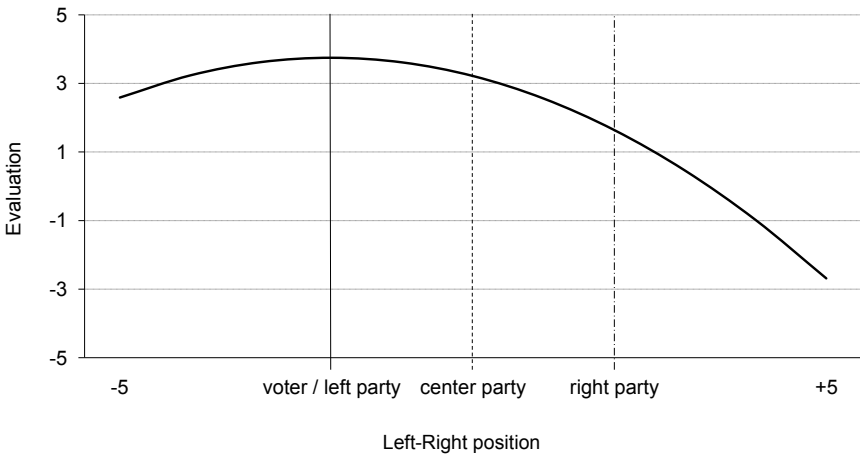
We now briefly outline the different models of ideology-based party evaluation. More extensive descriptions can be found in, for example, Davis et al. (1970) and Rabinowitz and Macdonald (1989). It is assumed that party and voter locations on the ideological continuum – the left-right scale – are given, according to the proximity model of party support, affect of a voter i for a party j simply is a (negative)

function of the distance between the voter's position (L_i) and that of the party (L_j) (e.g. Listhaug et al. 1994: 114):

$$(1) \quad A_{ij} = - (L_i - L_j)^2$$

In this formula, distance is expressed as the square of Euclidean distance. The fundamental prediction of the proximity model is that voters like best the party that is ideologically closest to their own ideological position, and that their support for parties drops off the further the parties are removed from the voter's position. For a single voter whose ideological position is on the left (-2), and three parties located at the right, center and left respectively, the proximity model is graphically illustrated in Figure 9.1. The single-peaked evaluation curve of the voter is at its maximum

Figure 9.1 Party evaluation under the proximity model (simulated data)



at position -2, where both the voter and the left party are located. At both sides of this maximum, evaluation drops off.

The directional model developed by Rabinowitz and Macdonald (1989) is based on a similar spatial representation of party and voter locations as the proximity model. An important difference is that the directional ideological continuum has a neutral midpoint and two distinct directions on either side of this midpoint. Moving left from this midpoint, ideological positions are left with an increasing intensity. Moving right, ideological positions are increasingly right.

The key assumption of the directional model is that voters are more attracted to parties that intensively voice their own ideological position (left or right) than to

parties that are closer to the neutral point. Such parties are seen as committed. That is, up to a certain limit: when a party's position is really extreme on the ideological continuum, it will lose support. For all 'normal' parties, however, voters' affect will vary with the intensity with which both the voter and the party choose their sides. This assumption is modeled as follows:

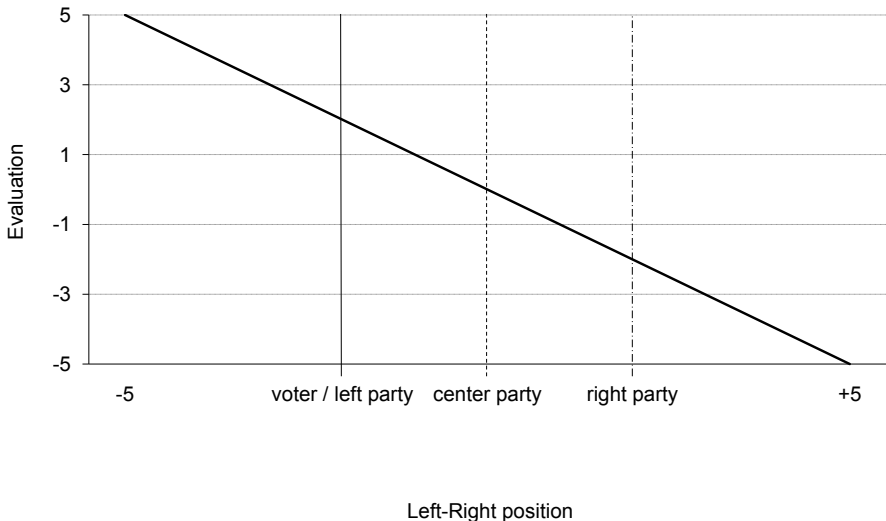
$$(2) \quad A_{ij} = L_i * L_j - P_{ij}$$

Voter *i*'s affect for party *j* is directly related to the product of the position of the voter and that of the party on the ideological continuum. A penalty P_{ij} for the party is subtracted when the party is too extreme. Normally, when parties do not take irresponsible stances, P_{ij} will be zero and the last term in the model can be ignored,¹ so that the model simplifies to:

$$(2a) \quad A_{ij} = L_i * L_j$$

When the voter and the party are on opposite sides of the neutral point, affect will be increasingly negative when the party and/or the voter are more intense. Rather than single-peaked preference curves, the directional model assumes monotonically increasing or decreasing preference curves. The more intense the party position (up to the limit of responsibility), the steeper the voter's preference curve. In this model, parties positioned near or at the neutral midpoint of the ideological continuum will provide the weakest cues to voters, and will therefore produce relatively flat

Figure 9.2 Party evaluation under the directional model (simulated data)



preference curves. For the same situation as in Figure 9.1, evaluation according to the directional model is illustrated by Figure 9.2. In contrast with Figure 9.1, the voter's evaluation of the party does not drop off at the left of his own ideological position. Rather, it increases further, indicating that parties to the left of the voter's position would be evaluated even higher than the left party included in Figure 9.2.² When a party would be too extreme, however, it would become less attractive. We assume that this situation does not occur on the part of the left-right continuum shown here.

9.2.3 From individual evaluations to support curves

We now turn to the implications for the electorate as a whole. Which predictions can be derived for the pattern of party evaluations under the proximity model and under the directional model when not just one, but millions of voters are considered?³

Under either the proximity or the directional model, individual evaluation curves such as those in Figures 9.1 and 9.2 can be constructed for every voter. The ideological positions of the voters vary. Depending on the voter's ideological position, the maximum of the curve under the proximity model, or the slope and sign of the curve under the directional model, will be different. Distinct individual evaluation curves can be drawn for voters at each position on the ideological continuum.

Moreover, different voters at the same position on the ideological continuum may have different interpretations and uses of the evaluation scale – for example, some tend to evaluate all parties rather highly whereas others are more reserved in this respect. Such individual differences are typically non-systematic, and can therefore be ignored with sufficiently large numbers of voters at each ideological position. As a result, a single evaluation curve provides a valid summary of the individual evaluations of many voters with the same position on the ideological spectrum, and this evaluation curve can by the same logic be meaningfully compared with curves constructed for voters at other ideological positions.

Finally the viewpoint is changed from the voters to that of the political parties. Every party also occupies a position on the ideological continuum. The party position at some point cuts the evaluation curves of voters. By connecting the evaluations of each party for voters at different positions on the ideological continuum, party support curves are obtained. The proximity and the directional models predict different patterns of support curves. These different patterns, for three hypothetical political parties (left, center, and right) are shown in Figures 9.3 and 9.4 (cf. Listhaug et al. 1994: 115). Despite the resemblance between Figures 9.1 and 9.3, and 9.2 and 9.4, the interpretation of the figures is now completely different. Whereas Figure 9.1 depicts the individual evaluation curve of a voter under the proximity model, Figure 9.3 shows the support curves of three political parties under the same proximity logic. Similar interpretations hold for Figures 9.2 and 9.4.

Depending on which of the two models is more appropriate, descriptions of voter decision-making in elections, and more generally of voters' attitudes towards political parties, will be divergent as well. To find out which model fits the empirical data

Figure 9.3 Party support curves under the proximity model (simulated data)

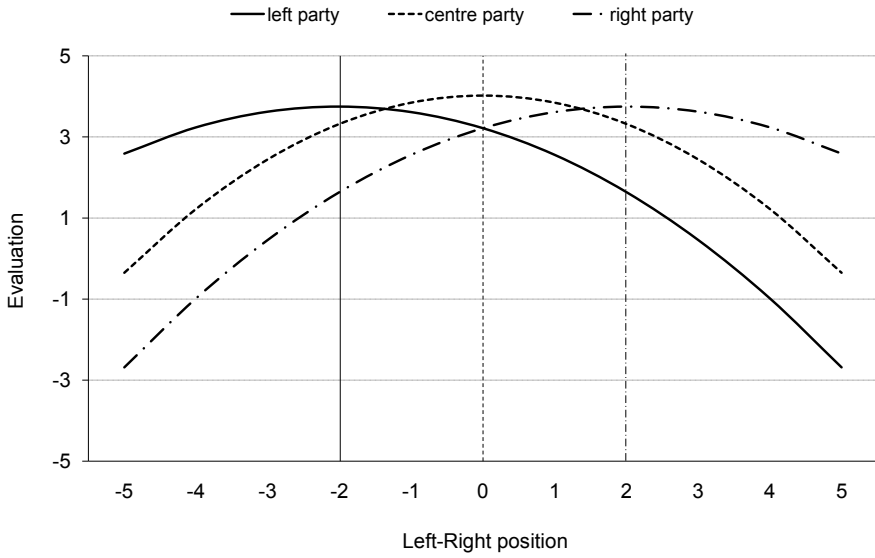
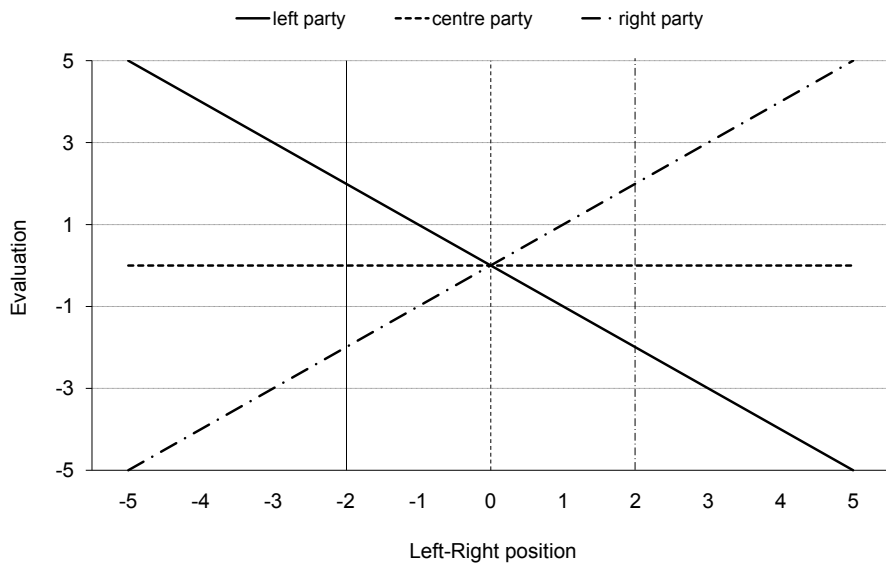


Figure 9.4 Party support curves under the directional model (simulated data)



best, party support curves will be used as the tools for our subsequent analysis of the pattern of party evaluations in the real world. Before presenting the analyses, the data and the method of analysis to be used are outlined, and specific hypotheses are formulated.

9.3 Data

For an empirical assessment of party support curves, two pieces of information about the voters are needed: their positions on the ideological continuum, and their evaluation of the political party. Both pieces of information are routinely included in many election studies all over the world, and have been standardized in the *Comparative Study of Electoral Systems* (CSES) which will be used in this chapter.

In this contribution we use Module 1 (1996-2001) and Module 2 (2001-2006, 4th advance release) of the CSES. Together, these modules contain 71 election studies. For various reasons,⁴ the total number of elections analyzed here is less, namely 66 elections (41 in Europe, 8 in Asia, 7 in Latin America, 4 in North America, 4 in Australia and New Zealand, and 2 in the Middle East). Party evaluation was assessed by asking respondents to rate the party on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means that the respondent strongly dislikes the party, and 10 means that the respondent strongly likes the party. The ideological position of voters was measured by asking the respondents to place themselves on a scale running from 0 to 10, where 0 means 'left' and 10 means 'right.' The left-right dimension is not equally common in the ideological parlance of all political systems – therefore, in our analyses we will explicitly assess the explanatory power of left-right positions. Party evaluation and left-right placements were rescaled to the -5 to +5 interval (see below).

Extra information that will be used for interpreting the results is provided by the mean left-right ratings of the political parties by the respondents. These mean ratings of parties can be regarded as an approximation of the ideological position of the parties, and form the background against which the findings will be interpreted.

9.4 Method of analysis

The method of analysis to be used is parabolic regression analysis. This method provides a direct test of the proximity and directional models of party support.⁵ The logic is simple. In parabolic regression, party evaluation is regressed on both the voter's ideological position and on the squared ideological position. The equation thus includes both a linear and a quadratic term for ideology. When the ideology scale is centered around zero (meaning that '5' is subtracted from the original scale value measured in the survey), the linear and the squared term will hardly be correlated, so that collinearity problems are avoided.⁶ The parabolic regression equation to be estimated for a party is:

$$(3) \text{ Evaluation} = b_0 + b_1(\text{Ideology}) + b_2(\text{Ideology})^2 + \text{error}$$

This equation can estimate both (proximity model) curves that show a peak around the party's position, and (directional model) curves that increase or decrease monotonically across the ideological spectrum. To see how the equation is related to the proximity and directional models discussed earlier, consider the following.

The ideological positions of political parties are given – in the analysis of voter support for parties, these party positions are therefore constants. The proximity model given by (1) was:

$$(1 \text{ repeated}) \quad A_{ij} = -(L_i - L_j)^2$$

This can be rewritten as:

$$(4) \quad A_{ij} = -L_i^2 - L_j^2 + 2L_i * L_j$$

In (4), L_j stands for the party position, which is fixed. Using C (for 'constant') instead of L_j , the equation can be written as:

$$(5) \quad A_{ij} = -L_i^2 - C^2 + 2C * L_i$$

In (5), the only non-constant terms are $-L_i^2$ – a quadratic term with a negative sign – and $2C * L_i$ – a linear term with the sign of C .

According to the directional model (in its simplified form, i.e. without the penalty term), affect is the product of the voter position and the party position on ideology:

$$(2a \text{ repeated}) \quad A_{ij} = L_i * L_j$$

Since, again, the party position is fixed, replacing it by the constant C yields:

$$(6) \quad A_{ij} = C * L_i$$

Comparing (5) and (6), it appears that when the constant terms are disregarded, the difference between the proximity and the directional model is the presence of the quadratic term $-L_i^2$ in the equation (5). When this term is negligible, the affect function simplifies to equation (6), and the directional model would hold. In contrast, when it is non-negligible, the affect function would display curvature – a necessary condition for the proximity model to hold.

Returning to the regression equation in equation (3), the coefficients b_1 and b_2 show how the voter's ideological position is linked with the evaluation of the party. When b_2 is negligible, the directional model is supported. When b_2 is negative and non-negligible, the support curve will show curvature with a maximum. The maxi-

imum occurs where the first derivative to ideology of equation (3) equals zero; this is at the ideological position $-(b_1/2b_2)$. Under the proximity model, the maximum should coincide with the ideological position of the party, and it should certainly lie within the range of values of the ideology scale (i.e. in the range between -5 and $+5$). When a support curve reaches its maximum value outside the range of ideology scale values, this means that it monotonically increases (or decreases) across the full range of ideology, which would support the directional model. Finally, when b_2 is positive, the support curve has no maximum.

9.5 Alternative predictions

In the foregoing, a number of different predictions have been made which distinguish between patterns of support curves under the proximity model and under the directional model. The first of these is:

- (1) Under the proximity model, the quadratic term in the estimated support curve is non-negligible and negative. Under the directional model, the quadratic term is negligible and/or positive.

Secondly,

- (2) Under the proximity model, a peak in the support curve is located on the ideological scale at the ideological position of the party. Under the directional model, no peaks exist or – if they exist – are located outside the range of the scale.

For the question whether the analyses make any sense at all in the specific context of an election, the importance of the ideological left-right scale must be assessed. We will look at the explained variance by the parabolic regression. When the explained variance (R^2) is very low, obviously party support depends on other, uncharted factors, and we should not attach great value to the impact of left-right ideology. Thus,

- (3) For both the proximity and the directional model to hold, ideology as measured by the left-right scale must contribute to the explanation of party support.

After the initial analyses, we take the party positions on the left-right scale into consideration. The party positions are compared with the slope, and with the maximum values of the estimated support curves.

9.6 Example: the Australian 2004 election

As an example, consider the Australian Lower House election of 9 October 2004. This election returned the right-wing governing coalition of Liberals and National

party into power, after a close race with the left-wing Labor party. Prime minister John Howard's Liberal party (40.9 percent of the vote) won exactly half of the seats in parliament (75 seats), and its coalition partner, the agrarian National party (5.9 percent) won 12 seats. Labor (37.7 percent) won 60 seats, and the remaining three seats were allocated to independents. The left-liberal Democrats (1.2 percent) and the Greens (7.2 percent) did not win any seats, and neither did Pauline Hanson's One Nation (1.1 percent).

In the Australian National Election Study, evaluation scores for these six parties have been collected, together with the respondent's position on the left-right scale. In addition, the left-right ratings of the six parties mentioned are available, which provide the mean position of these parties in the eyes of the voters.

Six parabolic regressions were estimated, one for each party. The key results are summarized in Table 9.1.

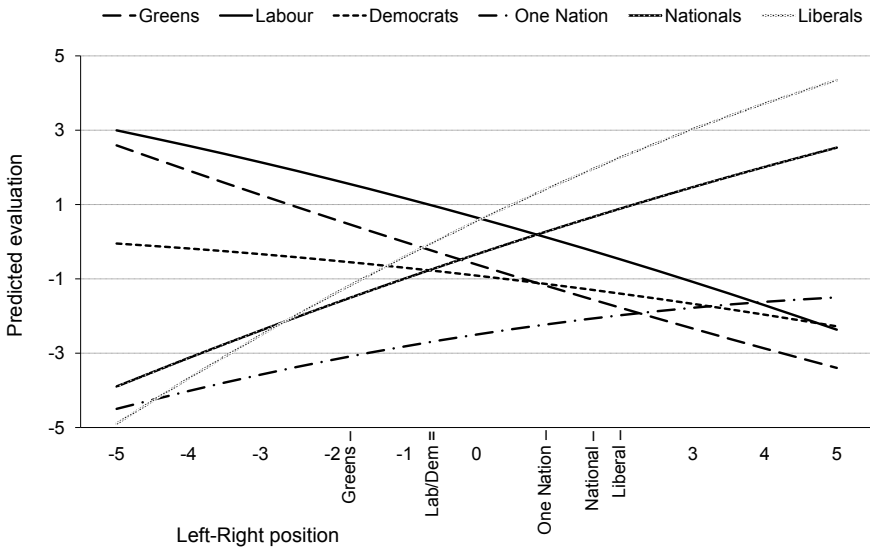
The Australian parties depicted in Table 9.1 have been ordered from left to right – from Greens to Liberals. Three parties (Greens, Labor, and Democrats) are regarded as left-wing, and three parties are seen as right-wing (One Nation, National, Liberal). In the case of Australia, the parabolic regression coefficients for all parties are fully in accordance with directional support curves. The linear coefficients for the three left-wing parties are negative (implying decreasing curves over the ideological spectrum), and those for the three right-wing parties are positive (increasing curves). The quadratic coefficients could make any curvature in the support curves visible, as required by the proximity model. But for none of the six parties is there curvature of any significance. None of the party support curves peaks within the range of the ideological spectrum.

In the case of Australia (2004), the linear coefficients follow the pattern predicted by directional theory. The slope of the evaluation curves is steepest for the most outspoken parties, and flattest for the parties closest to the center position on ideology. The two parties closest to the center position do not provide clear ideological cues to the voters, which is reflected in the relatively low R^2 s for these parties (Democrats and One Nation). The conclusion is that support for political parties in Australia follows the directional logic: voters like parties better when they are more intensively on their side when it comes to ideology.

Table 9.1 Pattern of party evaluations in the Australian 2004 election

Party	Ideological position	Linear coefficient	Quadratic coefficient	Maximum	R ²	N
Greens	-1.79	-0.60	0.01	no maximum	0.17	1,388
Labor party	-0.69	-0.54	-0.01	off scale	0.17	1,413
Democrats	-0.59	-0.22	-0.01	off scale	0.04	1,388
One Nation	0.94	0.29	-0.02	off scale	0.05	1,392
National party	1.59	0.64	-0.01	off scale	0.22	1,386
Liberal party	2.03	0.92	-0.03	off scale	0.33	1,422

Figure 9.5 Party support curves in Australia, 2004



Source: Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES), Module I

The results for the Australian 2004 election are graphically displayed in Figure 9.5, which depicts the estimated support curves for the six parties, and their ideological position. Compared with the information in Table 9.1, the curves in Figure 9.5 show one extra piece of information: the different *intercepts* of the estimated support curves (b_0 in equation (3)). It can be seen, for example, that except from voters at the far left, the Liberal party gets generally higher evaluations than the National party; and that One Nation and the Democrats receive low evaluations practically across the board.

9.7 Results

In this section the main results of the analyses of all 65 elections are presented (Tables with details of the parabolic regression analyses can be obtained from the authors).

9.7.1 Cases in which left-right ideology is unrelated to party evaluation

We first address the requirement common to both the proximity and directional models of ideology and party support, namely that left-right ideology must con-

tribute to the explanation of party support. When that is not the case, it does not make much sense to analyze the pattern of party support based on voters' ideological positions. In such cases, perhaps other ideological dimensions than left-right are used as the shortcut Downs (1957) referred to, or completely different factors affect the evaluation of parties.

In deciding whether left-right ideology is relevant for party support, no further reference is made to the contents of this ideology. So, when left-right ideology appears to make a difference for party evaluation, this may be either because it measures ideological thinking or because it reflects party identification.

Deciding when left-right ideology does not provide a significant contribution to the explanation of party support, is to some extent subjective. Here, two criteria are applied. The first is the absolute size of the linear and quadratic regression coefficients. In the limiting case when these are both zero, the estimated support curve is a horizontal line. When they are both close to zero, left-right ideology does not make a significant difference for the evaluation of the party. The second (and related) indicator is the explained variance of party evaluation in the parabolic regression. Table 9.2 summarizes the results of this analysis. All elections in Europe are characterized by some importance of the left-right scale for party evaluation – although some elections give rise to doubt, such as Romania (1996) and Russia (1999 and 2000). The two elections in Israel, all four in North America and all four in Australia and New Zealand also show left-right as a relevant dimension.

The left-right scale appears to be a less useful device in Latin America and in Asia. In Latin America, the elections in Mexico (1997, 2000, 2003) show a complete irrelevance of this instrument. The same holds for Brazil (2002) and Peru (2000, 2001). Only in Chile (1999) does left-right seem to make some difference. In Asia, left-right has some relevance only in the Hong Kong elections (1998, 2000, and to a lesser extent in 2004). In the Philippines (2004), Korea (2000, 2004) and Taiwan (1996, 2001) the concept appears to be meaningless from a political point of view (in the Japanese election studies, the left-right scale was excluded for this very reason).

As an illustration, the support curves estimated for the case of Taiwan (2001) are depicted in Figure 9.6. The Taiwan party system clusters on a narrow segment of the left-right dimension, with a width of 1.7. The support curves for the Taiwan parties can be compared with those depicted in Figure 9.5 for the Australian case. The differences between Figures 9.5 and 9.6 are evident: whereas in Australia the support curves together practically cover the full range of the evaluation scale, in Taiwan most lines (with the exception of the 'leftist' Taiwan Solidarity Union and the 'rightist' Kwo Min Tang) are almost horizontal, and the support curves cover only the -2 - $+1$ range on the evaluation scale.

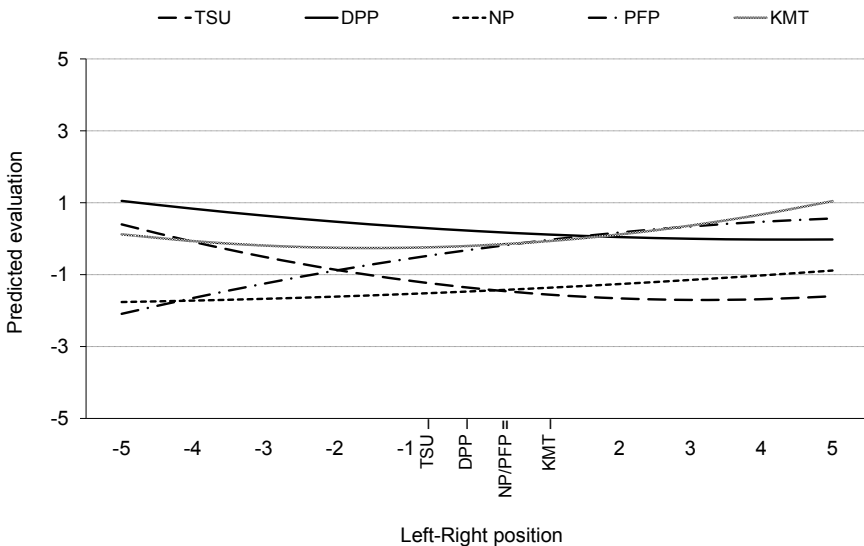
Some cases that are included in the subsequent analysis have a very low proportion of explained variance in party evaluation, but at the same time some party support curves are clearly sloped. An example is provided in the two panels of Figure 9.7, which depict the support curves for the Flemish and Walloon parties in Belgium (2003). Although the R^2 s of the regressions are all rather low, the

Table 9.2 Elections and the relevance of left-right ideology

	Relevant	Not relevant	Total
Europe	41	0	41
Middle East	2	0	2
Latin America	1	6	7
North America	4	0	4
Asia	3	5	8
Australia	4	0	4

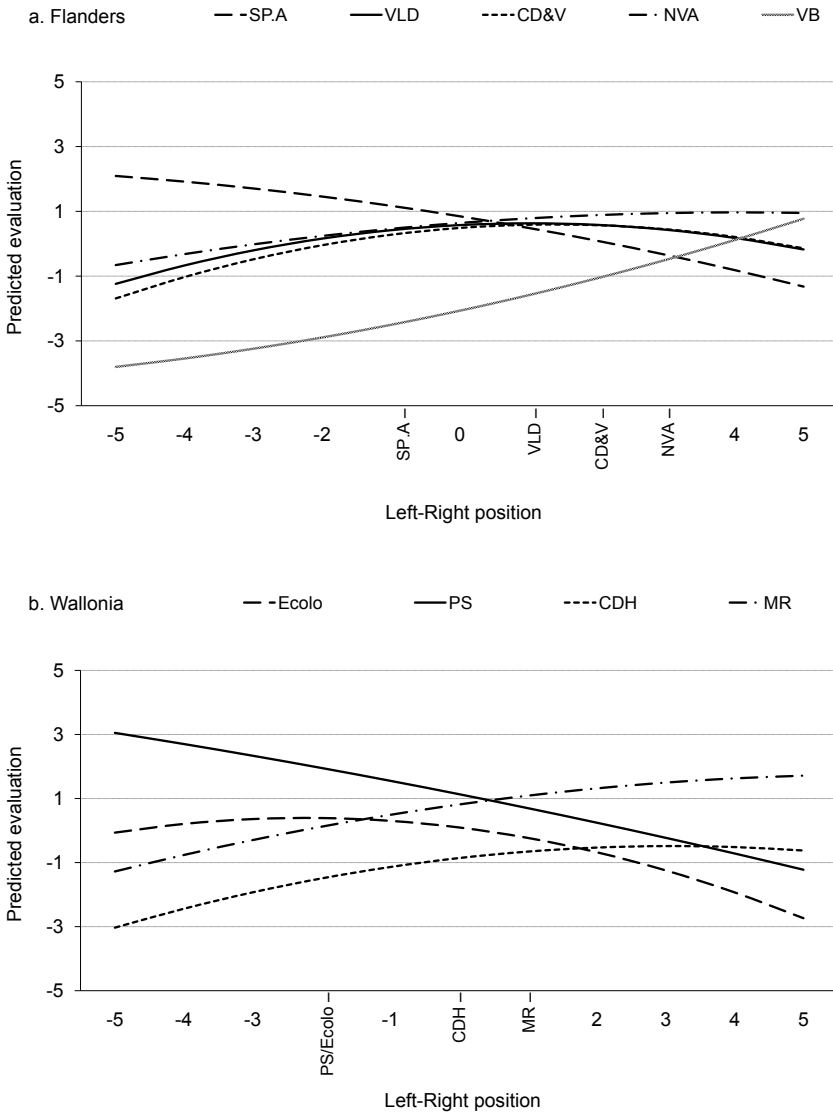
curves show slopes and for some parties curvature as well. The Walloon environmentalist party Ecolo, and the Flemish vLD and CD&V all show a peak in support near their own ideological position, suggesting that the proximity model holds for these parties. In contrast, the Walloon socialist party ps and the Flemish socialists SP.A show clear directional curves. Finally, the extreme right Vlaams Blok shows a very low evaluation across the spectrum, which steeply increases for voters at the right end.

Figure 9.6 Party support curves in Taiwan, 2001



Source: CSES, Module I

Figure 9.7 Party support curves in Belgium, 2003



Source: CSES, Module II

9.7.2 Left-right ideology: curvature and peaks

Table 9.3 characterizes the 317 regressions of party evaluation in terms of the type of curve that is estimated.

Table 9.3 Curvature and peaks in party regressions

	n	%
No maximum	139	44
Maximum off left-right scale	98	31
Maximum more than 1 off party position	59	19
Maximum near party position	21	7
Total	317	101

In 44 percent of the regressions, the estimated support curve has no maximum, and in another 31 percent the maximum exists but it is not within the range of the left-right ideology scale. In other words: for 75 percent of the parties investigated in this analysis, the support curve resembles the directional rather than the proximity model. This is overwhelming evidence that the proximity model does not reflect the available empirical data, supporting the contention of Rabinowitz, Macdonald and others.

In those cases in which the curve does have a maximum on the ideology scale, the estimated maximum of the curve is most often (59 of 80 cases) relatively far removed from the estimated left-right position of the party. Typically, the maximum is located at a more extreme position on the left-right scale than the party itself. Only in 7 percent of the cases is the estimated maximum near the position of the party on the left-right scale. In these 21 cases, the estimated support curve appears to conform to the proximity model.

The degree of curvature in these 21 cases varies (in some cases, such as the small *Mouvement des Citoyens/Pôle Républicain* (MDC/PR) of Jean-Pierre Chevènement in the French 2002 election, it is hardly noticeable). More importantly, directional- and proximity-type support curves appear to coexist. As an example, the Bulgarian party system consists of two parties located on the left (the small BSP) and the right (UDF, with 18 percent of the vote) of the ideological spectrum whose support is strongly and linearly dependent on the voters' left-right position. But it also contains a party, the National Movement Simeon II (43 percent of the vote), which is the clearest example available of a quadratic support function peaking at the party location. Typically, the NM-Simeon II is a rather centrist party on the left-right scale.

Simply counting results for different parties, directional-type support curves clearly outnumber the curves with a maximum on the scale by 3 to 1 (and including those cases in which the peak is located far from the party position, or in which the curvature is very low). However, the conclusion must be that there is not just one correct model of party support. Party systems shows mixtures, straight lines are not always that straight, and curved lines are not always that curved.

9.7.3 Slope, curvature, and party position

We have established that the shape of party support curves, based on left-right ideology, should be regarded as variable. The shape of support curves varies within and across party systems. An obvious implication is that the debate on proximity and directional models of ideology, with which this chapter started, is shifted. The original question was: which model fits the data better? The question we have arrived at now is: which factors determine the slope and curvature of support curves?

The latter question has been addressed before. One factor of some importance for the structure of individual party evaluations refers to the political sophistication of voters. It is assumed that the proximity model requires a more complicated reasoning than the directional model, and that therefore less sophisticated voters are more likely to resort to directional thinking. The evidence for this assumption is however mixed (Macdonald et al. 1995; Maddens and Hajnal 2001).

Here we focus on a different aspect of elections that is likely to affect the way in which political parties are evaluated, namely the position of the political parties on the ideological left-right scale. The party position on that scale conveys information about how extreme, moderate, or centrist a party is in the eyes of the electorate. Party positions also lie at the basis of measures of party polarization.

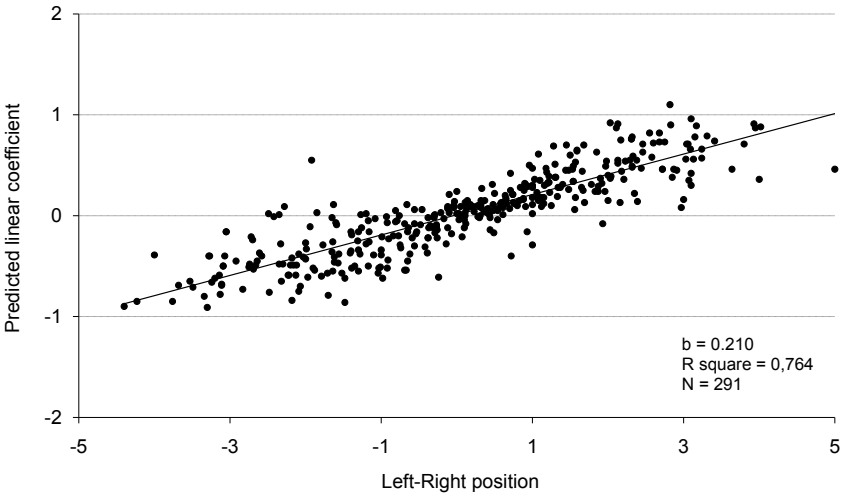
According to directional theory, a moderately high degree of party polarization has favorable consequences for parties of the left or right, and unfavorable consequences for parties in the center. A low degree of party polarization would instead help parties in the center. When the major parties are all located near the center of the main policy dimension, the left and right parties among these do not enjoy the electoral advantage (according to directional theory) of being outspoken. According to proximity theory, parties of the center are always at an advantage provided that the distribution of voters also has its mass in the center. In both theories, differentiation of issue profiles of the parties enhances issue-based voting behavior (cf. Van Wijnen (2001) for the Dutch case).

An impact of polarization on party choice (and not just party evaluation) is also suggested by an earlier analysis of three elections in the Netherlands (1971, 1986, 1994) (Aarts et al. 1999). This analysis shows that when the major parties are relatively strongly polarized on the issues, parties in the center of the policy dimensions got fewer votes than when the major parties were less polarized. This finding supports directional theory.

Here we first use the mean perception of the respondents of the party position on the ideology scale. How is the party position on the left-right scale related to the slope of the party's support curve and its quadratic coefficient?

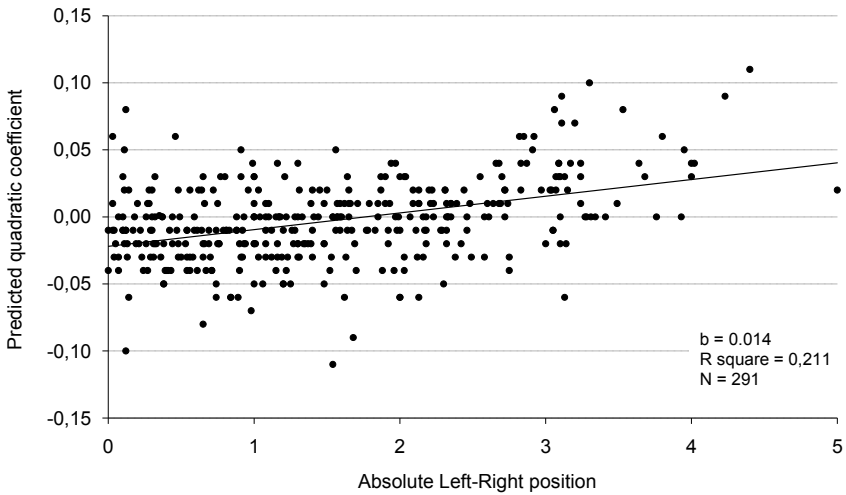
Figure 9.8 shows for 291 parties the regression of the value of the linear coefficient of the party support curve on the mean left-right position attributed to that party by the respondents. The relationship is strongly positive. Naturally, negative coefficients are almost exclusively found where the party position is on the left side of the neutral point and positive coefficients are associated with right-wing positions. But the linear coefficients (indicating the steepness of the support curve) are

Figure 9.8 Party position and linear coefficient



Source: CSES, Modules I and II

Figure 9.9 Absolute party position and quadratic coefficient



Source: CSES, Modules I and II

also larger in the absolute sense when a party is further removed from the center. And conversely, center parties tend to have flatter curves. Figure 9.8 thus suggests a clear (linear) relationship between party position and the strength of feelings that the party evokes among the voters. In the terminology of the directional model: the clearer the commitment that parties show on ideology – either to the left or to the right –, the more important ideology becomes for the evaluation of the party.

In Figure 9.9, the relationship between party position and the quadratic coefficient of the support curve of the party is depicted. In this analysis, we use the absolute value of the mean left-right position of the party, since we expect that curvature only depends on the distance from the (neutral) center, and not on direction.

A support curve can reach a maximum value when the quadratic coefficient is negative (when it is positive, the curve has a minimum value instead). Inspecting Figure 9.9, it appears that negative quadratic coefficients tend to be found for parties that are relatively close to the (directionally) neutral point on the ideology scale: the closer the party position is to the center, the more curvature its support curve tends to show. Thus, Figure 9.9 suggests that the proximity logic tends to be more valid for center parties than for parties with a distinct left- or right-wing profile. But as was shown above, many support curves with curvature do not peak within the range of the ideology scale (as this depends on both the linear and the quadratic coefficients, it cannot be concluded from Figure 9.9 alone).

9.8 Conclusion and discussion

The question formulated at the beginning of this chapter was, how political parties deal with the tension between moderation and commitment when formulating their ideological position. This question was translated to the perceptions that voters have of political parties. From the voters' point of view, it refers to tenability of the key assumption of the proximity model, namely that party support among voters peaks at the ideological position of the party and drops off to both sides. Alternatively, the question could be rephrased to assess the tenability of the directional model of party support, which requires linear support functions that are steeper when parties are ideologically more extreme. We focused on a single operational measure of ideology, namely the left-right scale. In this contribution, we applied a parabolic regression model to 66 elections from all over the world.

The analyses have shown that the left-right is almost irrelevant for party support in 11 out of 66 cases. These cases have been dropped from subsequent analyses. Of the remaining 317 parties in 55 elections, only 7 percent shows support curves in accordance with the proximity model. At least 75 percent of the parties shows support curves which conform to the directional model.

Directional-type support curves are often found for parties with ideological position on the left or right, whereas the proximity-type curve is associated with center positions.

It appears that no model of party support accommodates all political parties. That is in itself not a surprising result – party systems differ, parties differ, and in the literature the so-called mixed model of party support has been developed with this in mind. But in a discipline in which the proximity model still is the dominant, if not exclusive model taught in textbooks – and in political discourse characterized by the same dominance of proximity logic – it should lead to further thinking. The analysis relating party positions to the shape of the support curves suggested that party system polarization may be an important explanatory variable. But a measure of party system compactness does not exert a significant impact on the slope or curvature of support curves. Further analyses are needed to unravel the precise relationships between party system characteristics and the nature of the ideological evaluation of parties.

Acknowledgement

Previous versions of this text have been presented at the CSES Conference and Planning Committee meeting in Sevilla, 28-31 March 2006, and at the Politics seminar of Nuffield College, Oxford, 10 November 2006. Comments by the participants of these events were very helpful. The research benefited from a grant to Aarts by the Dutch Organization for Scientific Research NWO (# 400-04-706) and from Aarts' stay at the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIAS).

Notes

- 1 It is not necessary to ignore the possible penalty component of the directional model. Iversen, for example, (1994) provides a convincing operationalization of this term.
- 2 This does not imply that the voter would rather vote for the more intense party. There are many factors other than party evaluation that are weighted in the vote decision, including strategic considerations.
- 3 The concept and derivation of support curves (and their meaning for the evaluation of the proximity and directional models) has been the subject of some debate – see in particular the contributions by Westholm (1997, 2001) and those by Macdonald et al. (1998, 2001).
- 4 In Module 1, the Thailand (2001) and Japan (1996) studies lack necessary data. In Portugal, the 2002 election study included both Module 1 and 2; we have used these data only once. The second German (2002) study (mail-back) has been omitted. Finally, in Module 2 the Japan (2004) study lacks necessary data.
- 5 The use of parabolic regression analysis in this contribution leans heavily on the description of the methodology by Listhaug et al. (1994).
- 6 Party evaluations have been centered around zero as well.

Part III

Political

**Representation in the
European Union**

10 The Electoral Consequences of Low Turnout in European Parliament Elections

*Cees van der Eijk, Hermann Schmitt
and Eliyahu V. Sapir*

10.1 Introduction

SINCE THEIR FIRST OCCURRENCE IN 1979 THE DIRECT ELECTIONS OF THE European Parliament (EP) have been characterized by low turnout, and 2009 reaffirmed this pattern. The lowest levels of turnout in 2009, 20 percent or less, were registered in Slovakia and Lithuania. In other countries turnout reached higher levels, with rates of over 90 percent in Belgium and Luxembourg (where voting is compulsory), and (for non-compulsory voting countries) highest rates of 79 percent in Malta and 65 percent in Italy. But, irrespective of the actual levels, in all countries – including those with compulsory voting – turnout was lower, and often by large margins than what one would normally find in their national first-order elections – which could be parliamentary or presidential. This is true without exception for all countries, and it has been the case without exception in all EP elections since the first one in 1979. Averaged across all member states, turnout is just under two thirds of what was registered in the most recent national general election before the 2009 EP elections. Obviously, there is some variation in this ratio, and in some countries – the Czech Republic, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia – EP turnout dropped to less than half the rate in national elections.

The low levels of turnout in EP elections have given rise to a number of concerns, which have been persistent elements in public debate and scholarly research since 1979. Most of these relate to the causes of low turnout,¹ while the consequences of low turnout have received less attention (but, see references in footnote 3). It is

upon the latter that we focus in this chapter. More in particular we examine the consequences of low turnout for electoral representation. It has frequently been hypothesized that some parties benefit from low turnout because their own followers are loyal and active, and therefore turn out in above-average rates, thus yielding larger vote shares than would be the case at higher levels of turnout. By the same logic, parties would suffer from low levels of turnout if their followers would tend to abstain in above-average numbers. In other words: if the tendency to abstain is not uniformly distributed across the support bases of different political parties, low levels of turnout will lead to a different election results (in shares of votes obtained by the different parties and, depending on the magnitude of these difference possibly also in terms of seat allocation) than otherwise would be the case. If that were indeed to be the case, some groups of citizens – with particular social backgrounds, ideological viewpoints, or specific interests – would be better represented in the elected legislatures, while others would be worse off. Obviously, this would have implications for policy making. Moreover, it would violate the notion of political equality, a hallmark of democratic regimes.² In the long run, this could undermine support for representative democracy. But whether we really have to fear for such pernicious consequences of low turnout depends on a number of conditions: (1) the magnitude of the difference between parties' actual shares of votes (and seats) and those they would have obtained at higher levels of turnout; (2) the extent to which these advantages or disadvantages are related to particular kinds of parties, or whether they are unrelated to politically relevant characteristics of parties; and (3) whether any such patterns are persistent over time. In this chapter we will assess the extent to which these conditions hold, and try to quantify the consequences of low EP election turnout for electoral representation.

Not only academic analysts keep in mind that the level of turnout may affect the distribution of votes (and possibly also the distribution of seats). Politicians and journalists are equally aware of the iron logic that underpins this possibility, and probably many political activists and interested citizens as well. For politicians, it is, indeed, quite common to invoke turnout as (part of) the 'explanation' for results that are disappointing to them and to their party. In such instances, it seems as if a certain degree of solace can be gained from such an interpretation. When looking at leading politicians' reactions to 'losing' an election (in whatever sense of the word) it appears that interpreting this in terms of insufficient mobilization of their supporters is less threatening than in terms of the desertion of erstwhile supporters to rival parties. But, again, it remains a matter of empirical assessment to determine to what extent, if at all, turnout (particularly low turnout) can be blamed for any particular party's disappointing electoral showing.

What kind of effects of low turnout on electoral representation can we anticipate? From research into the character of second-order national elections – amongst which EP elections figure prominently – we know that they generate depressed levels of turnout. We also know that particular kinds of parties tend to do comparatively poorly in EP elections when compared to first-order national elections, name-

ly large parties, and in particular those in government (e.g. Reif and Schmitt 1980; Marsh 1998; Schmitt 2005). It seems therefore obvious to link these two tendencies and wonder whether the low turnout is indeed one of the factors contributing to the poor performance of large or government parties. If this were to be the case, we could also expect, Europe-wide, center-left and center-right political camps to be negatively affected by differential turnout and that any distortion of the representation of societal interests that we might find will be linked to party size and parties' incumbent or opposition status.

Another well known difference between second-order European Parliament elections and the main electoral contests in a country is that smaller -and by coincidence ideologically more extreme- parties are likely to do better than the main 'system parties' in comparison to their 'normal' (first-order) vote shares. This has been shown to be true for all elections of the European Parliament since their inception in 1979. It turns out that this might have more severe consequences for the representation of societal interests and ideological positions in the European Parliament than the government-opposition mechanism has. In second-order elections the ideological center is likely to be underrepresented when compared to first-order elections, and henceforth the European Parliament comprises a smaller proportion of centrist members than the national parliaments of its member countries do.

From electoral studies more generally, we know that the tendency not to turn out is highest for groups with low socio-economic status, particularly those with low education and low-status occupations (e.g. Verba et al. 1978; Dalton 2002; Citrin et al. 2003). To the extent that the interests of those groups are especially represented by particular set of parties (generally assumed to be leftist parties), one could therefore suspect that those parties would be most likely to be hurt by low levels of turnout.

Yet, neither the expectation from second order election theory that large parties are most likely to suffer from low turnout, nor that from general electoral studies that this would be so for leftist parties are grounded in compelling logic. The comparatively poor showing of large parties in second order elections may be due to other factors than low turnout, such as switching behavior at the individual level. Likewise, the expectation that left parties would suffer from low turnout capitalizes strongly on far from deterministic (often rather weak) associations between socio-economic status and party choice and, moreover, is often based on an ecological inference, with all its concomitant risks. When thinking about what to expect, we should therefore also look at studies that attempt to estimate empirically how different election results would have been at different levels of turnout. There are not many of such studies, however, and most pertain to the United States. Recently, however, a collection of such studies has been published in a special issue of *Electoral Studies* in 2007.³ The empirical papers in this collection all employ different approaches for estimating the effects of turnout on parties' vote shares, but they yield very similar conclusions: "The main finding ... is that turnout does not matter

a great deal, no matter what method, dataset or period of time the authors apply” (Lutz and Marsh 2007: 544).

In view of these different bodies of literature, we have no very strong expectations about the electoral effects of low turnout in the 2009 European Parliament elections. The existing literature on turnout effects hardly addresses contexts with not-yet stabilized party systems, such as the Central and Eastern European EU members, and even for established party systems the accumulated research is still rather patchy. So, we expect to see some electoral effects of low turnout, which may be different for different countries, and which may be different between different kinds of parties when looking across all member states of the European Union. We would be surprised to see huge effects, but even in this respect we might find ourselves surprised by actual empirical results.

We will proceed by first describing the data and our analytical approach. Subsequently we will present the results from our analyses which pertain to 2009 for each of the member states of the EU as well as for the composition of the EP itself. Finally we will compare our findings with those from similar analyses about earlier EP elections to assess whether some parties (or kinds of parties) are repeatedly advantaged or hurt by the low levels of turnout in EP elections.

10.2 Analytical approach

The effect of different levels of turnout on parties’ vote shares can be estimated in different ways, as is illustrated by a collection of such studies edited by Lutz and Marsh for a special issue of *Electoral Studies* (2007). Some compare vote shares of parties across elections with different levels of turnout; others construct predictive models of party choice which are then applied to non-voters; some approaches can only be applied in a single country, others rest on comparison across systems, and so on.

Irrespective of the approach that one chooses, it always involves a counterfactual element. This may either be implicit – contained in the attribution of a causal influence to a particular factor (cf. King et al. 1996) – or explicit in the construction of counterfactual vote shares under other than actually observed levels of turnout. In our case, we do not want to base a counterfactual on voter choice or party vote shares in a different kind of election (such as a national first-order election) as that risks our estimates to be contaminated by sundry confounding factors originating from the impact of the specific nature of the institution to be elected on voters’ behavior.⁴ We also want to avoid basing a counterfactual on voter choice or party vote shares in an election conducted at a different moment in time (such as e.g. a previous EP election) as that would require the implausible assumption that voters’ preferences and evaluations of parties have not changed during the intermittent period. What we thus need is a counterfactual of the party choice that actual non-voters would have made had they not abstained from voting. This can be constructed in the

form of a predicted value from an explanatory model of party choice (while assuming that the structural relations between dependent and independent variables are identical for voters and for non-voters), but in surveys it can also be obtained by asking respondents this question directly. In this case, the most relevant data with respect to the 2009 EP elections are the voter surveys of the *European Election Study 2009*. The non-voters in those surveys were asked the follow-up question “If you had voted in the European Parliament elections, which party would you have voted for?” We use the responses to this question as the empirical basis for constructing the (counterfactual) vote shares that parties would have obtained had turnout been higher than it actually was.

Pettersen and Rose (2007: 575) have challenged the approach to estimate the impact of higher voter turnout based on survey items like the one we use, and which have been employed since Campbell et al.’s 1960 study of the American voters’ behavior. They identify three serious threats. Firstly, since respondents are aware of the election results (as such counterfactual data can only be collected after elections), their answers are subject to ‘bandwagon effects.’ Secondly, they argue that assessing which individuals among the non-voters could actually have voted is problematic, as there are no criteria to determine with reasonable certainty which non-voters could sensibly be regarded as potential voters and which would not vote under any circumstances. Lastly, they note that some abstainers do not cast a vote because they are unable to choose between different parties, and this inability would replicate itself in a survey.

We are not fully convinced by these arguments. How problematic hypothetical questions are depends on the real-world plausibility of what is asked, and in this particular case the question does not refer to something alien that is beyond the realm of actual experiences of respondents. With respects to bandwagon effects – often exceedingly difficult to assess whether or not they occur at all – these would only be problematic if they would be more pronounced for non-voters answers than for voters’ recalled reports of their choices. We see no compelling reason why that would be the case. Moreover, if bandwagon effects would actually exist and if they would be stronger for non-voters, we should observe negative effects of low turnout for those parties that did very well in the 2009 EP election and, as we will see later, this is not the case.⁵ The problem how to decide which particular non-voters are plausible potential voters and which are not is irrelevant in our approach (see below), as we only consider the response distribution for the entire group of non-voters. Finally, if non-voting were to originate in the inability to choose from the parties on offer, and this were to be replicated in the survey, then those responses (as well as non-voters who state that they would not have voted anyway) play no role in our procedure. We thus consider the question how non-voters would have voted as a plausible counterfactual at the individual level.

But more is required for a plausible counterfactual of (aggregate) election outcomes. This is because the sample distributions of voter behavior (electoral participation and party choice) differ significantly from the actual election results.

The proportion of non-voters in the sample is generally lower than that in the population, and for a number of countries we also find non-negligible differences between sample and election result for parties' share of the votes. These differences are brought about by a variety of factors, many of which can reasonably be corrected for by weighting.⁶ Our estimates of counterfactual EP election results at higher than actual levels of turnout are thus obtained by weighted aggregation of the reported party choices of voters and the choices non-voters would have made had they voted.

10.3 Data and weighting

Our data are obtained from the *European Election Study 2009* (Van Egmond et al. 2010). In each of the member states of the EU approximately one thousand respondents were interviewed. For our present purposes the most important variables are those relating to respondents' electoral behavior: whether or not they cast their vote in the 2009 EP election, if so, which party they voted for, and if they had not voted, which party they would have chosen would they have voted.

The required weighting to derive estimated election outcomes at higher than actual levels of turnout consists of the following steps.⁷ First, we calculate weights that address the discrepancy between official election results and sample distributions.⁸ The category most affected by these weights is non-voting, which is significantly under-represented in the samples of all member states. At the same time, this weighting also adjusts for any discrepancies between actual and sample distributions of parties' share of votes. In a second step, we apply these same weights to the responses of the non-voters who indicated which party they would have chosen had they turned out. The assumption here is that the factors that generate over- or under-representation of particular parties amongst the voters in these samples operate in the same fashion for the non-voters that have been interviewed. The next step is to determine the higher level of turnout for which an election result is to be estimated. In principle this can be set at any magnitude, but the relevance of any kind of counterfactual analysis rests on the real-world plausibility of the constructed 'reality.' In view of this criterion we estimated election results for the level of turnout that had been registered in the most recent general election before the 2009 EP election. For the counterfactual vote shares of the parties, the weighted choices of the voters in the sample are added to the weighted choices of the non-voters who indicated which party they would have chosen had they turned out.⁹ Application of the resulting weights yields a sample distribution of parties' vote shares that can be compared to the actual election outcome. The difference between these two distributions reflects the advantages or disadvantages that every party has incurred as a consequence of lower turnout than that in a general election.

Application of this weighting procedure yields, for each individual political party, the estimated share of the votes it would have obtained in the 2009 EP elections

if turnout had been at the level of the most recent national election in the country involved. These can be compared with parties' actual vote shares. These comparisons can be used in a number of ways:

- to assess for each country, and by aggregation for the EP in its entirety, whether the allocation of EP seats would have been different had turnout been higher;
- to assess for each country – and by aggregation also to the level of the EP – whether electoral support for the policy direction that the various parties stand for would have been different had turnout been higher.

These policy directions are expressed in the manifestos that parties wrote for the EP elections, and which have been coded in the manifesto component of the *European Election Study 2009* (Braun et al. 2010). From the data from that study we can use parties' positions on 7 broad policy dimensions, which were assigned by coders after having coded the entire manifesto in more detailed policy aspects:¹⁰ Left versus Right; Environmental Protection versus Economic Growth; Libertarian versus Authoritarian; Religious versus Secular; State Intervention versus Free Enterprise; Multiculturalism versus Ethnocentrism; Pro EU Integration versus Anti EU Integration.

- to assess whether particular kinds of parties are more likely to be advantaged than others, where parties can be distinguished not only by the policy directions expressed in their manifestos, but also by their government status (in government vs. in opposition), their size, and the party family they belong to.

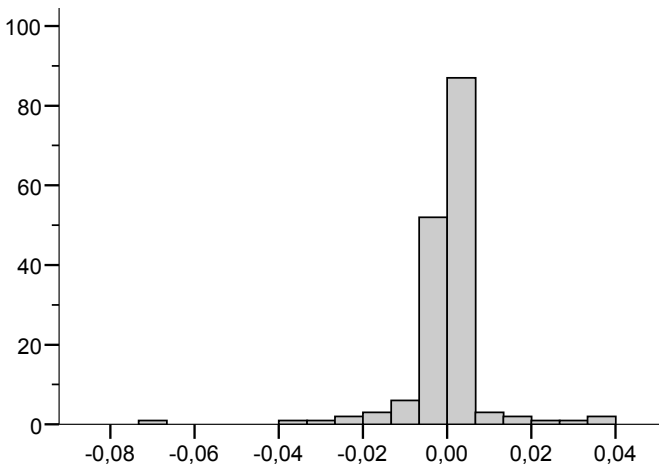
Our data, from the voter study as well as from the manifesto study, pertain to 27 countries, but in two of these (Belgium and Ireland) non-voters were not asked which party they would have voted for had they turned out after all. These two countries have therefore been excluded from the analyses. The number of different parties in the remaining 25 countries is 326. Of these, 162 are included in the analyses, the remaining ones were excluded on the grounds that they are politically irrelevant (parties without any seats in the 2004 nor in the 2009 EP, nor in the national parliament, or with extremely marginal vote shares), or that no manifesto data are available for them.

10.4 Election outcomes at higher levels of turnout

Our first interest is in assessing the magnitude of the estimated turnout effects and whether a higher level of turnout would have altered the allocation of EP seats in the 2009 election. In Figure 10.1 we display in the form of a histogram the sizes of the estimated turnout effects for the 162 parties that we analyze across the 25 countries for which we have the relevant data.

We see here in dramatic clarity the exceedingly small magnitude of turnout effects. For the overwhelming majority of parties, their share of the vote would have been less than 2 percent different from what it actually was had turnout been (much) higher (across all countries: approximately 50 percent higher than the actual level in the 2009 EP election). Figure 10.1 also shows that we have very little variance between parties in terms of turnout effects, which means that there is very little scope for probing what kind of parties were advantaged (or conversely: disadvantaged) by the low turnout. The small number of parties that were affected by the low levels of turnout in 2009 will be discussed later, but first we present a different perspective on our results, namely by summarizing them per country.

Figure 10.1 Number of parties (vertical) experiencing turnout effects of given magnitudes (horizontal)



Note: The numbers on the horizontal axis represent changes in vote shares (in proportions of the total valid vote) that would have been caused by higher than actual turnout.

Source: European Election Study (EES), 2009

In Table 10.1 we compare for each country the actual party shares of the vote with the party shares that would have been obtained had turnout been at the same level as in a general election in that country. We report in the table also the actual turnout in the 2009 EP elections and the level of turnout for which the counterfactual results have been estimated (obviously, the smaller the difference between these two levels of turnout, the smaller the possibilities for finding sizeable turnout effects). The difference between these two outcomes can be expressed in the so-called Pedersen index (Pedersen 1979), which can be interpreted as the average absolute difference between the two vote shares across all parties, or, for our current purposes, the average absolute turnout effect. As far as the allocation of EP seats to parties

Table 10.1 Turnout effects in the 2009 European Parliament elections, expressed in vote shares and in seats

Country	# of parties included in the analysis	Actual turnout EP 2009 elections	Counter-factual level of turnout	Over-all turnout effect in vote shares (Pedersen index)	# of seats in EP
Austria	5	46.0	71.5	4.00%	17
Bulgaria	13	37.5	55.8	7.50%	17
Cyprus	6	58.9	89.0	6.50%	6
Czech Republic	4	28.2	64.4	1.50%	22
Denmark	6	59.5	86.6	0.50%	13
Estonia	8	43.9	61.9	1.50%	6
Finland	5	40.3	66.1	1.50%	13
France	8	40.5	60.4	1.50%	72
Germany	8	43.3	77.7	0.50%	99
Greece	7	52.6	74.1	1.00%	22
Hungary	6	36.3	67.8	1.00%	22
Italy	5	65.1	80.5	0.50%	72
Latvia	8	52.6	62.3	0.50%	8
Lithuania	10	20.5	48.5	2.50%	12
Luxembourg	7	91.0	91.7	0.00%	6
Malta	8	78.8	96.0	0.00%	5
The Netherlands	4	36.9	80.4	1.00%	25
Poland	2	24.5	53.8	1.00%	50
Portugal	6	36.8	65.0	1.00%	22
Romania	5	27.7	38.8	0.50%	33
Slovakia	6	19.6	54.7	0.50%	13
Slovenia	6	28.0	63.1	0.50%	7
Spain	6	46.0	73.9	0.00%	50
Sweden	10	45.5	82.0	0.00%	18
United Kingdom	9	34.2	61.4	0.50%	72

is concerned, one has to keep in mind that the number of seats differs between countries, approximately in accordance to their population size. These differences in available seats imply that, in order to have consequences for seat allocations, turnout effects have to be larger in small countries. In Luxembourg, for example, only 6 MEPs are elected so that the allocation of seats is only affected if turnout effects exceed (in absolute terms) 16 percent. In Poland on the other hand, where 50 seats

are elected, turnout effects exceeding 2 percent may be large enough to change the allocation of seats.

Inspection of the results in Table 10.1 shows only three countries experienced turnout effects sufficiently large to merit special mention: Austria (average turnout effect 4 percent), Cyprus (6.5 percent) and Bulgaria (7.5 percent). In all other average countries turnout effects are close to zero. When considering the minimal electoral threshold implied in the number of available seats,¹¹ it is obvious that (much) higher turnout would have had hardly any implications for the allocation of seats in each of the countries, and thus for the composition of the entire European Parliament. Only in Bulgaria a single seat would have gone to a different party.

Averaged across countries, the magnitude of overall turnout effects, expressed in the Pedersen coefficient is 1.4 percent. To put this value in perspective, we can compare it to an average of 13 percent that Mair (2002) reports for the differences between consecutive first-order national elections in Western European countries. We can also compare it to estimated turnout effects in previous EP elections, where, again using the Pedersen index, the respective values for 1989, 1994, 1999 and 2004 were 2.4, 3.7, 4.3 and 6.9 percent (Van der Eijk and Van Egmond 2007: 567). These estimates for previous EP elections had to be based on a counterfactual that was slightly different, owing to the absence in previously available surveys of the question asked to non-voters: "If you had voted in the European Parliament elections, which party would you have voted for?" As a consequence, those counterfactuals had to be based partly on (intended) vote choice in a (concurrent) national election, and risked therefore that those estimates of turnout effects were upwardly biased by other phenomena (such as vote switching).

10.5 Which parties are most affected by low turnout?

As already stated, our estimated turnout effects have little variance (as illustrated by Figure 10.1), which hampers further analysis into factors associated with electoral (dis)advantage caused by low turnout. Yet, we have estimated effects for 162 different parties for which other characteristics are also known, so that we can assess to what extent these other variables are related to turnout effects. The results of these analyses will be summarized below, mostly in narrative form.

- As displayed in Table 10.1, there are differences in the (average) magnitude of turnout effects between countries, but the distribution is quite skewed towards the low end, with most of the variance being generated by just three countries: Bulgaria, Cyprus and Austria. We were unable to identify country characteristics that distinguish these three countries from the others.
- At the bivariate level we find no associations of a magnitude that even approach significance at $p < 0.10$ between turnout effect and party's govern-

ment/opposition status or party size (expressed in proportion of the valid votes at the 2009 EP election).

- Turnout effects are significantly related to some of the seven policy dimensions on which parties were scored by coders on the basis of their manifestos: Left/Right ($r = -.24, p < .01$); environmental protection / economic growth ($r = -.19, p < .05$); libertarian/authoritarian ($r = -.18, p < .05$); multiculturalism/ethnocentrism ($r = -.23, p < .01$). Although these correlations are significantly different from zero, they are nevertheless exceedingly weak, none reaching even 6 percent of explanatory power. Not significant were the relationships with parties' positions on religious/secular; state interventionism/ free enterprise; pro/anti European integration, nor with the extremity of parties' positions on the Left/Right or the pro-anti European integration dimensions.
- When distinguishing parties on the basis of the 'party family' they belong to, we find no significant differences in turnout effects (nor in their absolute values).
- When, finally, entering the variables mentioned in the previous bullets in a multiple regression, we find strong multicollinearity between many of the positions of parties on the policy dimensions that were coded from the manifestos. The 'best' regression equation that can be obtained contains only parties' positions on the Left/Right and libertarian/authoritarian dimensions as explanatory variables, and yields an R^2 of no more than 0.08.¹² Stated differently, there are hardly any systematic differences between parties' turnout effects for the party characteristics investigated here. The differences that are statistically significant are very weak and yield hardly any explanatory or predictive power. These largely negative findings are fully in line with those reported by Oppenhuis et al. (1996: 296) and by Van der Eijk and Van Egmond (1997: 570), who use slightly different procedures to estimate turnout effects in the 1989, respectively in the 1989 to 2004 EP elections combined.
- As stated earlier (see also Figure 10.1), we find very little variance across parties in the extent to which their vote shares would have been different had turnout in the 2009 EP elections been higher. No doubt this contributes to the lack of meaningful associations of turnout with other party characteristics. But, in spite of this, there is a small number of parties that are subject to turnout effects that are not entirely negligible, and even though their number is too small for a successful statistical analysis, we nevertheless feel it worthwhile to report them in terms of their actual identities. Knowing which specific parties were affected (either positively or negatively) by low turnout may be relevant to other researchers of turnout effects, or to analysts that focus on these specific parties or on the countries in which they are located. Table 10.2 thus lists these parties with their scores on the party characteristics discussed above. Our report of correlations and regressions

Table 10.2 Parties with absolute turnout effects exceeding 2 percent of the valid vote, with some of their characteristics

Country	Party Name	Incumbent Party?	Party Size	Turnout Effect	Left-Right Position	EU-Integration Position
Austria	Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ)	YES	12.71%	-3.0%	8/10	10/10
Bulgaria	Coalition for Bulgaria (BSP)	NO	18.42%	2.0%	3/10	2/10
	Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria (GERB)	NO	31.53%	-7.0%	8/10	4/10
	National Union Attack (ATAKA)	NO	9.01%	-2.0%	6/10	8/10
	Movement for Rights and Freedoms (DPS)	NO	9.00%	2.0%	4/10	2/10
Cyprus	Progressive Party of Working People (AKEL)	YES	34.90%	4.0%	2/10	5/10
	Movement for Social Democracy (EDEK)	NO	9.85%	4.0%	3/10	2/10
	Democratic Party (DIKO)	YES	12.28%	-2.0%	8/10	2/10
	Democratic Rally (DISY)	YES	35.65%	-4.0%	8/10	2/10
Lithuania	Homeland Union - Lithuanian Christian Democrats (TS-LKD)	YES	12.22%	-2.0%	8/10	2/10

demonstrates that many of the suggestions that inspection of this table may generate do not stand up when subjected to systematic analysis, and we would expect that, if any regularity exists, it may be related to variables that were not coded in our data, and that are conceivably of a transient nature. One can think of, for example, whether in the period leading up to the election a party has been in the news because of internal conflicts (which might contribute to it being hurt by low turnout), or whether its potential supporters are temporarily much more energized to participate than those of other parties (which may benefit a party under low turnout conditions). But we cannot exclude the possibility that, even if we were to code such characteristics of parties, they would turn out to be equally unimportant to account for the (limited) variance in turnout effects.

10.6 Discussion and concluding remarks

In this chapter, we have set out to reconsider the electoral effects of low turnout for a kind of election in which they could matter strongly because electoral participation is particularly low: direct elections to the European Parliament. This kind of 'low stimulus election' (Campbell 1960) generally fails to mobilize large numbers of

voters. This very fact might present a severe problem for the functioning of representative democracy because those not mobilized are known to be a rather biased subsample of the citizenry at large. More than three quarters of a century ago, Tingsten (1937) taught us that abstainers are ‘peripheral’ both in social and political terms. But today as well, we expect higher proportions of the less well-educated, the less well-off, and the less politically interested among those who do not turn out on election-day. As a consequence, socio-political interests represented in parliament through general elections might not be a fair representation of all interests, so that ‘low stimulus elections’, or in more recent parlance second-order national elections, might harm one central requirement of any normative theory of democracy: political equality.

Using the data of the *European Election Study 2009* we tested whether this is indeed the case. We arrived at two central findings: first, party proportions of the valid vote would hardly have differed from what was registered on election night if a somehow ‘normal’ proportion of citizens would have turned out to vote. The average difference across all parties is less than half of one percent, and differences in excess of 2 percent would have occurred for only 10 out of the 162 parties investigated. National seat allocations would only have changed in one country (in Bulgaria), and then only for one seat. The European Parliament would have hardly looked different if more EU citizens had turned out: one current Bulgarian member would be replaced by another Bulgarian candidate.

Moreover, to the extent that higher turnout would have resulted in somewhat different vote shares for the various parties, there is hardly any pattern in the kind of parties that are likely to be advantaged by this, or hurt. There are no systematic advantages to be gained from higher turnout for incumbent parties, or for left ones, or for whatever other kind of party. It seems likely that the few instances where higher turnout would have made a noticeable difference are driven by idiosyncratic circumstances.

What does that mean for the contribution of direct elections to the European Parliament to the democratic character of EU governance? To start with, it still means that low participation is a bad thing for all sorts of things – bad for the development of a feeling of EU citizenship, bad for the inclusiveness of the EU system of governance, and last but not least for the development and strengthening of partisanship. It does not mean, however, that the European Parliament would be different, with different policy majorities, if only more EU citizens could be motivated to turn out and vote.

When recalling the similarity of our results with those reported by Oppenhuis et al. (1996) and by Van der Eijk and Van Egmond (2007), we see that the low level of turnout in EP elections very rarely generates electoral advantage or disadvantage for any of the political parties. More generally yet, Lutz and Marsh (2007) reviewed a number of articles that tried to estimate turnout effects, in different countries, in different periods, and in different kinds of elections, and concluded that “...turnout does not matter a great deal.” We may thus wonder why it is that turnout effects

are so insignificant while in principle they could be quite important. To answer this question, we need to explicate the conditions under which politically relevant turnout effects would be likely to occur. One condition would be a boycott of an election that appeals with success amongst the potential supporters of only some of the parties. In recent history, such boycotts have not occurred in European countries, and they seem unlikely to occur as long as the electoral process is experienced as free and fair. A different condition that would generate significant turnout effects would require the existence of large groups of citizens who regard only a single party as an acceptable choice. If such groups were to be dissatisfied with 'their' party, it would be psychologically less costly for them not to vote than to defect to another party. At the same time, it would be necessary that this condition of inability to switch to another party yet not being motivated by one's own party to turn out exists for one or only some parties, as otherwise they all would be equally hurt by some of their supporters staying away from the polls. Looking at European electorates over the past decades, we see that the proportions of voters for whom only one party is acceptable as a recipient of their vote are very much smaller than most politicians and most journalists are inclined to think (cf. Kroh et al. 2007). Most citizens see at least two parties as approximately equally attractive, which implies that switching to another party is psychologically not more demanding than staying at home. Moreover, those small groups of citizens who are exclusively linked to a single party only, and who could therefore be the source of differential turnout effects, are at the same time those who are most likely to vote, also in second order elections. When seen from this perspective, it is not so surprising at all that we do not observe any pronounced effects of low turnout on parties' vote shares. But this will not deter politicians who did poorly to attribute their disappointing results to their own supporters staying at home in larger numbers than those of other parties. For politicians, whose career, identity and self-esteem is on the line, it is indeed psychologically less damaging to imagine that their potential supporters did not defect, but only stayed home. We can therefore expect the suggestion of turnout affecting election results to stay alive and to haunt us, but it is likely to be just that, a suggestion, a figment of someone's imagination.

Notes

- 1 E.g. Schmitt and Mannheimer (1991); Franklin et al. (1996); Blondel et al. (1998); Schmitt and Van der Eijk (2007); Stegmaier and Fauvelle-Aymar (2008); Van der Eijk and Schmitt (2009).
- 2 E.g. Lijphart (1997) who argues that compulsory voting may be the lesser evil in view of this unresolved dilemma of representative democracy.
- 3 The special issue (2007) was edited by Lutz and Marsh, and contains contributions by Lutz and Marsh; Bernhagen and Marsh; Van der Eijk and Van Egmond; Pettersen and Rose; Rubenson et al.; Fisher; Rosema; and Lutz.

- 4 This is demonstrated by many voters making different choices in elections that are conducted concurrently (e.g. Van der Eijk and Schmitt 1996 who compare concurrent EP and national parliamentary elections in Luxembourg).
- 5 Pettersen and Rose's argument might be more relevant in a two party system, where the equivocality of who 'won' is least. But in the multi party systems in the countries we analyze, there are many different ways in which a party could 'win' or 'lose', making the alleged bandwagon effect not only elusive in empirical, but also in conceptual terms.
- 6 Factors contributing to the discrepancy between official election results and sample distributions include: (1) households being used as sampling units rather than individuals; (2) selective non-response, with non-voters generally being less likely to generate interviews; (3) social desirability leading respondents to claim that they had voted while they actually did not, or to claim to have voted for a more respectable party than they actually supported; (4) country-specific fieldwork artifacts resulting in de facto less effective coverage of some parts of the electorate (geographically or socially); (5) changes in preferences of respondents between election day and the time of interviewing. The last of these factors cannot be remedied by weighting, but is less problematic than in many other surveys (such as the Fall *Eurobarometer* surveys) because fieldwork commenced immediately after the EP elections.
- 7 We did not use the socio-demographic weights provided by the fieldwork agency of the study, as their application would have increased the discrepancies between actual and sample distributions, thus requiring more pronounced subsequent weighting, with increased risks of capitalizing on chance.
- 8 Weights for voters:

$$w_i = ((p_i/100) \cdot n) / n_i$$

where $i = 1, \dots, i-1$ indicates the parties and i indicates non-voting
 w_i is the weight applied to voters for party i
 p_i is the proportion of voters for party i in the entire population (including the non-voters)
 n is the sample size
 n_i is the number of respondents that voted for party i
- 9 Weights for non-voters who indicate how they would have voted had they turned out (see also previous footnote):

$$(n - (\sum_{i=1}^{(i-1)} (n_i \cdot w_i) - \sum_{i=1}^{(i-1)} (nv_i \cdot w_i)) / (1 - t)$$

where nv_i is the number of non-voters claiming to have voted party i if they had turned out and t is the turnout level for the last first order election.
- 10 For details about coder instructions see www.piredeu.eu/DC/DC_Files/EES_2009_Manifestos_documentation_20100401.pdf.
- 11 The minimum implied electoral threshold is (in percent of the valid votes) is $100 / (\# \text{ seats})$. However, the actual thresholds may be considerably higher, for example when not all seats are pooled. In the UK, for example, 12 regions are distinguished, each of which elects – in a PR fashion – a given number of MEPs. This number ranges between 3 and

10, so that the actual threshold is much higher than 1.4 percent (i.e. $100/72$), but varies between 33 percent and 10 percent, depending on region.

- 12 The regression coefficients for both variables are -0.001 , implying that for every position more towards the Right (or more towards the authoritarian pole) parties incur 1 percent loss of votes in the EP election when compared to a counterfactual higher turnout election. The very low R^2 indicates, however, that the error variation around this shallow slope is very large, and that the results do not lend themselves to strong substantive conclusions. When looking at the absolute turnout effects, we find equally weak relationships, but now with incumbency and size of party as the only significant variables, which indicate that larger parties are somewhat more likely to be affected (either in a negative, or in a positive direction) by low turnout, and incumbent parties marginally less so. Again, explained variance is so small that, in spite of these relations being statistically significant, they do not warrant substantive conclusions of much scope.

11 Assessing the Quality of European Democracy

Are Voters Voting Correctly?

Martin Rosema and Catherine E. de Vries

11.1 Introduction

DURING THE LAST TWO DECADES THE PROCESS OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION has undergone important changes. Whereas until the early 1990s the integration process was widely seen as an elite-driven project in which public opinion was largely irrelevant, today there is increasing evidence to suggest that issues relating to European integration are shifting from the realm of elite politics to that of mass politics. Major European initiatives, such as the creation of the common currency, influence the everyday lives of citizens throughout Europe. In addition, many of the major treaties sparked off popular interest through contentious referendum campaigns – to date only six out of the current 27 member states of the European Union have not (yet) held a referendum on matters relating to the European project. Consequently, it is safe to say that European issues have reached the contentious world of popular referenda and electoral politics, and that citizens are increasingly aware of the ramifications of the process (Hooghe and Marks 2008).

Against this backdrop, the debate regarding the lack of accountability and responsiveness in Europe has intensified. Journalists and scholars alike have argued that the largely pro-European elite is increasingly out of touch with their base. This became painfully evident through the rejections of the Constitutional Treaty in popular referendums in France and the Netherlands. While the integration process has motored full speed ahead, citizens throughout the European Union (EU) have become increasingly weary of the project (De Vries and Van Kersbergen 2007; Eichenberg and Dalton 2007). Although several studies demonstrate that political elites are actively monitoring their constituents (Carrubba 2001; Steenbergen et al. 2007), we witness a Europe that is divided: on average political elites have been much more in favor of European integration than their citizens (Hooghe 2003).

The lack of electoral competition on European integration has characterized European Parliament (EP) elections ever since they were introduced in 1979 (Reif and Schmitt 1980; Schmitt 2005). This chapter explores the resulting mismatch in policy preferences between voters and their representatives after the most recent EP elections, which were held in June 2009. The main questions are whether there is still limited policy congruence with respect to European integration between citizens and their representatives, and how the apparent lack of policy congruence can be explained. The first explanation is that voters do not voice their opinions about European integration when they cast their vote – neither in elections for the European Parliament (EP) nor in national elections – but base their choice primarily on other considerations (Tillman 2004; De Vries 2007). The second explanation concerns the supply side of electoral politics, that is, the policy packages that political parties offer to voters. If among political elites there is consensus about the future of European integration, it becomes difficult for voters to express their policy preferences at the polls. Have voters been offered meaningful choices in the 2009 EP elections?

Anyone familiar with the work of Thomassen (1991, 2009c; Schmitt and Thomassen 1999) will see that these two explanations link up with the Responsible Party Model of political representation. This model sets out the conditions under which citizen preferences will be reflected by government policy: (1) there must be different parties with different programs, (2) parties must be sufficiently coherent to be able to implement policy, and (3) voters are required to vote for the party that is closest to their own policy preferences (Thomassen and Schmitt 1999c: 15–16; see also Pierce 1999). In this chapter we focus on the first and third condition and assess the quality of democracy in the European Union by examining party positioning and vote choice in the 2009 EP elections, as well as in the latest national elections preceding these European elections.

To study the quality of democracy in the EU, we employ the concept of ‘voting correctly’, which was introduced by Lau and Redlawsk (1997, 2006). Whereas this concept was originally developed and tested in an experimental setting, it can also be applied to study voting in real elections. Indeed, Lau et al. (2008) used election survey data to study the quality of the vote decision in American presidential elections. Perceived policy congruence between voters and candidates was a key element of their analysis of correct voting, albeit it was not the only element. So in that sense our approach deviates from their work, as we will solely focus on policy congruence and thus neglect factors such as party identification or candidate images. We will elaborate on the reasons for doing so later in this chapter.

Note that in this chapter we adopt a rather narrow definition of democratic quality, namely one in which policy congruence is considered the ultimate purpose of elections (cf. Powell 2000) and hence responsiveness is put central. There is clearly more to democracy than what we focus on here (see e.g. Dahl 1989). Hence in this chapter we do not assess democratic quality in the EU in full, but merely focus on the quality of electoral choice by focusing on policy preferences.¹ But whatever

view of democracy one would adhere, policy congruence is likely to be an important part of it. Indeed, responsiveness has been put forward as the single most important element of democratic quality (Diamond and Morlino 2005).

In the following sections, this chapter first discusses the two electoral channels in which voters may express their policy preferences: national elections and EP elections. Next, we elaborate on the idea of correct voting as an indicator of democratic quality. We then present some expectations about the ability of voters to make correct voting decisions in terms of two dimensions of political conflict: left/right and European integration. Having outlined the theoretical foundations, we proceed with the empirical analysis using data from the *European Election Study 2009* about the fifteen oldest member states of the EU. We conclude by summarizing our findings and discussing some of its implications.

11.2 Policy representation in the EU: two electoral channels

One of the central claims of the discussion regarding the democratic deficit is the inability of voters to express their views on EU affairs. Within the context of a multi-level Europe, voters wishing to express their preferences regarding European integration in order to influence political elites are presented with two electoral channels: the *intergovernmental channel* (i.e. national parliamentary elections) and the *supranational channel* (i.e. European Parliament elections) (Beetham and Lord 1998; Thomassen and Schmitt 1999c). In national elections voters authorize and hold accountable their national representatives, who in turn shape the course of integration in the European Council and the Council of Ministers. In European elections voters can influence the partisan composition of the EP, which decision-making powers have increased rapidly over the two decades since the introduction of co-decision making.

Several scholars have emphasized that citizens fail to express their policy views on European integration in European Parliament (EP) elections, as these constitute 'second order national elections' (Reif and Schmitt 1980; Van der Eijk and Franklin 1996; Schmitt 2005). However, the real problem is arguably that citizens do not consider their opinions about European integration when voting in *national* elections. After all, the integration process is only partly shaped by supranational structures, such as the European Parliament. It is primarily in the hands of national political leaders that reach agreements through intergovernmental structures and that are accountable for their European activities in national elections (Thomassen and Schmitt 1999a; Mair 2005). In practice the system of representation appears to not function properly, as voters do not express their EU preferences in either of these channels. EP elections "are fought primarily on the basis of national political concerns" (Franklin and Van der Eijk 1996: 7), while national elections are characterized by a "lack of inter-party policy differences on European matters (which)

makes it difficult for parties to fight elections on European issues” (Van der Eijk and Franklin 1996: 369). Consequently, neither in their choice of national political leadership nor in their choice of members of the EP are voters able to make their preferences regarding European integration heard and democratically control the integration process.

The consequence of the missing linkage is that representatives may hold different opinions on European integration than their constituents. This has indeed been found. Thomassen and Schmitt (1999b), for example, compared the policy preferences of the voters in the 1994 European Parliament elections with those of the MEPs they elected. With respect to the process of European integration, which was captured by the issues of national borders and a single European currency, they observed clear differences: “Regarding both the abolishment of national borders and a common European currency, we find a wide discrepancy between preferences of voters and the positions of their representatives in the European Parliament. (...) Almost half of the MEPs have no reservations about continuing to do away with national borders. There is far less enthusiasm among the mass public. Not more than one in five EU citizens supports open borders without any reservations. (...) In the case of the common European currency, the distance between voters and MEPs is even larger. Whereas more than 60% of the MEPs take the most outspoken position in the direction of a new common European currency, less than 20% of the voters do so” (Thomassen and Schmitt 1999b: 192-195). These figures illustrate that political elites hold more favorable attitudes toward European integration than their citizens. This suggests that the system of political representation as employed in the European Union has failed to establish policy congruence on this important dimension of political conflict.

More than a decade after the aforementioned conclusions were drawn, however, much has changed. More specifically, there is increasing evidence of the impact of EU attitudes on vote choice in national elections – a process referred to as *EU issue voting* (De Vries 2007; see also Evans 1999; Gabel 2000; Tillman 2004). Consequently, at least in some countries an ‘electoral connection’ between national and European politics seems to be emerging (Carrubba 2001). These findings of increased EU issue voting in the intergovernmental channel are not surprising. Several authors have argued that it is more rational for voters seeking a voice in the integration process to do so via national elections than via EP elections (Gabel 2000; Mair 2005, 2007). Thomassen and Schmitt (1999a) adequately identified this paradox: “Formal decisions on a further transfer of sovereignty from the national to the European level are subject to the intergovernmental regime of European decision-making. They need the consent of national governments and are, at least in principle, under the control of national parliaments and national electorates. Therefore, the interesting paradox is that what usually are called *European* issues are basically *national* issues. As far as the existing party system fails to offer a meaningful choice to voters, this is a problem at the national rather than the European level” (Thomassen and Schmitt 1999a: 259; emphasis in original). This means that for the

study of political representation in the European Union it is important to conduct analyses at the level of individual member states, in addition to the study of supra-national structures such as the EP. Indeed, nationally elected members of parliament are able to influence – or at least comment – on EU legislation, although their influence varies greatly among the member states (see Raunio 1999). Moreover, the Lisbon Treaty has strengthened the role of national parliaments in the scrutiny of EU policies. So, paradoxically, expressing policy preferences on European integration makes more sense in national elections than in EP elections (Mair 2005, 2007; Mair and Thomassen 2010).

11.3 Voting correctly and the quality of democracy

The simplest way for voters to ensure that their opinions about European integration are heard, is by selecting representatives that hold similar policy views and doing so in European as well as national parliamentary elections. We study the extent to which voters display such behavior by employing the notion of ‘voting correctly’ (cf. Lau and Redlawsk 1997, 2006). The notion of a correct vote refers to a vote that “is the same as the choice that would have been made under conditions of full information” (Lau and Redlawsk 2006: 75). This definition resembles Dahl’s (1989: 180–181) notion of a ‘real’ vote: “a person’s interest or good is whatever a person would choose with the fullest attainable understanding of the experiences resulting from that choice and its most relevant alternatives.”

The pivotal question, then, becomes: what does ‘fully informed’ mean? In Lau and Redlawsk’s (1997, 2006) model ‘fully informed’ relates to all information available in the campaign. We, however, employ a somewhat different use of the term. In our view in the context of the EU ‘fully informed’ is best defined as holding accurate views regarding the conflict dimensions that characterize political contestation at the European level, as well as the positions of the competing political parties in terms of each dimension. Furthermore, we assume that contestation at the European level is best characterized in terms of two dimensions: left vs. right and national sovereignty vs. European integration (cf. Steenbergen and Marks 2004; Hix et al. 2006; Schmitt and Thomassen 2009).² We thus focus on the degree to which voters vote correctly when it comes to their preferences in terms of these two dimensions of political conflict.

The conceptualization of voting correctly in this study deviates from how the concept was employed in the experimental setting, where an *information processing perspective* was adopted. The basis for comparison was the vote that would have been cast with awareness of all pieces of information about candidates that were available, although these had not all become visible in the experiment. In the real world one could also focus on information available about parties or candidates, and for example base the analysis on an analysis of information available in the

media during the election campaign. In our view, however, a better approach is to ground the criteria for assessing the correctness of a vote in (*normative*) *democratic theory*. Our approach is thus to put policy congruence central, building on the idea that the key function of elections is to give citizens influence over political leaders in terms of policy (cf. Powell 2000) through a system of political representation (Pitkin 1967). Although this approach differs from the one in the experimental setting, it resembles – at least partly – the approach adopted by Lau et al. (2008) when focusing on actual presidential elections.

The conceptualization influences the measurement adopted. In their work, Lau and Redlawsk (1997, 2006) provide two measures of voting correctly. The first is based on experimental data. In a controlled experimental setting, subjects were provided with *complete* information about mock candidates in a simulated election *after* they had voted. The vote of those participants who indicated they would not have changed their vote in light of this new information were classified as correct (Lau and Redlawsk 1997: 588–589). In an experimental setting correct voting may be approached in this way, but in the real world applying this method is virtually impossible. Lau and Redlawsk (1997, 2006) therefore provide another measure, which builds on the presumption that voters will never be fully informed. This measure uses the evaluation of voters' own, naive information-gathering strategy in order to find out if they would vote differently if the same criteria of judgement (i.e. issue stances, group endorsements and candidate evaluations) are applied to all candidates/parties.

If we combine the above considerations, a correct vote can be viewed as a vote that builds on information about all parties/candidates on all relevant dimensions of judgement, while putting equal weight on each dimension for all parties/candidates. If we assume that influence over policy is the purpose of elections (cf. Downs 1957; Powell 2000), and if we further assume that in the European Union political contestation takes place on two separate dimensions of conflict, this can be translated into the use of the *shortest distance hypothesis* in a two-dimensional political space (cf. Downs 1957; Enelow and Hinich 1984). The idea that this is the core of what may be considered 'the right way to vote' is of course not new and brings us back to the third element of the Responsible Party Model. To deepen our understanding, however, it is crucial to not just examine voting correctly in terms of the political space comprising both dimensions, but also analyze representation in terms of each individual dimension. This enables us to provide a more nuanced picture of the quality of representation and potential biases.

11.4 Hypotheses

This brings us to the expectations for the analysis. As noted above, one problem regarding representation on EU matters is that voters' choices at the polls are not strongly shaped by their opinions about European integration. Because the ideo-

logical division between left and right is widely conceived as the dominant dimension of conflict in national politics (Pierce 1999) as well as European Union politics (Schmitt and Thomassen 1999, 2009), we expect that voting correctly in terms of left/right occurs more frequently than on European integration. Furthermore, because the integration process is shaped primarily through intergovernmental structures, we hypothesize that voting correctly in terms of European integration occurs more frequently in national parliamentary elections than in EP elections. So we formulate two hypotheses about voting correctly at the individual level:

(H₁) The level of voting correctly is higher in terms of left/right than in terms of European integration.

(H₂) The level of voting correctly in terms of European integration is higher in national parliamentary elections than in EP elections.

It is important to bear in mind that the various EU member states have very different political context characteristics. These may affect the extent of correct voting within each country. Lau and Redlawsk (2006: 22) developed a model explaining the way in which the political environment influences the degree to which voters get it right. In keeping with Lau and Redlawsk (2006: 84), we focus on several macro-level hypotheses relating to the choice set, diversity of party positions and aggregate levels of EU support. We formulate these hypotheses with respect to the European integration dimension, because here deficiencies appear to be most serious.

The first hypothesis about country level differences relates to the size of the choice set, that is, the number of parties in the respective election. We expect higher levels of correct voting when there are fewer alternatives in the choice set. One reason is voters' cognitive constraints: It is easier to have knowledge about few parties than about many parties. The second reason is methodological: If voters would cast their vote at random, the chances that they would have voted for the party closest to them is simply higher with a lower number of parties. The next hypothesis relates to the distinctiveness of issue positions of political parties. The idea is that the easier it is for voters to distinguish between issue positions of political parties, the higher the likelihood of correct voting. This means that we expect that in member states where parties have more distinct positions on European integration, voters will more often choose parties that are closest to their own EU preferences.³ Finally, it is sensible to also focus on the aggregate level of support for European integration in a country. Since the mid 1990s political elites on average have been much more supportive of the European project than the mass public (Hooghe 2003). As a result, in countries with many harsh critics of European integration, voters will find it more difficult to vote correctly in terms of European integration, as party positions match badly with their own views. So we have three hypotheses concerning the amount of correct voting at the level of member states:

(H3) *The smaller the choice set of political parties in a country, the higher the extent of correct voting in terms of European integration.*

(H4) *The more distinct the positions of political parties on European integration in a country, the higher the likelihood of correct voting in terms of European integration.*

(H5) *The more extensive the support for European integration in a country, the higher the likelihood of correct voting in terms of European integration.*

11.5 Data and method

To measure and analyze correct voting, we rely on the *European Election Study* (EES) data from 2009.⁴ The EES has the advantage that it allows for a comparison of correct voting in terms of left/right as well as European integration in the same way for a large number of countries. Because the 12 member states that most recently joined the EU have such a different position compared to the 15 older member states, we only focus on the latter.

The EES 2009 questionnaire not only includes questions about vote choice in the EP elections in June 2009, but also asks respondents for which party they had voted in the latest national elections. The survey furthermore contains virtually identical measures for left/right and European integration. Regarding left/right, respondents are asked to indicate their political views by choosing the number between 0 and 10, where 0 means *left* and 10 means *right*, that best represents their position. Using the same scale, they are asked to indicate what number best represents the position of several political parties. In the same vein, respondents are asked to place their own views as well as those of the political parties on scale concerning European integration. In this case the end-points are that European unification *has already gone too far* (0) and that it *should be pushed further* (10). We limit our analysis to parties that obtained at least one seat in the EP, thus neglecting very small parties that were sometimes also included in the survey.⁵

By answering these questions voters indicate, albeit indirectly, how similar they perceive their own political views as compared to the positions of the various political parties. We employ a simple measure as indicator of policy congruence in terms of either dimension, namely the distance between a voter's position and the perceived position of a party. Voting correctly is defined as voting for the party (or one of the parties) that is perceived closest in the two-dimensional space, which combines left/right ideology and European integration (Euclidean distance). This procedure matches the shortest distance hypothesis in Downs' (1957) conception of rational voting (see also Enelow and Hinich 1984).⁶ In the case of ties (two or more parties equally close) a vote for any of them is considered a correct vote.

One might argue that this measure fails to take into account the bias resulting from inaccurate perceptions of parties' positions on both scales and that the respondents' scores should be replaced by externally validated party positions; for example, the mean score awarded by all voters. Such a procedure would only make sense, however, if voters use the scale in an identical manner. The validity of this assumption is questionable. In particular with respect to left/right, respondents may interpret the labels differently. Indeed, Pellikaan (2010) found that in the Netherlands religious and secular voters have different views on the meaning of 'right' and consequently position particular parties differently. For that reason, we avoid such an alternative procedure and use respondents' own perception of party positions. To the extent that this affects our results, it implies that we most likely overestimate the degree of correct voting.⁷

Note that we conceive of both dimensions as making up one 'political space' and hence analyze voting correctly on the basis of measures indicating policy congruence on both dimensions simultaneously. To be able to study the quality of political representation in a more nuanced way, we also create measures that indicate whether individuals voted correctly if one would either only focus on left/right ideology or only focus on European integration.

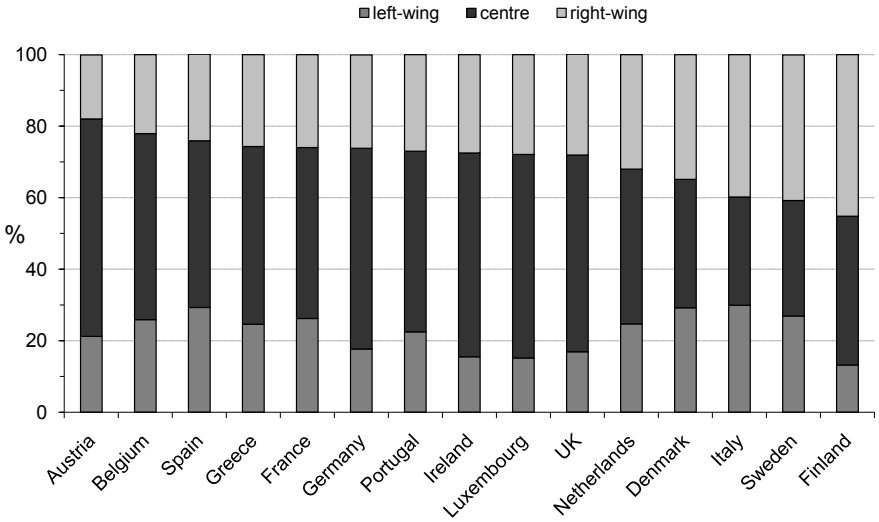
11.6 Results

11.6.1 Policy preferences of voters and parties

Before we turn to the analysis of the extent of correct voting, let us first provide an overview of voters' and parties' positions on both dimensions of political conflict. Figure 11.1 provides an overview of voters' left/right positions across the 15 EU member states. To enhance clarity of presentation, we rescaled the continuum to three categories: left-wing (0-3), center (4-6), and right-wing (7-10). Figure 11.2 shows in a comparable way voters' stances towards European integration. We rescaled the corresponding survey item into three categories: 'pro European integration' (7-10), 'anti European integration' (0-3) and 'intermediate position' (4-6).

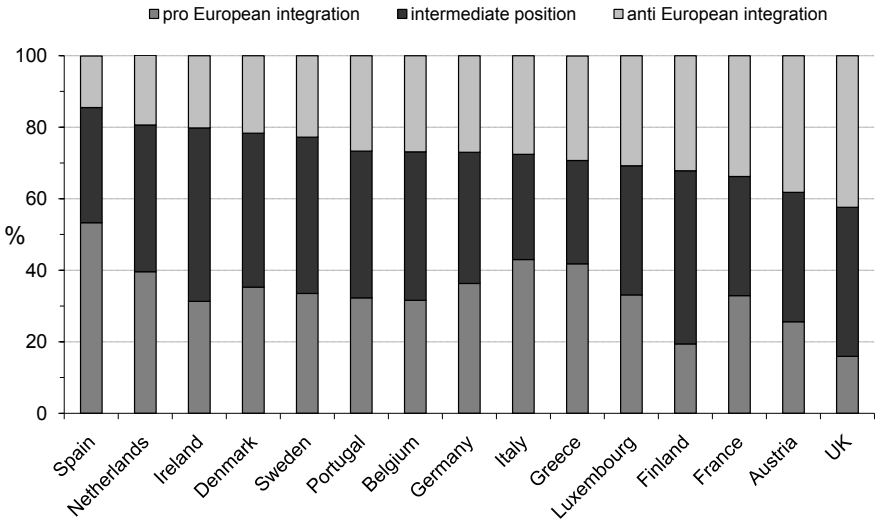
These figures provide several important pieces of information. Firstly, in the EU as a whole, in terms of both left/right and European integration, voters are fairly evenly spread across the three categories. This means that left-wing voters and right-wing voters are more or less in balance, and so are those in favor and those against European integration. Secondly, the figures show extensive variation across countries. These differences are most pronounced with respect to European integration. For example, in some countries, like Spain or Greece, voters are more often in favor of further European integration, whereas in other countries, like Austria or Finland, voters are more wary. Thirdly, there is only one member state where a majority of citizens favors further integration (i.e. Greece). In all other countries the support figure falls below the 50 percent mark. Moreover, in four member states (i.e. Aus-

Figure 11.1 Citizens' ideological Left-Right position



Source: European Election Study (EES), 2009

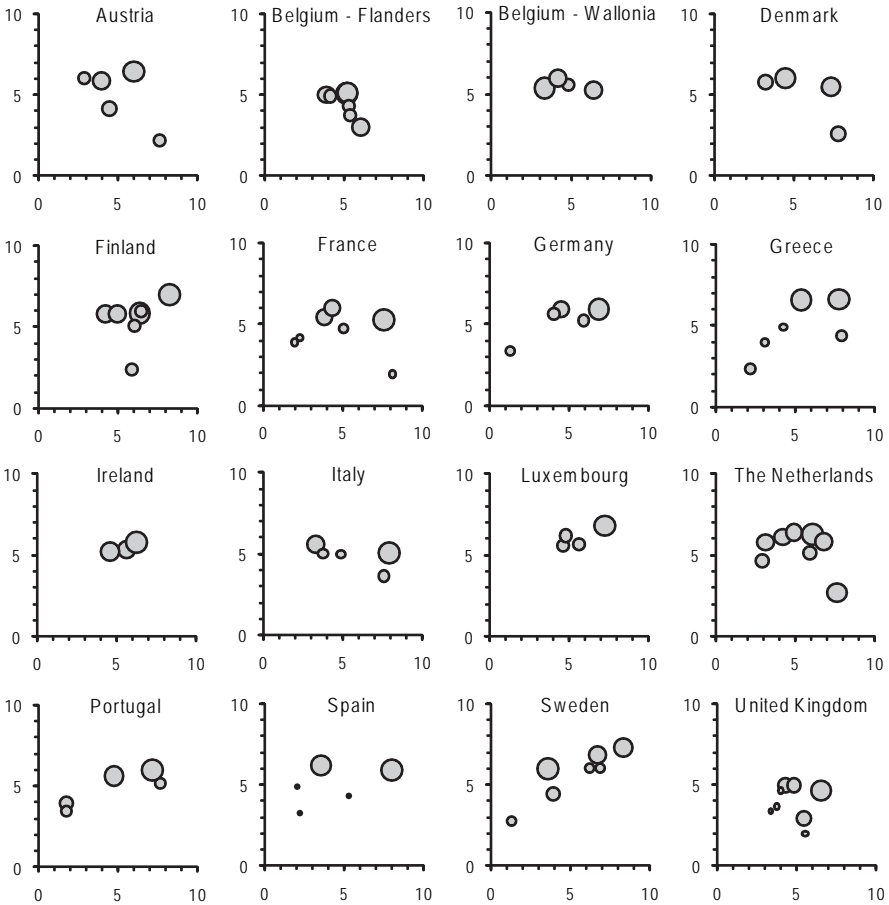
Figure 11.2 Citizens' support for European integration



Source: EES 2009

tria, Finland, Sweden and United Kingdom) citizens who feel that integration has already gone too far outnumber citizens who favor integration to move ahead.

Figure 11.3 Political parties' positions on Left-Right ideology (horizontal) and European integration (vertical)



Note: Left-right (horizontal): 0 means 'left' and 10 means 'right'. European integration (vertical): 0 means 'anti European integration' and 10 means 'pro European integration'. The size of the dots increases with party size (within-country comparisons).

Source: EES 2009

How are parties positioned on both scales? Figure 11.3 plots parties' positions on European integration against their left/right placements for each country. The figure also indicates the size of the parties: the size of the dots varies in accordance with the number of seats obtained in the 2009 EP elections.⁸ We determined the position of a party by calculating the mean of respondents' perceived position on both scales. One major advantage of this procedure is that party positions are esti-

mated on the same scale as voter positions. In order to ensure the validity of these voter-based measurements, we cross-validated them with expert judgements.⁹

The graphs enable us to make a number of observations. Firstly, they demonstrate that there are substantial differences between the extent to which parties are spread across both dimensions. With respect to left/right the general pattern is that parties are fairly spread across the continuum, albeit there are differences between countries (average range equals 5.5; average standard deviation equals 2.0). With respect to European integration there are also differences between parties, but these are less pronounced (average range equals 3.6; average standard deviation equals 1.3). In all but two member states party positions range more in terms of left/right than in terms of European integration (the exceptions are the United Kingdom and Ireland, which have identical range for both dimensions).

Secondly, the figures reveal that there is no clear and simple relationship between the policy views of political parties on European integration and left/right ideology. In some countries the strongest opposition to the European project is voiced by right-wing parties (i.e. Austria, Denmark, France and the Netherlands), whereas in other countries the opposition is voiced on the left-wing (i.e. Germany, Greece, Portugal and Sweden). Finland and the United Kingdom are the only countries in which a party associated with opposition to European integration is positioned in the center of the left/right continuum. Note that this is the expected position for a single issue party focusing on national sovereignty, such as the UK Independence Party. The graphs also suggest that in some countries it is virtually impossible for citizens to voice discontent on European integration, since there is no party in the Eurosceptic area of the graphs (i.e. Ireland and Luxembourg).

Thirdly, if we take party size into account, it becomes clear that parties with relatively negative attitudes toward European integration are mostly small parties. The only exception is the Netherlands, where the recently established Freedom Party (PVV) of Geert Wilders became the second largest party in the 2009 EP elections. The positions of the large parties with respect to European integration tend to be fairly close to the midpoint of the scale – mostly slightly above and hence expressing a mild pro-European integration stance. The graphs also reveal that parties with a strong pro-European attitude are a rarity. Indeed, the Swedish Moderate Party and the Finnish National Coalition Party are the only parties that received an average score of at least 7.0. This indicates that if there are problems at the supply side, these apply as much for ‘EU-phoria’ as for ‘EU-phobia.’

These results partly echo findings reported for previous EP elections, in which opposition towards the European project was also strongest among smaller parties, especially those on the extremes of the left/right dimension (Hooghe et al. 2002; Schmitt and Thomassen 2009). However, the country-level analyses also show that the curvilinear relationship between parties’ positions on left/right and European integration for the EU as a whole (the so-called ‘inverted U-curve’ or ‘horseshoe pattern’), does not adequately describe the political landscape of individual countries. Indeed, there is not a single country among these 15 member states in which

strong Euroscepticism is expressed by *both* the left and the right. This means that voters wishing to express sentiments against European integration typically can either only turn to a small party on the far left, or only turn to a small party on the far right. Given the fact that left/right ideology strongly shapes party choice (Van der Eijk and Franklin 2006), the supply side of the electoral competition makes it rather difficult to establish accurate representation on the European integration dimension.

11.6.2 Voting correctly across the 15 oldest EU member states

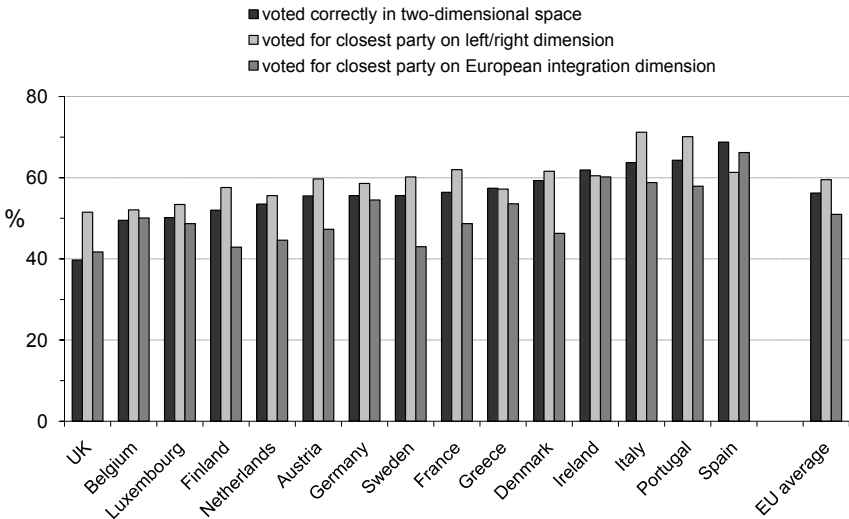
We now turn to the levels of correct voting and the quality of political representation. How well are voters able to translate their perceptions about political parties' stands on both dimensions into a correct vote, that is, vote for the party closest in the two-dimensional space? Figure 11.4 provides an overview of the extent to which voters were getting it right in the 2009 European Parliament elections and thus reports the percentage of respondents that voted correctly. The figure also indicates to what extent vote choices matched the shortest distance hypothesis when applied to either left/right or European integration as a single dimension.

The general pattern across the 15 member states is that correct voting in terms of left/right occurred more frequently than correct voting in terms of the two-dimensional framework or in terms of European integration. Across the EU in terms of left/right on average 60 percent of the voters appeared to get it right. In terms of European integration the figure is somewhat lower, namely 51 percent. The figures for the two-dimensional space take an intermediate position at 56 percent. These findings support our first hypothesis (H1): correct voting occurred more often in terms of left/right than in terms of European integration.

Additional analyses (not reported here) indicate that only about one out of three voters cast their vote for a party that was closest on both dimensions. When interpreting this figure, one should realize that for many voters it may be logically impossible to vote for a party that represents them better than any other party on both individual dimensions simultaneously. Indeed, across the EU-15 on average only 55 per cent of the voters were, given the positions of themselves and the competing parties, able to choose a party that provided the best match on both individual dimensions. In other words, almost half of the electorate is forced to choose between the best match on left/right or the best match on European integration.

Earlier in this chapter we argued that citizens wishing to influence European integration should not care most about EP elections, but about national elections. Hence, we hypothesized that correct voting in terms of European integration occurred more frequently in national elections than in EP elections. However, our additional analysis of correct voting in national elections (not reported) does not confirm this expectation. In fact, on average the scores are 2 percent lower in national elections than in EP elections. So the second hypothesis (H2) is not confirmed. Correct voting occurs as often in national elections as in EP elections.¹⁰

Figure 11.4 Percentage of voters who voted correctly



Source: EES 2009

11.6.3 Explaining country differences in correct voting

Variation exists across countries in the ability to which voters get it right when it comes to their left/right and European integration preferences. We explore these differences for the European integration dimension (where the level of correct voting is lowest) and focus on voting in the EP elections. How can we make sense of the cross-national variation in correct voting?

According to our third hypothesis (H₃) we expect more correct voting as the number of alternatives in the choice set decreases. To address this matter systematically, we calculated the correlation between the amount of correct voting on European integration in percent and the number of political parties in the European Parliament.¹¹ We indeed find a negative relationship between the number of choice options and the extent to which voters choose the party that best represents their EU interests ($r = -.72, p < 0.01$, one tailed).

The second explanatory factor relates to the meaningfulness of the choices available to voters. We hypothesized higher levels of correct voting when the positions that political parties take on European integration are more distinctive (H₄). We use the standard deviation of party positions on the European integration scale as an indicator for distinctiveness. The results provide no evidence for the hypothesized effect. There is no statistically significant relationship, while the sign is in the other direction than hypothesized ($r = -.42, p = .06$, two-tailed).¹² Thus, we find no empirical evidence supporting the fourth hypothesis.

The final factor that we consider is the average level of support for European integration. We expect that the more extensive the support for European integration in a country, the higher the likelihood of correct voting in terms of this dimension (H₅). We analyze this with a measure that equals the percentage of respondents who positioned themselves on positions 7 to 10 on the corresponding survey item. The results support the idea that correct voting on European integration is positively related to general levels of support for European integration among voters ($r = .67$, $p < .01$, one-tailed). So in countries where relatively many citizens support European integration, voters are indeed more likely to choose a party that represents their view on this dimension of conflict.

If we combine the latter factor with size of the choice set in a single regression model to predict the amount of correct voting in a country, the explained variance (R^2) equals 82 percent. The level of aggregate support for European integration and the number of choice options in the election appear to be key factors for explaining cross-national variation in correct voting on this dimension of conflict.

11.6.4 Biases in representation at the individual level

The findings suggest that slightly more than half of the EU citizens in the Western member states voted in line with their policy preferences, while the figures for left-right and European integration as single dimensions do not deviate much. This means that at the individual level the quality of representation is presumably not optimal. Moreover, even for the majority who voted correctly the question arises whether the party they supported has identical policy views, or whether voters were in a sense forced – by the supply in policy packages provided to them – to select parties that hold different views. We therefore examine for those who voted correctly, as well as those who did not vote correctly, whether they perceived the party they voted for as holding identical policy views as oneself or not; and if differences between party and oneself were perceived, whether voters cast their vote for a party that was considered *more left-wing* or *more right-wing*, and *more Eurosceptic* or *less Eurosceptic*, than oneself. We again focus on the 2009 EP elections.

Table 11.1 provides an overview of the types of representation biases associated with voters' party choice. Across the 15 member states on average 60 percent voted for a party that they perceived to take an identical position on the left/right dimension. The other voters opted slightly more often for a party they perceived as more right-wing than oneself than for a more left-wing party. The differences are limited, though, and hence in terms of left/right voters who voted correctly were collectively represented fairly accurately.

The second group of voters (i.e. those who voted incorrectly and thus supported a party that they did not consider closest on the left/right dimension) display a clear bias. These voters were about twice as likely to vote for a more right-wing party than a more left-wing party. If we combine respondents who voted correctly and who voted incorrectly, the resulting bias on average equals 17 percent (this bias is calculated as the difference between the percentage voting for a party more right-

Table 11.1 Percentage of voters who voted for parties that were perceived as more left-wing or more right-wing than oneself

	Au	Bel	Den	Fin	Fra	Ger	Gre	Ire	Ita	Lux	Net	Por	Spa	Swe	UK	EU-15 average
<i>Voters who voted correctly in terms of Left/Right</i>																
More left	20	19	17	14	11	17	12	20	15	10	13	23	19	13	19	16
Similar	51	56	65	63	62	61	68	46	56	65	73	60	56	67	54	60
More right	28	25	18	23	27	22	20	33	29	25	14	17	25	20	27	24
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N	292	318	426	309	215	309	337	300	319	292	324	298	260	395	210	
<i>Voters who did not vote correctly in terms of Left/Right</i>																
More left	46	37	39	34	37	28	31	20	35	27	44	48	16	43	32	34
More right	54	63	61	66	63	72	69	80	65	73	56	52	84	57	68	66
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N	197	292	265	227	132	218	252	196	129	255	259	127	164	261	198	
<i>Bias to right</i>	8	16	9	19	20	21	21	32	19	29	6	-3	30	10	22	17

Source: EES 2009

Table 11.2 Percentage of voters who voted for parties that were perceived as more or less in favour of European integration than oneself

	Au	Bel	Den	Fin	Fra	Ger	Gre	Ire	Ita	Lux	Net	Por	Spa	Swe	UK	EU-15 average
<i>Voters who voted correctly in terms of European integration</i>																
More pro EU	25	24	26	15	30	21	25	25	38	22	22	25	30	21	16	24
Equally	44	48	51	56	50	51	57	47	39	44	59	49	44	57	63	51
Less pro EU	31	28	23	29	20	27	18	29	23	34	19	26	25	23	20	25
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N	228	283	304	198	148	280	271	305	183	255	242	169	233	253	166	
<i>Voters who did not vote correctly in terms of European integration</i>																
More pro EU	19	32	39	20	26	27	30	19	34	16	34	28	34	27	16	26
Less pro EU	81	68	61	80	74	73	70	81	66	84	66	72	66	73	84	73
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N	254	282	353	264	156	234	235	202	128	269	301	123	119	336	232	
<i>Bias pro-EU</i>	36	20	10	40	20	24	15	27	4	41	16	19	8	27	41	23

Source: EES 2009

wing than oneself and the percentage voting for a party more left-wing). Apparently, voters who have to choose between a party on their right and a party on their left were more strongly inclined to choose a party on their right. The figure varies substantially across countries. For example, the bias in left/right is fairly strong in Spain and Luxembourg (30 percent), but virtually absent in Portugal and the Netherlands. As expected, this variation across countries is related to the number of parties ($r = -.51, p < .05$, one tailed). If there are more parties to choose from, there is less bias in terms of left/right.

Table 11.2 presents a similar analysis for the European integration dimension. Individuals who voted correctly in terms of European integration in half of the cases did so for a party that took an identical policy position. The others split more or less evenly between parties that held a more or less favorable opinion about further integration. Furthermore, voters who did not 'get it right' mostly voted for parties that were less Euroskeptic. Those voting for parties with more favorable stands towards integration outnumbered those voting for parties less supportive of moving ahead with integration by three to one. The overall bias at the aggregate level exceeds that for left/right and amounts to 23 percent. Given the fact that parties that are skeptical about European integration are scarce, this finding is not surprising. This bias is exactly what can be expected on the basis of the positions of political parties on this dimension. We have also calculated the size of the bias for the previous EP elections, which were held in 2004, and obtained an identical outcome (23 percent). So the quality of representation has not improved in the latest EP elections (nor worsened).¹³

Again, there are substantial differences between countries. The bias is particularly strong in the United Kingdom, Austria and Finland (40 percent), whereas there is virtually no bias in Italy and Spain. For this variation across countries the number of parties is not relevant ($r = .01, p = .98$, two-tailed). This can be understood on the basis of the fact that in terms of European integration there is less variation in party stances and major parties hardly ever opposed European integration so far (see Figure 11.3). Another factor, however, does affect the country differences: the amount of aggregate support for European integration ($r = -.82, p < .01$, one-tailed). So the bias is strongest in countries with little popular support for further European integration and this factor alone explains two thirds of the variance ($R^2 = .66$).

11.7 Conclusions

This study has assessed the health of political representation in the European Union by examining the success of voters in selecting a party that most accurately represents their policy preferences. The analysis focused on the two dimensions that characterize political contestation in the European Union – left/right ideology and European integration – and focused on Western Europe, i.e. the 15 oldest member states of the EU. In order to determine the quality of democratic representation we

introduced the concept of voting correctly, i.e. are voters' actual votes the same as the choices they would have made if they would be aware of these dimensions of conflict and voted accordingly?

In all, our results on the basis of the *European Election Study 2009* show that in terms of left/right, approximately six out of ten voters appear to be getting it right, while about five out of ten voters get it right when it comes to European integration. This confirmed our hypothesis that correct voting is more likely in terms of left/right than European integration. For a two-dimensional space comprising both dimensions the figure lies somewhere in between, suggesting that only slightly more than half of the electorates choose parties that best represent their policy preferences. There were no substantial differences between EP elections and national elections. The amount of correct voting varied across member states. We hypothesized this variation to be a function of choice set (number of parties) as well as the range in parties' EU positions. The findings lend support for the former hypothesis, but not the latter. Furthermore, we observed, as expected, that correct voting was more likely in countries where voters' opinions were relatively positive (like, on average, those of political elites across the EU).

Those who did not vote correctly in terms of left/right relatively often chose parties that were perceived as more right-wing than themselves. The resulting bias in representation was negatively related to the number of parties that citizens could choose from. A larger bias exists when it comes to the European integration dimension. Here voters were relatively likely to vote for parties that were less Euroskeptic than themselves. This bias was strongest in countries where the public as a whole showed least support for European integration and appears to be caused by the fact that in virtually all 15 countries the main parties have not voiced opposition to European integration so far.

The findings of our analyses suggest that there are deficiencies in the quality of representation in the European Union. Furthermore, the findings point to two causes that are known from studies focusing on earlier EP elections. First, at the supply side political parties show limited variation in policy preferences concerning European integration, at least less than in terms of left/right. Furthermore, opposition to European integration is usually voiced by relatively small parties that are positioned either relatively far on the left or relatively far on the right. The combination of negative EU attitudes on the left *and* the right, which is known to characterize the EU as a whole (Hooghe et al. 2002; Schmitt and Thomassen 2009), is non-existent at the level of individual countries. This means that voters who wish to base their choice strongly on left/right ideology, often have no viable option to also express their EU sentiments.

Second, at the demand side we have shown that about half of the electorate seems to – consciously – vote for a party that does not best represent their views on European integration. Moreover, this group in particular appeared to comprise the voters that cause the bias. So the problem is not only that parties do not offer what voters want with respect to European integration. Also, voters do not pick the par-

ties that best represent their policy views on this dimension of conflict. Low levels of ‘EU issue voting’ result in elected representatives failing to accurately represent their voters on this dimension.

Hence, this study suggests that a failing linkage exists between political elites and their voters regarding EU matters. As such, it need not be a surprise that when European integration matters are put up for referendum, citizens are not as enthusiastic as the politicians that represent them. These findings also constitute a ‘warning-sign’ for Europe’s political leaders. What lies ahead when the integration process is pushed further, is likely to be met by increased popular backlash. Currently, many voters are willing to put their EU preferences on hold in EP elections and national elections, and knowingly vote for parties more favorable of European integration than they themselves are. However, as integration efforts increasingly encroach upon voters’ everyday lives, this may not prove a stable equilibrium. In the process of consolidating previous integration efforts, of even taking further steps, political elites may otherwise experience the electoral costs of failing to represent their voters on European affairs.

Acknowledgement

Earlier versions of this chapter were presented at the Annual National Conference of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, 3–6 April 2008, and the Annual Conference of the Dutch Political Science Association and Flemish Political Institute (Politicologenetmaal), Berg en Dal, The Netherlands, 29–30 May 2008. We are grateful to participants in these conferences, as well as colleagues in our departments, for their valuable comments.

Notes

- 1 For broader views, we refer to other literature on the concept of democracy (Held 2006), the functions of democratic elections (Katz 1997), the notion of democratic quality (Diamond and Morlino 2005), and democratic quality in the EU (Majone 1996; Moravcsik 2002; Zweifel 2002; Crombez 2003; Follesdal and Hix 2006).
- 2 Note that many authors argue that next to left/right ideology the political space in Western Europe consists of a cultural dimension (Inglehart 1977; Flanagan 1987; Kitschelt 1989; Inglehart et al. 1991; Hooghe et al. 2002; Kriesi et al. 2006). This second dimension of political contestation involves the divide between values, such as public order, national security and traditional life styles, and values, such as individual choice, political participation and environmental protection (Dalton 1996: 81–82). For simplicity’s sake we do not include this dimension as such in our analysis. The main reasons are that the EES does not include adequate indicators for voter and party positions on this dimension, some of those issues have become incorporated in the words *left* and *right*, and this dimension

- shows overlap with the European integration dimension of conflict and hence including it would complicate the analysis.
- 3 Lau and Redlawsk (2006: 84) also introduced another macro-level factor: the balance of an electoral campaign. Coming from the US context, the researchers focus on the (material) resources available to each candidate. This is less useful in Western Europe, as material resources appear to play a less crucial role and thus are not suitable as a proxy for campaign attention.
 - 4 EES (2009), European Parliament Election Study 2009, Voter Study, Advance Release, 7 April 2010. Data and documentation are available at <http://www.piredeu.eu>. See also Van Egmond et al. (2010).
 - 5 Parties for which data on its issue stands are not available have been excluded from the analysis.
 - 6 An alternative approach would be applying the directional theory of issue voting (Rabinowitz and Macdonald 1989; see also Aarts and Aardal in this volume). However, the underlying idea that respondents' answers to such survey questions indicate which of two sides on an issue they take, combined with the intensity of this preference, is not plausible for the left/right scale (Granberg and Gilljam 1997). Moreover, although intuitively the situation could be different for the survey item about European integration, also for this dimension of conflict doubts have been cast on the usefulness of the directional theory (Granberg and Gilljam 1997).
 - 7 Future research may analyze the extent to which our results are biased due to the measures used. One possibility is to make use of the Candidate Survey of the PIREDEU project and use candidate placements to determine party positions. At the moment that we write this chapter, however, these data are not yet available.
 - 8 The size of the dot corresponds with the number of seats obtained in the 2009 EP elections by that party as compared to the number of seats obtained by the largest party in that country.
 - 9 We cross-validated the mean voter ratings in the by comparing identical measures from the *European Election Study 2004* with expert judgements from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) from 2006 (Bakker et al. 2008). The mean scores from the EES proved valid, as they correlated highly with the CHES data (Pearson's R amounts to .93 on the left/right and to .86 on the European integration scale; both correlations are significant at the $p = 0.001$ level). Those who are surprised about such strong correlations are reminded that accurate estimates from a group do not require accurate estimates at the individual level. Mistakes can cancel each other out and hence at the aggregate level reasonable estimates of parties' positions can be obtained with this procedure (cf. Erikson et al. 2002; Surowiecki 2004).
 - 10 The difference between the figures for both sorts of elections could be a methodological artefact resulting from the time interval between the moment the survey was conducted (around the EP elections) and the latest national elections (up to five years earlier). Indeed, slightly different outcomes are obtained if we use another measure of vote preference in national elections, namely a question that asks how individuals would vote "if there was a general election tomorrow." The correct voting figures for EP elections and national elec-

tions then become virtually identical. The fact remains, though, that our second hypothesis is not supported by the data.

- 11 The number of parties corresponds with the number of parties that obtained one or more seats in the European Parliament elections in 2009. Regional parties (e.g. Scottish Nationalist Party) have been excluded, because for a majority of the population such parties are not an option. For Belgium, the average number of parties in Flanders and Walloon has been taken.
- 12 If we would use another measure (i.e. the range), the relationship becomes significant, but it is still in the 'wrong' direction ($r = -.54$, $p < .05$, two-tailed).
- 13 The corresponding figure for left/right in the 2004 EP elections equalled 12 percent, which suggests that the bias in terms of left/right has increased (to 17 percent in 2009).

Part IV

**The Impact of the
Economic Context**

12 The Impact of the Economic Crisis in Europe: “I’m doing fine”

Jan W. van Deth

12.1 Introduction

ALTHOUGH THE ECONOMIC SKIES ALREADY DARKENED IN 2007 EVEN THE most cheerful soul must have realized that something was wrong by the end of 2008 and that very difficult times lay ahead. After the burst of the real estate bubbles in the US and Britain in 2007 a meltdown of the international financial markets slowly took shape. Initially, banks and institutes highly involved in mortgage credits collapsed and had to be taken over by competitors. Consequently, the crisis spread to banks and insurance companies very rapidly. On 15 September 2008, investment bank Lehman Brothers filed for bankruptcy protection and the US government had to rescue banks and insurances companies in unparalleled ways. Within a few weeks a US bank rescue plan totaling US\$ 700 billion was issued. By that time the US stock market had already realized a dazzling loss of more than US\$ 8 trillion in about 15 months. Similar events happened in European countries with major financial institutions collapsing. States such as Ireland or Iceland almost went insolvent. All over the world millions of people lost their homes, jobs and life-long savings. By autumn 2008 it was clear that the world was experiencing the worst global financial and economic crises since the Great Depression. Only government intervention on a scale unthinkable until very recently could avoid a total collapse of the world economic system.¹

The unfolding catastrophe and the unparalleled extent of government interferences were, of course, extensively covered by the media. In the course of 2008 these messages became increasingly negative and pessimistic. Phrases such as “the current financial crisis is a historic event” (NRC Handelsblad), “this is going to be expensive for all of us” (The Independent), “the worst financial crisis since 1929” (Le Monde), “burnt-out Europe” (Les Echos), “shockwaves through America’s bank-

ing industry” (Copenhagen Post), “a game of publicly financed roulette” (El País), or “a brutal purge in the financial sector” (De Standaard) emphasized the seriousness of the downturn. However phrased, the common message was unambiguous: Europe stumbled rapidly into the deepest recession since the 1930s and the consequences would be unprecedented. Not only American house owners or holders of accounts at Icelandic banks would be affected, but future generations all over the world would have to bear the costs of exploding public debts. Although optimistic messages never disappeared, mainstream news was clearly pessimistic and skeptical. Especially when government interventions were reported and discussed, these messages commonly had a dramatic or outright apocalyptic character.² By the end of 2008 the opinion climate in Europe was dominated by the arrival of the severest recession in decades. Even if one did not (yet?) suffer personally from the financial and economic crises, the future looked very wearisome. Besides, these fears would rapidly spread from the economic to the political sphere and threaten democracy in a similar way as Thomassen (1989: 104) had summarized fashionable interpretations of the stagflation of the 1970s: “... it is not the economic crisis as such which is responsible for the decline of democracy, but in a time of economic recession demands of citizens can no longer be met. This will lead to a decline of public confidence and finally to the end of parliamentary democracy.”

This chapter deals with the consequences and effects of the financial and economic crises on the orientations of citizens in Europe. By the end of 2008 the apocalyptic character of the recession will definitely influence the assessments of the economic situation among citizens. Subsequently, continuing reports about the scale of the disaster will affect their feelings of satisfaction and happiness, and stimulate the spread of uncertainty and pessimism. Since politicians and parties apparently were unable to prevent extremely risky financial speculations and insolvencies of major financial institutions, political confidence will decrease too. Although these suppositions are plausible and popular, empirical evidence about the impacts of the recent financial and economic crises on the orientations of citizens is still rare.

The *European Social Survey* (ESS) is used here to explore the political orientations of citizens during the collapse of financial and economic institutions all over the world. Fieldwork for the fourth wave was carried out in autumn 2008 and winter 2008/09 and included multi-country surveys among representative samples of the populations of 31 countries. The organization of the ESS is based on a long-term timetable with bi-annual interviews and it was, of course, unforeseeable that data collection for the fourth wave would take place at the rock bottom of the severest economic downturn in decades.³ Yet the ESS offers a unique opportunity to explore orientations during the darkest phase of the recession. In December 2009, data from 21 European countries with a total of 41,027 respondents were available (ESS-4 Edition 2.0).⁴ These results of the fourth wave are used here to investigate the satisfaction, happiness and political confidence of citizens during the crisis from a cross-national perspective.

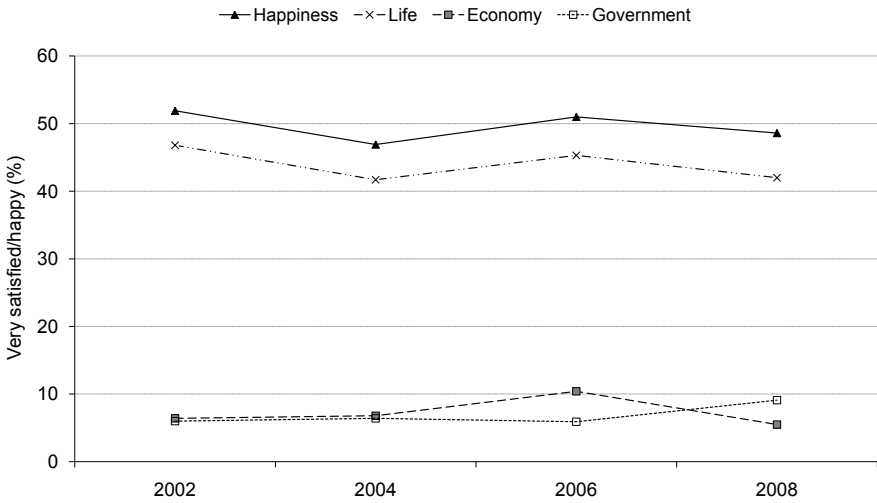
12.2 “I’m doing fine”

A first way to explore the consequences of the economic crisis on the orientations of European citizens in 2008 is to look at changes in these orientations in the last few years. Do the results obtained with the fourth wave of the ESS deviate from the findings gained in the previous three waves (2002, 2004, 2006)? In most European countries this period was characterized by a surprisingly strong economic recovery with decreasing unemployment and considerable reductions of government deficits. The ESS contains a few direct questions about the level of satisfaction with these developments. Highly relevant is, of course, the question dealing with the economy: “On the whole how satisfied are you with the present state of the economy in (your country)?” Respondents are invited to rate their degree of satisfaction on an 11-point scale ranging from ‘extremely dissatisfied’ (0) to ‘extremely satisfied’ (10). In a similar way the level of satisfaction is asked for “... the way the government (of your country) is doing its job” and for “... your life as a whole nowadays.”⁵ In addition, a further question registers the overall degree of happiness: “Taking all things together, how happy would you say you are?” Here, too, an 11-point scale is used, ranging from ‘extremely unhappy’ (0) to ‘extremely happy’ (10).

Figure 12.1 shows the percentages of the people in Europe in the period 2002–2008 who are very satisfied and very happy (that is, the respondents selecting a score of 8, 9 or 10 on the scales offered).⁶ Evidently, only a small number of people are very satisfied with the economy or with government activities in their country: the shares of very content citizens fluctuate between six and ten percent only. At the same time, however, developments in these shares seem to reflect actual changes, with an increase of satisfaction with the economy during the boom in 2005–2007 and a drop with the spread of the recession in 2008. Beside, national governments seem to be ‘rewarded’ with a modest increase in satisfaction with their activities after those successful years. The two other personal indicators show much higher levels with more than forty percent of the people being very satisfied with their life as a whole and even more respondents being very happy. Despite the draconian depiction of the financial and economic crises in the media as the worst depression since the 1930s, the fluctuations in these two last indicators suggest a return to the levels of well-being reached in 2004. A steady decline paralleling the economic downturn is not confirmed by these findings, but the figures for 2008 are indeed lower than for 2006. Or – somewhat more cautiously phrased – the crisis apparently had some impact on personal well-being and happiness, but the consequences seem to be rather modest. The average citizen in Europe had not (yet?) captured the seriousness of the situation by the end of 2008 or did not seem to care much.

The lack of impact of the crisis on political orientations can also be shown for developments in political confidence. The ESS includes a general question on trust and confidence in institutions: “Please tell me on a score of 0–10 how much you personally trust” institutions such as ‘the (country’s) parliament’, ‘political parties’ and ‘politicians.’⁷ Although the levels of confidence for these political objects are

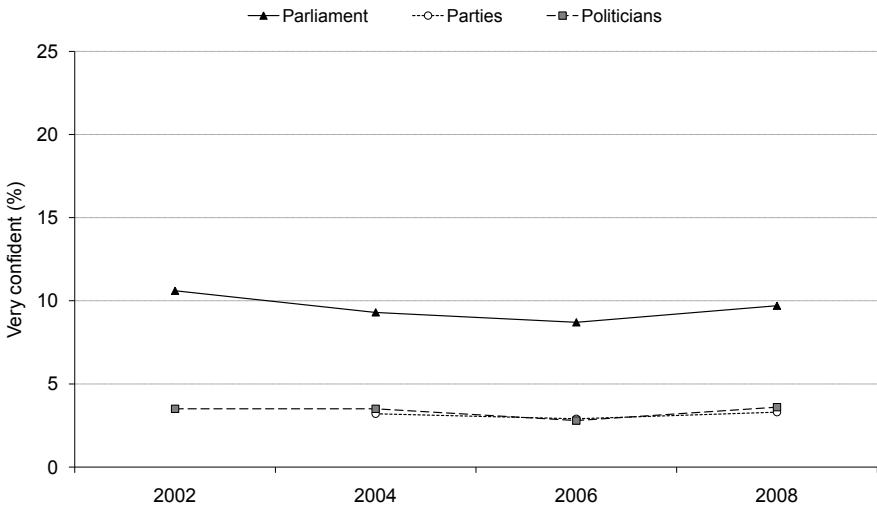
Figure 12.1 Satisfaction and happiness in Europe, 2002-2008



Note: Percentages of people scoring 8, 9 or 10; pooled data weighted for design and population effects.

Source: European Social Survey (ESS) 1, 2, 3, and 4

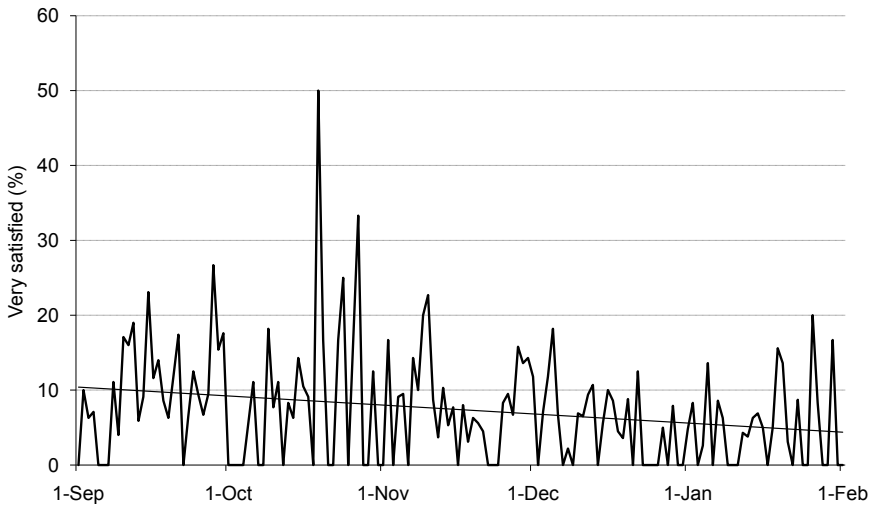
Figure 12.2 Political confidence in Europe, 2002-2008



Note: Percentages of people scoring 8, 9 or 10; pooled data weighted for design and population effects.

Source: ESS 1, 2, 3, and 4

Figure 12.3 Satisfaction with economic situation in Germany, 2008-2009



Note: Percentages of people scoring 8, 9 or 10; weighted for design effects.

Source: ESS 4

low, they differ clearly (see Figure 12.2). Confidence in parliament, parties and politicians all decreased during the years of economic expansion between 2006 and 2008. As with satisfaction with government activities in Figure 12.1, we see that all three types of political confidence *increased* during the upcoming recession in 2008. In fact, here too, we see a return to levels already reached in 2004. Although citizens were increasingly dissatisfied with the economic situation in 2008, this did not come with a negative trend in political confidence.

With Lehman Brothers collapsing in September 2008 and massive government intervention packages decreed in October of that year, the consequences of the crisis must have become increasingly noticeable. Whereas an optimist could try to neglect the darkening economic skies in summer 2008, no escape from the frightening depictions was possible by the end of that year. Therefore, respondents interviewed in early stages of the fieldwork of the fourth wave of the ESS in late summer 2008, were probably less affected by the crisis and its media coverage than people who were interviewed three or four months later. In order to explore this expectation Germany is used as an exemplary case here. Data collection in this country took place from 1 September 2008 until 31 January 2009; that is, during the most dramatic period of the recession. German media reported extensively about the collapse of the international financial markets and especially about the bank rescue plan of € 500 billion the German federal government issued in October 2008 to rescue the insolvent Hypo Real Estate Holding and other financial institutions. Signs of the severe recession were hard to avoid in Germany. The term ‘financial

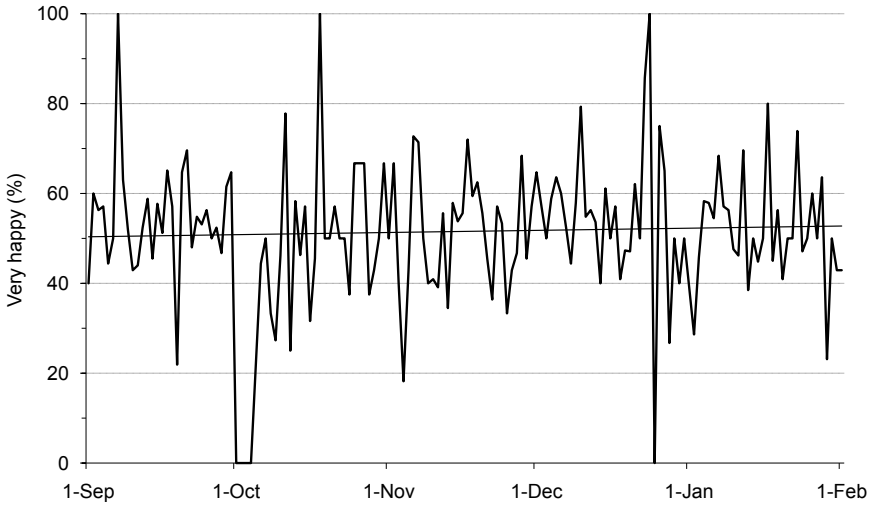
crisis' was elected by the Germans as the Word-of-the-Year-2008 and messages about a 'record downturn', 'collapse', 'naked panic' or 'monster wave' dominated the media.⁸

The percentage of Germans being very satisfied with the economic situation in their country in autumn 2008 is depicted in Figure 12.3. As can be seen, the average level is rather low (about eight percent scoring 8, 9, or 10), and very close to the European average. Unsurprisingly, strong fluctuations can be noted due to composition effects and the low number of cases at each point in time.⁹ Yet the level of satisfaction declines continuously during the period considered. In fact, in about four months the downward trend (as indicated by the linear regression line in Figure 12.3) results in a reduction of the group of very satisfied people of more than eight percent points! Apparently, the stream of bad messages about the deteriorating economic situation did not fail to impress German citizens: the already small group of people very satisfied with the economy in September 2008 disappeared almost completely by early 2009.

The results obtained for economic satisfaction support the idea that significant opinion change indeed took place in Germany during the dramatic period in the last few months of 2008. But the expected downward trend can be observed only for the level of satisfaction with the economic situation. Just as with governments all over the world, the German administration responded to the unfolding crises with constantly expanding rescue packages and interventionist regulations. The bank rescue plan already mentioned had a total value of about twenty percent of the German gross domestic product. In spite of these unprecedented measures German people were just about as dissatisfied with the activities of their government in autumn 2008 as with the economic situation in their country (data not shown). However, this lack of content with government activities hardly changed between September 2008 and January 2009. Whether this lack of unambiguous trends is due to the fact that the Germans did not blame their government for the recession or that they were grateful for the extensive rescue measures taken cannot be decided. Maybe frustration about the evident inability to regulate speculative financial markets is balanced by appreciation for the measures taken by the administration.

A similar lack of impact can be noted for measures of personal satisfaction and happiness: the unfolding economic crisis and its massive media coverage had no consequences for these feelings among the German population. By the end of January 2009 satisfaction with 'life as a whole nowadays' even increased more than three percentage points since September 2008! For happiness the picture is less clear, but here, too, no downward trend can be detected (see Figure 12.4). Obviously, the deterioration of the economic situation and the dominance of apocalyptic scenarios in the media hardly affected the feelings of personal satisfaction and happiness among the German population.¹⁰ The only – utterly trivial – result revealing some impact concerns the level of satisfaction with the economic situation. The German population, then, perceived the darkening economic skies but did not infer any implication

Figure 12.4 Happiness in Germany, 2008-2009



Note: Percentages of people scoring 8, 9 or 10; weighted for design effects.

Source: ESS 4

for their satisfaction with government activities or for their personal satisfaction or happiness from this threatening situation.

Similar results can be obtained for political confidence in Germany. About eleven percent of the Germans expressed a very high level of confidence in their parliament ('Bundestag') whereas it is hard to find respondents willing to say the same for political parties of politicians (two and three percent of the Germans only, respectively). Contrary to the findings for the pooled data set, confidence in parliament tended to decrease by more than four percentage points in Germany during the spread of the financial and economic crises in autumn 2008 (data not shown). At the same time, the levels of confidence in political parties and politicians remained constantly at their very low levels. Even if we take ceiling effects into account, it is clear that citizens make distinctions when the impact of the economic crisis on their political orientations is considered. Behind the stable (low) level of satisfaction with government activities we find different consequences of the economic crisis for confidence in various political institutions and actors in Germany. Confidence in political parties and politicians actually are much less affected by the crisis than confidence in the national parliament.

12.3 At the rock bottom of the crisis in Europe

In the previous section Germany was used as a case study to explore the impacts of the financial and economic crises in the period between September 2008 and January 2009. The analyses showed that meaningful results can be obtained by looking at the developments during these four months. Satisfaction with the economic situation decreased as expected, but the impact on satisfaction with government activities, personal well-being, happiness and political confidence appear to be puzzling. Are we dealing with specific German results or can similar developments be observed in other European countries as well? In order to answer these questions the same analyses have been carried out for each of the twenty other countries available in the fourth wave of the ESS using the set of seven indicators (three for satisfaction, one for happiness, three for political confidence). The trend for the development of each indicator in each country during the field period in that country is roughly indicated by two coefficients: the direction coefficient of a linear regression model (α) for the time series, and the difference between estimated levels at the end and at the beginning of the specific data collection period. The results of these computations are summarized in Table 12.1.

In no less than 19 of 21 countries the level of satisfaction with the economic situation decreased during the relative short periods of fieldwork. For the pooled set of countries a downswing of more than seven percentage points can be noted. This substantial decline across Europe underlines the usefulness of a closer look at the development of political orientations during the fieldwork for the fourth wave of the ESS. Yet large cross-national differences in the impact of the economic crisis on the orientations of European citizens are visible. In many of the most prosperous countries (Norway, Sweden, Finland, Switzerland, The Netherlands, Germany) levels of economic satisfaction dived remarkably in a very short period of time. With respect to the global meltdown of the financial and economic markets in autumn 2008 the decline in economic satisfaction in Europe is rather trivial. The amazing cases seem to be Israel and Slovakia, where satisfaction with the economic situation increased (!) slightly during this period.

The other findings summarized in Table 12.1 underline the idea that the economic crisis was not simply accompanied by a general wave of dissatisfaction, unhappiness and loss of political confidence in Europe. As can be seen in the bottom lines of the table the direction coefficients for the regression lines are near zero for the six indicators and a (minor) decrease can only be noted for satisfaction with government activities. In fact, whereas the four political measures all show a decline, the two indicators for personal well-being – satisfaction with life and happiness – register a very modest *increase* during the periods of fieldwork. This general finding however, should be interpreted cautiously. Firstly, with the exception of the downturn in economic satisfaction the changes are small. Yet it is clear that personal feelings of satisfaction and happiness among European citizens are not affected by the financial and economic crises. Secondly, behind the results for the

Table 12.1 Changes in satisfaction, happiness, and political confidence; 2008/2009 (linear regression coefficients and differences)

Country		Satisfaction		Happiness		Trust			Period
		Econ.	Govm.	Life		Parl.	Party	Polit.	
Belgium	trend	-0.00	0.01	-0.02	-0.02	0.03	-0.03	0.01	11.13.2008
	change	-0.28	0.87	-3.27	-3.39	3.54	-2.15	0.52	03.23.2009
Bulgaria	trend	-0.04	-0.07	0.02	-0.02	-0.03	-0.05	-0.06	03.07.2009
	change	-2.53	-6.20	3.46	-5.90	-3.41	-4.12	-4.55	05.31.2009
Cyprus	trend	-0.10	-0.05	0.07	0.01	0.05	-0.04	-0.01	09.29.2008
	change	-12.62	-9.07	13.82	0.95	8.31	-4.01	-0.64	12.19.2008
Denmark	trend	-0.05	-0.04	-0.04	-0.01	0.00	0.01	-0.00	09.06.2008
	change	-6.15	-4.70	-4.09	-0.75	0.28	0.56	-0.20	01.11.2009
Estonia	trend	-0.09	-0.08	-0.12	-0.04	-0.06	-0.07	-0.08	11.15.2008
	change	-8.75	-8.24	-23.76	-9.86	-7.54	-5.33	-7.15	03.26.2009
Finland	trend	-0.06	0.01	-0.02	0.03	-0.02	0.02	0.04	09.19.2008
	change	-11.81	0.97	-3.39	4.92	-3.64	2.02	4.67	02.05.2009
France	trend	-0.05	-0.03	0.04	-0.01	0.05	-0.03	-0.04	09.29.2008
	change	-2.98	-3.30	9.75	-1.49	7.60	-1.80	-3.23	02.06.2009
Germany	trend	-0.09	-0.01	0.02	-0.02	-0.04	-0.00	-0.00	09.01.2008
	change	-8.45	-0.86	3.54	-2.68	-4.07	-0.16	-0.08	01.31.2009
Hungary	trend	-0.02	-0.01	0.00	0.01	-0.06	-0.01	0.02	02.21.2009
	change	-1.23	-1.50	0.73	2.49	-7.06	-0.42	1.56	04.20.2009
Israel	trend	0.01	0.01	0.07	0.02	0.00	-0.03	-0.04	09.12.2008
	change	1.19	0.66	13.6	3.73	0.40	-1.84	-2.26	03.12.2009
Netherlands	trend	-0.08	-0.03	0.01	-0.04	0.01	0.02	0.01	09.07.2008
	change	-9.45	-2.90	2.34	-6.78	1.41	1.54	1.02	06.27.2009
Norway	trend	-0.20	0.03	-0.04	-0.02	0.00	0.04	0.02	09.01.2008
	change	-39.28	4.12	-7.41	-3.01	-0.06	3.88	2.29	01.20.2009
Poland	trend	-0.01	0.02	0.02	0.03	-0.01	-0.01	0.01	11.03.2008
	change	-0.96	2.13	5.64	8.83	-0.58	-0.42	0.38	02.15.2009
Portugal	trend	-0.05	-0.01	-0.02	0.02	-0.07	-0.04	-0.03	10.22.2008
	change	-1.52	-0.63	-2.78	2.58	-5.49	-1.55	-0.89	03.08.2009
Russia	trend	-0.03	-0.09	-0.01	-0.03	-0.02	0.04	0.03	11.08.2008
	change	-2.20	-14.18	-1.29	-4.71	-2.60	3.12	2.56	04.09.2009
Slovakia	trend	0.03	0.07	0.02	0.02	-0.03	0.01	-0.01	11.02.2008
	change	3.91	10.79	3.20	5.22	-3.27	0.58	-0.80	02.28.2009
Slovenia	trend	-0.03	-0.04	0.00	0.05	-0.01	-0.00	0.00	10.06.2008
	change	-4.20	-7.17	0.23	12.39	-1.88	-0.39	0.26	01.05.2009
Spain	trend	-0.03	-0.04	0.03	-0.00	-0.02	-0.04	-0.05	09.04.2008
	change	-2.94	-5.83	11.14	-0.96	-5.10	-4.61	-6.22	02.18.2009
Sweden	trend	-0.09	0.02	-0.02	0.00	0.03	0.01	-0.01	09.25.2008
	change	-12.28	3.14	-4.33	0.14	4.45	1.27	-1.07	02.03.2009
Switzerland	trend	-0.14	-0.05	-0.02	0.01	-0.02	0.03	-0.01	09.02.2008
	change	-24.28	-8.02	-3.75	1.22	-2.98	2.86	-1.03	04.17.2009
United Kingdom	trend	-0.02	0.03	0.01	0.00	0.05	0.00	0.03	09.02.2008
	change	-1.72	3.68	3.01	0.54	8.13	-0.04	2.85	01.16.2009
Total	trend	-0.05	-0.02	0.00	0.00	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00	
	change	-7.07	-2.21	0.78	0.17	-0.65	-0.52	-0.57	

Source: ESS 4 (weighted for design effects per country; pooled data weighted for design and population effects)

pooled data considerable cross-national differences can be observed. For instance, both Estonia and Switzerland show a sharp drop in economic satisfaction, but this development comes with a clear decrease in happiness in Estonia, whereas in Switzerland an even more remarkable increase in happiness is registered. Strong declines in satisfaction with government activities are found – for instance – in the Russian Federation and Slovakia, but economic satisfaction goes in different directions in these two countries. Since actual government activities and institutional performances clearly differ between the 21 countries considered, these distinctions in content and confidence do not come as a surprise.

12.4 At the Titanic?

By the end of 2008 the financial and economic crises increasingly dominated public opinion in Europe. Accordingly, dissatisfaction with the economic situation rose in almost every country in a very short period of time. This growing discontent, however, is mainly focused on the state of the economy – satisfaction with government activities or with life in general seem to be much less affected. In similar ways, the levels of happiness and political confidence are remarkably steady. Whereas the economic collapse worsened and many citizens showed decreasing satisfaction with the economic situation, personal well-being, happiness, and political confidence do not seem to be affected. In other words: although the iceberg is now within eyeshot of all passengers on the Titanic, the party continues calm and serene.

The deviating effects of the financial and economic crises on the orientations of citizens are evident. Apparently, the general level of economic satisfaction declines while other orientations remain stable. This divergence at the aggregate level could be due to the fact that different parts of the populations are concerned, with some people being increasingly discontent with the economic situation and other people feeling happier and more satisfied with their life as a whole. In order to explore this interpretation, additional analyses on the individual level are required. Broadly speaking, we can expect that with the darkening economic skies, firstly, a reduction of the level of satisfaction with the economic situation is likely, but no immediate consequences for other orientations can be observed. Secondly, the reduced levels of economic satisfaction – and not the economic recession – will affect the levels of personal satisfaction, happiness and confidence. As Thomassen (1983, 1989) showed, panel data are required to test such expectations properly. Since panel data are lacking, a multivariate regression model is used here as a surrogate instead.¹¹

Taking the six orientations considered so far – satisfaction with government and life, happiness, three types of political confidence – as the dependent variables in our models, the primary explanatory factor is the level of satisfaction with the economic situation. A possible ‘Titanic effect’ will be visible in log-odds ratios larger than one: in that case, people who are very dissatisfied with the economic situation will also have relatively high levels of well-being and confidence. Yet it might not be

the feeling of satisfaction with the economic situation, but the economic situation *as such* which explains the various levels of discontent, happiness and confidence.¹² People in developed and prosperous societies are probably more likely to be content with the activities of their government and their life than people in less fortunate circumstances. In general, political confidence will also be relatively high in these countries. As an indicator for this effect gross domestic product per capita in 2008 is used here.¹³ For the impact of the financial and economic crises on the orientations of citizens the extent of the rapidly spreading recession might be even more relevant than the level of socio-economic development of a country: the steeper the fall into the economic catastrophe, the more pessimistic and negative the feelings expressed by average citizens at the rock bottom of the crisis will be. As a second contextual indicator the drop in gross domestic product between 2008 and 2009 is included in the analyses.¹⁴ The block of contextual factors is completed by a measure of socio-economic equality (Gini-index).¹⁵ People living in societies with evident socio-economic inequalities will be more seriously threatened – and therefore more likely to feel more frightened and pessimistic – by a severe economic downturn than people in countries where measures are taken to protect the position of the most vulnerable parts of the population. Finally, a third block of variables is included to control composition effects between the various samples (age, gender, education) as well as two variables to control for trivial (positive) effects on well-being and satisfaction: the existence of children in the family and the household income.

The results of the regression analyses are summarized in Table 12.2. Only the first and the third rows consist of six significant and substantial coefficients indicating that economic satisfaction and the extent of the downturn are the most interesting factors. At the same time, the model fits differ for the four political variables on the one hand, and the two personal indicators on the other (with more than 90 percent correct classifications for the first group and only 65 to 68 percent for the latter). A relatively high level of satisfaction with the economy is accompanied by high scores on each of the six dependent variables, especially satisfaction with government activities and confidence in politicians. The suggestion that personal and economic satisfaction are unrelated has to be rejected, since we find relative low, but clearly larger than one log-odds ratios for satisfaction with life in general and especially for happiness. The impact of economic satisfaction on other orientations seems to be genuine – all effects for this factor remain positive and significant when other variables are entered in the models. A ‘Titanic effect’ cannot be based on these findings: people dissatisfied with the economy will also be discontent with their life and show relatively low levels of happiness – economic satisfaction, on the other hand, comes with personal satisfaction and happiness.

Pointing out the relevance of economic satisfaction for political orientations and feelings of personal satisfaction and happiness, however, is not the whole story. Of the contextual variables included in the models, both the coefficients for socio-economic development and for inequality are mostly statistically significant, but their impact can be neglected (all ratios close to 1.0). Much more interesting are the

Table 12.2 Determinants of satisfaction, happiness, and political confidence (binary logistic regression; log-odds ratios)

	Satisfaction		Happiness	Political confidence		
	Govm.	Life		Parl.	Parties	Polit.
Satisfaction with economy (0-10)	1.62***	1.29***	1.18***	1.33***	1.31***	1.40***
GDP/capita 2008 (US\$)	1.00***	1.00***	1.00***	1.00***	1.00*	1.00***
Change GDP/capita 2008-2009 (%)	.86***	1.07***	1.06***	.87***	.87***	.86***
Gini-index (0-100)	1.05***	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.03**	1.03***
Age (years)	1.01***	1.00***	1.00***	1.01***	1.00*	1.00*
Gender (1 = male)	1.01	.86***	.84***	1.23***	1.03	.92
Education (years)	.98*	1.01	1.01*	1.02***	.97***	.97***
Children in household (1 = yes)	.83***	.82***	.94*	.94	1.04	1.06
Household income (0-1)	1.03***	1.12***	1.13***	1.02*	.98*	.95***
Nagelkerke R ²	.22	.22	.17	.11	.06	.08
Correctly classified (%)	91	68	65	90	97	96
N	41,027					

Note: Significance levels: *** $p < .000$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Source: ESS 4 (Percentages of people scoring 8, 9 or 10; pooled data weighted for design and population effects)

results for the impact of the size of the economic downturn, which show noticeably different results for political and personal orientations. Whereas even a relatively modest economic dive lowers the chances for attaining high levels of satisfaction with government activities or political confidence, the reverse is true for personal satisfaction and happiness. For these last two variables the coefficients are larger than one, indicating that personal satisfaction and happiness are indeed higher in countries which have done relatively well. The remarkable finding here is the *diverging directions* of the impact of the economic crash: in countries with substantial economic cutbacks, governments are not stronger ‘punished’ than in countries who could limit the economic damage. In fact, people in countries that did relatively well appear to be less satisfied with government activities and have lower levels of political confidence! As mentioned, in these countries people will also be more satisfied with their life and be happier.

The results for the final block of individual control variables hardly contain surprises. The chances for reaching a high score on personal satisfaction and happiness are lower for men than for women, and clearly depend on household income. Furthermore, the existence of children in the household lowers satisfaction with life and feelings of happiness. For political orientations few substantial effects can be

noted. Apparently especially males have high levels of confidence in parliament and living in a household with children has a negative impact on the level of satisfaction with government activities. Since the effects of the control variables are modest and do not show a clear pattern no further considerations are required.

12.5 Conclusion

The worst economic crisis since the Great Depression affects the orientations of citizens in rather limited ways. With respect to the apocalyptic nature of the media coverage of the recession it does not come as a surprise that many citizens are not very content with the economic situation in their country. In fact, the analyses presented here show that people did become increasingly more dissatisfied during autumn/winter 2008/09. Yet neither the economic recession itself nor the growing dissatisfaction with the economic situation is accompanied by strong decreases in satisfaction with government activities or in political confidence. Changes in indicators for personal satisfaction and happiness, on the other hand, show a different picture. For these variables the relationships with economic satisfaction are much weaker than for political orientations. Furthermore, whereas the extent of the actual economic downturn is inversely related to political orientations, personal satisfaction and happiness increase in countries where the extent of the crisis is relatively small. A 'Titanic effect' as suggested by the macro-level analyses, is not corroborated.

Why did the collapse of the international financial markets and the dramatic extension of government intervention have such limited impacts on the political orientations of citizens and their personal feelings of well-being and happiness? Millions of people lost their jobs, houses and savings, and bank rescue programmes cost hundreds of millions of tax payers' money – but apart from the utterly trivial decline in economic satisfaction no personal feelings of satisfaction and happiness are affected. Three interpretations for these results seem to be plausible: compensation effects, a lack of saliency, and long-term processes.

The fact that people perceive a clear deterioration of the economic situation and reduce their level of economic satisfaction does not simply imply that pessimism and frustration are unavoidable. On the contrary: exactly because the economic developments are threatening, people will look for *compensations* and strengthen their feelings of personal well-being and satisfaction. As long as the recession is contained to rather abstract financial markets and public rescue plans there is no need for broadly spread pessimism. Why would you spoil your life when neither your personal savings, nor your own house or job is at risk? Compensations are also realized when the crisis opens unexpected opportunities (fired bankers being very happy with new careers as playwrights or comedians). These kinds of distinctions and reactions seem a promising starting point to explain the deviant directions political and personal orientations take in many countries. However, the findings

for the micro-level analyses presented here show much more coherence than compensation explanations allow for. In fact, economic satisfaction is positively correlated with both personal satisfaction and with happiness. Compensation effects, then, do not offer a very plausible or promising approach to explain the limited impact of the economic crisis.

A second line of reasoning challenges the basic premise that economic, political and personal orientations are related or underlie a common mechanism. Even a severe economic crisis will not have an impact on the orientations of citizens if these events are not very relevant or *salient* for their own life. No matter how black the economic skies are depicted by the media, if no consequences are expected for the personal situation of citizens, there is no reason to be more (or less) happy or to be more (or less) content with one's personal life. This lack of saliency of social and societal developments for individual orientations has been documented before (Van Deth 2000). An interpretation along these lines would imply that personal well-being and happiness are neither correlated with economic satisfaction nor with the extent of the economic crisis. The results presented here militate against these implications. As compensation effect, a lack of saliency does not seem to account for the limited impact of the economic crisis on the orientations of citizens in Europe.

A third interpretation focuses on the persistence of public opinions and the *long-term processes* needed to deal with changes. A dramatic economic collapse is unfolded within a short period of time whereas people attune their orientations only gradually. Therefore, the economic boom in 2005-2007 will continue to have a positive impact on individual orientations long after economists, politicians and journalists started to point out the recession in 2007 and 2008. The massive media attention for the crises and the strong emphasis on the unusual seriousness of the situation do not speak for this interpretation. Besides, people evidently reacted almost immediately to bad news: during the short period of fieldwork for the ESS at the rock bottom of the crisis, satisfaction with the economic situation dropped instantly in almost every country. Yet the problem remains why the crisis would affect economic satisfaction immediately, but fails to influence other personal or political orientations accordingly. A more sophisticated approach might resolve this difficulty by distinguishing between several phases or steps in the process of opinion change. Initially, an economic crisis results in a decrease in the level of satisfaction with the economic situation. After this reduction has become steady, the lower level of economic satisfaction will affect other aspects or areas. As mentioned, long-term panel data to explore such explanations properly do not exist.

Apparently, the impacts of the deepest financial and economic downturn since the 1930s on the orientations of citizens are much less pronounced than could be expected on the basis of the dramatic media coverage of the actual sharp drop into the recession. Public opinion at the rock bottom of the crisis is not characterized by negativity or evil mood. Thomassen (1989: 134) reported a similar lack of empirical support for popular – pessimistic – interpretations of the political consequences

of the economic crisis of the 1970s and compared social scientists with “generals who are always preparing themselves for the last war.” The public resistance to the apocalyptic messages in autumn 2008 might be seen as a simple sign that European citizens have their feet more firmly on the ground than many ‘generals’ prefer to think.

Acknowledgement

I am grateful to Mirjam Beyer, Sarah Odrakiewicz and Dominik Schraff for their assistance with the collection of information for this contribution.

Notes

- 1 See for a brief overview of the main aspects of the international crisis and its consequences for public budgets: World Bank (2009), *World Development Indicators 2009* (<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/DATASTATISTICS/0,,contentMDK:21725423~pagePK:64133150~piPK:64133175~theSitePK:239419,00.html> visited on 10 February 2010).
- 2 See <http://www.eurotopics.net/en/archiv> for access to media messages in various European countries during the crises (visited on 10 December 2009).
- 3 This also explains the lack of specific questions about the financial and economic crises in these surveys.
- 4 For information about the ESS, see: <http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/>. Data for the fourth wave can be obtained from: <http://ess.nsd.uib.no/ess/round4/>. The 21 countries included are: Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Israel, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and United Kingdom.
- 5 Since we are exploring the impact of the economic crisis the exact reasons for (dis)content – ‘pocket book’ vs. ‘socio-tropic’ arguments (cf. Kinder and Mebane 1983: 143) – are not relevant yet.
- 6 The share of people who are very satisfied or very happy is a straightforward indicator of the degree of well-being among the population. However, all results presented here can also be based on the use of average scores.
- 7 The questionnaire also refers to ‘the legal system’, ‘the police’, ‘the European Parliament’ and ‘the United Nations.’ Confidence in these institutions is not considered here because the financial and economic crises do not seem to be relevant for these institutions from the short-term perspective used here.
- 8 See for a brief overview of the media covering of the crisis in Germany: Van Deth (2009). The importance of media coverage of economic themes for political orientations has been empirically corroborated long ago (cf. Kinder and Mebane 1983: 168).
- 9 A simple ‘rolling cross-section design’ (Johnston and Brady 2002) would have eliminated these complications, but is not included in the ESS.

- 10 Very similar results have been reported for The Netherlands (see Dekker, Van der Meer, Schyns and Steenvoorden 2009; Dekker, Van der Meer and De Goede 2009).
- 11 Hierarchical multi-level models are not used here because the main aim is to explore and describe possible cross-national differences. Furthermore, the number of countries is low. Applying multi-level models here has led to a virtually endless number of unstable and unreliable estimates. For that reason no results of these computations are presented (for overviews of the limitations of multi-level models, see Gorard 2007 or Dedrick et al. 2009).
- 12 See for a brief overview of the arguments behind the explanatory factors selected here: Lawrence (1997). Alternative interpretations are summarized by Anderson (1995) and by Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier (2007). For happiness and well-being see Layard (2005: 55-75), Lane (2000: 13-58) or Halpern (2010: 6-55).
- 13 Gross domestic product based on purchasing-power-parity (PPP) per capita GDP 2008. Source: International Monetary Fund, *World Economic Outlook Database*, October 2009 (www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2009/02/weodata/ visited on 12 February 2010).
- 14 Change in GDP based on PPP per capita 2008-2009 as a percentage of the value in 2008 (own computations based on: International Monetary Fund, *World Economic Outlook Database*, October 2009 (www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2009/02/weodata/ visited on 12 February 2010). For 2009 only estimates are available.
- 15 Source: *CIA World Factbook 2008* (http://www.photius.com/rankings/economy/distribution_of_family_income_gini_index_2008_1.html visited on 12 February 2010).

13 The Changing Macro Context of Norwegian Voters

From Center-Periphery Cleavages to Oil Wealth

Ola Listhaug and Hanne Marthe Narud

13.1 Introduction

Electoral politics in Norway has changed. In the heyday of the Rokkan-Valen model of electoral behavior Norway was pictured as a country of cleavage-based politics and strong parties building on these cleavages (e.g. Rokkan and Valen 1964). In contrast to Sweden, which was dominated by class politics and left-right conflicts, cleavages in Norway were more varied and included class, religion, language, attitudes toward alcohol, and geography. In the latter category Stein Rokkan and Henry Valen (Rokkan 1970; Valen 1981) included both the main regions of Norway and center-periphery, often conceptualized as geographical distance to the capital and the dominant urban areas around Oslo. Center-periphery took on an additional significance in the two EU referendums of 1972 and 1994 as Norway became the only country to reject EU membership in a referendum – and did this twice. A broad interpretation is that Norway was not quite ready for Europe. The country is in the periphery of the continent, adding to and magnifying the effects of center-periphery conflicts within the country (Jenssen et al. 1998). Moreover, one can also argue that the country historically is closer to Atlantic powers – Britain (also populated by EU skeptics) and the United States – than to the main countries on the continent.

It is possible to see the two referendums – and more the first than the second – as a revival of the traditional cleavage dynamics in Norwegian politics, bolstering the view that Norway is a peculiar case in Europe (Østerud 2005) which in this respect

can be compared only to Switzerland (Sciarini and Listhaug 1997). However, with the partial exception of the EU referendums, the consensus of empirical scholarship points to a decline of the importance of center-periphery structures and traditional cleavages. Class structure is transformed and has lost much of its political potency (Ringdal and Hines 1995; Listhaug 1997) as workers, farmers, and fishermen have declined in numbers. Likewise, urbanization and population movements from north to south have denuded the periphery of political power. And the cultural cleavages are almost obsolete: Religion is declining as is Lutheran fundamentalism associated with the Christian People's party. Language is no longer an important political conflict and the minority form of Norwegian language - 'nynorsk' - is on the losing end. Much the same, and even more strongly, can be said of the temperance movement.

In sum, the macro context of Norwegian voters has changed in line with the decline of the center-periphery cleavages, and as a consequence, it is certainly possible to argue that Norway has lost some of its uniqueness. However, Norway remains a distinct case in the economic and political landscape of Europe, but along quite different dimensions than before. It is now a country of oil wealth, and one of the richest in the world. The purpose of this chapter is to describe some of the oil wealth effects on the relationship between citizens and government. Which impact, if any, has the economic development had on voters' evaluation and support of incumbent parties? Our emphasis is on the three most recent elections in Norway, the elections of 2001, 2005, and 2009. We will show that these elections display very different patterns with regard to the impact of the oil wealth in the new millennium.

13.2 The curse of the oil purse

In her book with the telling title *The Paradox of Plenty*, Terry Lynn Karl (1997) analyzes how some major petro states have mismanaged their oil fortunes. It is not only poor countries that can mismanage income from oil, as we learn from the expression 'Dutch disease', which is used to describe the effects of how The Netherlands spent their income from natural gas in the 1960s and 1970s, leading to an unsustainable growth of the public sector and a decline in manufacturing industries (Larsen 2004). The negative effect of oil economies is also captured by the idea of a 'resource curse' which has an economic aspect (Larsen 2004) as well as relationship to conflict, where countries with an abundance of natural resources like oil might suffer from conflicts over the distribution of income from these resources, leading in extreme cases to civil war (Torvik 2002; Ross 2004; Smith 2004).

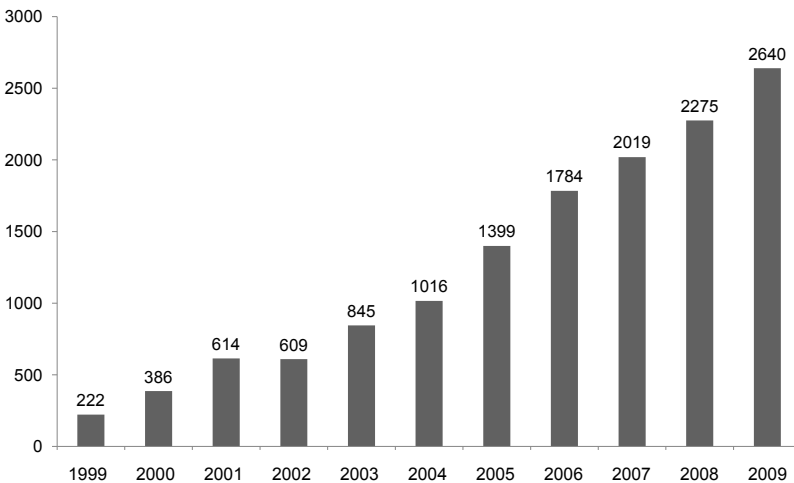
Karl (1997) describes Norway's management of its oil fortunes as a success. The country is more developed than most petro states and the country is not dependent on this resource alone. More important, Norway has developed strong state institutions to handle the financial risks of oil. A key institution is the oil fund or, using

the official name, the Government Pension Fund, which invests the income from oil abroad, and sets a rule for spending per year – 4 percent.

The oil fund and the procedures for spending from the fund have reigned in much of the dysfunctionalities of a large oil income and have stabilized the economy. The establishment of the oil fund has also led many outside experts to say, ‘look to Norway’ if you want to know how to manage a large natural resources sector. But all problems have not been solved. As we write this chapter the government is attempting to reduce excess spending from the fight against the financial crisis in 2008–2009. An important part of the efforts is getting the spending rate from the oil fund back to the annual 4 percent level. However, not all problems of having so much wealth have disappeared (see Figure 13.1 for the growth of the oil fund from 1999 to 2008; and Table 13.1 for a forecast for the size of the fund for the period 2001–2015). By any standard the fund is very large. Figure 13.1 shows the strong and continuous growth of the fund, and in Table 13.1 the forecast goes four years into the future. The prediction is that in 2015 the fund will contain about 1 million NOK per capita (the population of Norway is about 4.8 million). It is not only the size of the fund that is impressive, it is also the fact that the fund has grown from nothing to the current size in about 10 years. It would be surprising if this wealth did not have a political impact.

Most of the oil money is kept out of the domestic economy but not out of the minds of voters. Public opinion data from the 1997–2005 period show that citizens want to spend more of the money than the actual government policies allow for

Figure 13.1 Market value of Government Pension Fund (NOK billions)



Source: Annual reports retrieved from www.norges-bank.no, March 12, 2010

Table 13.1 Forecast for the size of the Government Pension Fund (NOK billions)

	Billion NOK
1 January 2001	386.6
1 January 2002	619.3
1 January 2003	604.6
1 January 2004	847.1
1 January 2005	1 011.5
1 January 2006	1 390.1
1 January 2007	1 782.8
1 January 2008	2 018.5
1 January 2009	2 300.0
1 January 2010	2 793.6
1 January 2011	3 215.3
1 January 2012	3 609.9
1 January 2013	4 013.1
1 January 2014	4 391.6
1 January 2015	4 769.1

Source: www.norges-bank.no, March 12, 2010

(Listhaug 2005a: 847–848; Narud and Valen 2007: 277), and this is also the case in general, although the mass support for spending varies somewhat over time.

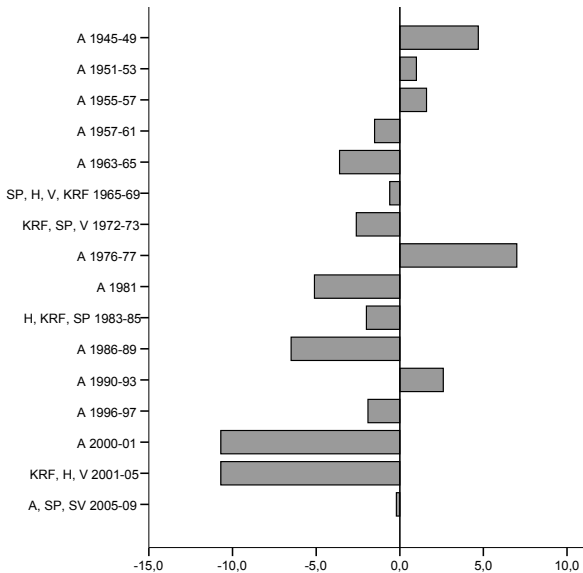
The effect of oil wealth managed in the oil fund is that it creates expectations that cannot be met. For political trust Listhaug (2005a: 839) writes: “The most important effect is that it (the oil fund) created a contrast frustration gap. Political parties, especially the Progress Party and the Socialist Left Party,¹ as well as important interest organisations and advocacy groups, immediately started to observe the contrast between important tasks and problems that cannot be solved within the constraints of current state budgets, and the pile of money that steadily grows under the label of the oil fund. But this pile of money cannot be accessed easily: it is likely that frustrations caused by seeing the cake and not be able to eat it, if shared by many citizens, may undermine political trust.” Indeed, studies by Aardal (2003, 2007), Listhaug (2005a) and Danielsen (2009) show that voters who want to spend more of the oil fund money are more distrusting than voters who want to keep spending at the current level or spend less. Moreover, on the basis of the *European Social Survey* (ESS) data Listhaug (2005a) finds that political trust in Norway is high when compared with other countries, but that the comparative trust advantage of the country has declined in the most recent period in which the impact of the oil economy has grown. Extending the comparative data analysis of Listhaug (2005a) to the years 2004 through 2008, Danielsen (2009) finds that comparative trust improved for these years, but that Norway was not able to move to the top in trust ratings, a position that the country had held in many studies from the 1980s.

13.3 Empirical analysis

Political behavior effects of oil wealth are most likely not limited to trust. Increasing expectations and ensuing frustrations are also likely to have an impact on voting behavior. Consequently, negative incumbency effects are clearly on the rise in Norway (Midtbø 1999; Narud and Valen 2007). Figure 13.2 confirms this observation and presents the total gains or losses for the government parties in all the elections of the post-war period.

The Norwegian results are by no means unique, but are in line with evidence from all West European countries in the post war period. In their analyses of 17 European countries between 1945 and 1999, Narud and Valen (2008) demonstrated that in all countries there has been an adverse incumbency effect, and that the

Figure 13.2 The electoral performance of parties in office at the time of the election (in percent of national vote), 1945-2009



Note: The total average gain/loss equals minus 1,8 percent

average incumbency losses have increased over a period of 50 years. While some variations are evident in the Norwegian case, the overall trend of negative incumbency effects are most severely pronounced in the elections of 2001 and 2005 with the governments (from different party blocks) losing 12 percent on both occasions. Indeed, the results of these elections run contrary to any intuitive understanding of the economy and the vote – given the enormous economic growth in the period at

hand. By contrast, we can detect virtually no incumbency effect (positive or negative) in the 2009 election, which may seem odd, given the fact that this election took place in the shadow of the financial crisis. In fact, the 2009 centrist-left government was the first one to survive an election in 16 years. Even though other factors as well are likely to have contributed to the electoral fate of the incumbent parties, we will argue that the contrasting patterns of the three elections are clearly related to the size of the oil fund, but in very different ways. In 2001 and 2005 in the form of a ‘curse’ – in the sense that frustration effects of oil wealth had grown over time (in line with the size of the fund), causing voters to expect more than the governments were able to deliver. Then in 2009 in the way of a ‘blessing’ – in the sense that the economic resources available from the oil fund enabled the government to run a series of economic programs to counteract the negative effects of the financial crisis. In the latter election, and in contrast to the first two, it could also be the case that the ‘economic shock’ from the global financial crisis had a moderating effect on voters’ expectations vis-à-vis the government.

13.4 The 2001 and 2005 elections: Grievance-asymmetry and the ‘curse’ of the oil

A widely recognized notion from the literature on economic voting is that voters reward the government when economic conditions are good, whereas they punish the government in times of economic recession. This more or less universal ‘truth’ has been subject to an extensive amount of empirical research, in which students have attempted to define which types of conditions are most relevant for the economic vote. Much of this research indicates that there is a relationship between the economy and the vote, but the direction and the strength of this relationship is complex and less intuitive than the simple notion of economic voting would predict (see e.g. Lewis-Beck and Paldam 2000; Van der Brug et al. 2007; Dutch and Stevenson 2008). For instance, there is some very strong evidence for economic voting in the US, whereas the empirical evidence for other parts of the developed world is much weaker. Furthermore, comparative research points to some very clear negative effects of economic recession, whereas there is little indication of any positive effects of economic improvement (Narud and Valen 2008: 384). This kind of ‘grievance-asymmetry’ indicates that there is a negative bias in the electorate, making the voters more alert to economic troubles than to good news (see e.g. Nannestad and Paldam 1997; Dorussen and Palmer 2002: 10). Moreover, the electoral fortunes of incumbent parties are not conditioned by economic factors alone. Systematic research across countries reveals that electoral performance varies according to system-specific variables such as type of government, critical events and changes in the political environment of political parties (Anderson 2000; Bengtsson 2004; Narud and Valen 2008). A relevant question is therefore how political events and institutional factors can account for variations in economic voting. A key variable

in this respect has been clarity of responsibility. Voters are more likely to vote economically if the political institutions clarify who is responsible for what, and if there is a viable alternative to the incumbent government (Powell and Whitten 1993). Listhaug (2005b) claims that the weak and irregular effects of economic voting found for Norway may be explained by the dominance of minority governments, a weak opposition and political events that overshadowed economic concerns in the elections studied.

For the purpose of this chapter, we have already noted that the revenues from the oil fund can have opposite effects than those predicted by the conventional view on economic voting. And even though the overall impact of economic factors has been modest compared to other factors in the election, Norwegian voters seem to be well aware of the changes that have taken place in the economy. Hence, Narud and Valen (2007: 270) found that voters' retrospective evaluations of the national economy between 1985 and 2005 went hand-in-hand with the actual development of the macro economy. Moreover, the rapidly improving economy which formed the bases of the elections of 2001 and 2005 was clearly reflected in the eyes of the voters, as Figure 13.3 confirms.² In addition to the retrospective evaluations reported here, the voters' prospective perceptions of the economy as well as that of unemployment were positive (Narud and Valen 2007; Narud and Aardal 2007).

However, none of the incumbent governments at the time, Labour in 2001 and the center-right coalition in 2005, were able to cash in any benefits from the posi-

Figure 13.3 Voters' retrospective perceptions of personal and national economy, 1985-2005



Note: The figure plots the percentages stating that the personal/national economy has become "much better" or "somewhat better."

tive developments. Instead, as Figure 13.2 clearly demonstrated, the incumbent parties suffered record losses. These observations are interesting in light of the 'grievance-asymmetry' hypothesis and the alleged 'curse of the oil purse.' We have argued that a positive economic development over a longer period of time creates expectations among the voters that are almost impossible to meet. It could be that the policy performance of the governments were falling short of voters' expectations, simply because they demanded that governments 'deliver' more than they already did in terms of welfare, education, and other types of benefits.

Indeed, analyses of the 2001 and 2005 elections indicate a clear trend in this direction, even though the political context of the two elections varied (Narud and Aardal 2007; Narud and Valen 2007). In 2001 Labour faced the electorate as a single-party minority government after only a year and a half in office. In the spring session of 2000 the party had joined the rightist parties in toppling the centrist 'mini-coalition' headed by Kjell Magne Bondevik, quite a popular government according to the opinion polls (Aalberg 2001: 377). In 2001 the Labour government had no real challengers, however, as the opposition parties failed to form a viable alternative to Labour. By contrast, the center-right minority coalition of 2005, which had been in office for the entire four-year period, was challenged by the co-called red-green alliance, consisting of Labour, the Center Party and the Socialist Left, which for the first time in history formed a joint majority alternative left-of center. This fact made the question of governing alternatives a dominant issue in the election campaign. In addition, the election agendas of the 2001 and 2005 campaigns were quite different. In 2001 two issues dominated the agenda: taxes and schools. The 2005 campaign had a wider spectrum of issues in which a number of welfare questions were at the forefront (Aardal 2003, 2007). What the two governments had in common, however, was a context of favorable developments in the macro-economy; a low level of inflation and unemployment, a considerable growth in GNP, and last, but not least, a swelling oil purse.

Yet, economy, at least in terms of the traditional macro economic indicators, played a modest role for voters' party choice in both elections. If we take a closer look at the 2001 election, the economic indicators explained only 2 percent of the support for the incumbent party (Narud and Valen 2007: 301). Voters' perceptions of their own economic situation in the future was the only indicator with a significant effect, whereas their perceptions of the national economy, which in many comparative studies have come out as the most relevant variable, had no significance. However, when taking into the equation voters' views on the use of oil money, the explained variance of the model was boosted. Evidence showed that voters who supported a policy of increased spending of the oil revenues were much more inclined to vote against the government than those with a more restrictive view on public spending. In addition, many voters indicated that the parties to the right, the Conservatives and the Progress Party, had a better policy with regard to the oil fund than the incumbent government did. The single most important factor for voters' choice, however, was the government's performance on welfare issues, which was evaluated negatively by many voters. The overall analyses of the 2001 election showed that Labour had lost its traditional ownership of

welfare issues (Aardal 2003). Indeed, the discrepancy between voters positive perceptions of the economy and their negative evaluation of the government's performance must have hurt the government considerably (Narud and Valen 2007: 288-301).

The 2005 election had many parallel features to that of 2001, although the incumbent government was a government of a different ideological 'flavor.' Accidentally, the electoral losses were exactly the same as for Labour in 2001. However, in coalition governments the incumbent parties rarely suffer the same fate. In fact, they often jostle each other for votes, and this was also the case here. The Christian People's Party and the Conservatives suffered enormous losses, and reached their lowest share of the votes ever. The third coalition partner, the Liberals, gained votes – benefiting substantially from the losses of the coalition partners (Aardal 2007). The great victors this time were Labour, which took back many of its lost votes from four years back, and the Progress Party, which reached an all time high in the history of the party. As was the case in 2001, the economic indicators played only a modest role for voters' support of the incumbent parties in 2005. Table 13.2 presents a block-wise regression of various clusters of explanatory variables identified by Narud and Aardal (2007:

Table 13.2 The impact of five sets of explanatory variables for the support of the incumbent parties in 2005 (voted for The Christians, Liberals or Conservatives). Block-wise linear regression. Standardized coefficients (beta)

	Block 1	Block 2	Block 3	Block 4	Block 5
	Background	Economy	Political issues	Oil money	Ideology
Education (high)	.13**	.12**	.13**	.09**	.10**
Gender (women)	-.04	.00	.01	.01	.04
Income (high)	.16**	.14**	.13**	.11*	.07**
Age (high)	.04	.03	.04	.04	.12**
Occupation (low status)	-.09**	-.08**	-.07**	-.07**	-.03
Own economy better, retrospective		.02	.00	.00	-.02
Own economy better, prospective		-.01	-.01	-.01	-.01
Country's economy better, retrospective		.17**	.16**	.16**	.11**
Fear of unemployment		-.04	-.04	-.04	.01
Government's tax policy good			.14**	.14**	.06*
Government's tax policy bad			-.09**	-.08**	-.03
Spend more of the oil money				-.17**	-.18**
Public-private					.40**
R ² (adjusted)	.07	.10	.13	.15	.29

* sig. on .05 level, ** sig. on .01 level

Source: Narud and Aardal, 2007:195

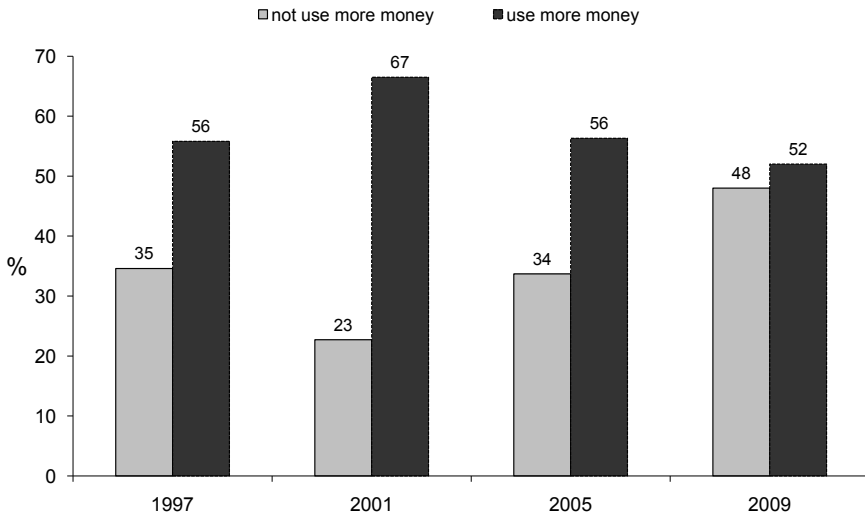
195) in their analysis of the election. The dependent variable is the aggregate electoral performance of all cabinet parties.

Of particular interest for us are the blocks showing the effects of the economic variables, even though it should be noted that three of the background variables (education, income, and age) retained significant effects after control for all other factors. In other words, social and demographic background are by no means irrelevant for voters' choice, even though the various models of issue voting are the predominant explanatory tools these days. The table shows that voters' evaluation of the national economy had a significant impact on the level of support for the government parties. The effect was quite strong and went in a positive direction, suggesting, rather unsurprisingly, that the support for the government parties increased with positive evaluations of the country's economy. However, block 2 only increased the explained variance modestly. The same is true for voters' evaluation of the government tax policy, which was one of the most important issues in the 2001 campaign – much to the benefit of the Conservatives at the time. Voters' views on how to spend the revenues from the oil fund had a strong and negative effect on the incumbent parties' support, suggesting that the government's restricted oil policy did not go over well with voters who held a more expansive view on this question. Indeed, this result corresponds to the 2001 election with relevance to the Labour government. The overall importance of the oil question was not extensive however, as the explained variance by introducing block 4 increased by only two percent. What really mattered the most for voters' support (or failing support) for the government was their ideological leaning, that is, their orientation along the public-private policy dimension. The substantive interpretation of this observation is that support for the incumbent government increased with a favorable view on privatization. Interestingly, voters' view on the government's tax policy turned out to be insignificant after the inclusion of block 5, whereas the effect of the national economy and oil money held up in the final model specification.

So far we have discussed the relationship with government and the opposition as though the opposition parties were one entity. This is of course too simple given the prominent position of the Progress Party, particularly with relevance to the question of oil revenues. We have already mentioned the restrictive attitudes of Norwegian governments concerning the use of these revenues, and how all governments have advocated the rule that they would not use more than four percent of the return of the fund to finance the state budget. This self-imposed rule has been controversial, however, and certainly not in line with the views of the majority of the voters, as is clear from Figure 13.4.³

In all elections, save the most recent one in 2009, voters who want to spend more of the oil income have greatly outnumbered those with a more restrictive view on this matter. The polarization between the two groups increased from 1997 to 2001, as the number of voters in the latter group decreased considerably. Voters who wanted to spend more of the income, on the other hand, increased in numbers. One reason for this development was surely the debate prior to the 2001

Figure 13.4 Voters' attitudes towards the governments' spending of oil revenues, 1997-2009



Note: The results for 1997, 2001, and 2005 are built upon the national election surveys (post-election), whereas the results for 2009 are based upon a pre-election survey from June 2009.

election in which the opposition parties recommended a more liberal spending of the oil incomes. The strongest and most insistent advocate for this view was then (and still is) the Progress Party, which time and again has pointed to the marked discrepancy between private affluence and public poverty. Consequently, the party has demanded that the large surplus from oil revenues should be used to help solve domestic problems.

The fact that the number of voters in favor of spending more of the oil revenues decreased somewhat in 2005 is most likely a reflection of the change of government in 2001, with the former opposition parties now in office adapting to the more 'responsible' four percent rule. With even the Socialist Left Party (not traditionally known for its fiscal conservatism) included in government, it could be argued that since 2005 the Progress Party has stood alone as the only 'true' opposition party in Norwegian politics. A closer look at the groups of voters of individual parties reveals that the Progress Party voters stand out as the most ardent defenders of the increased use of the oil revenues (Aardal 2003; Narud and Aardal 2007). In 2005 even the majority of the Socialist Left voters took a more moderate stand on the spending issue, whereas an overwhelming majority of the Progress Party voters (83 percent) took the opposite position (Narud and Aardal 2007: 188).

How much is there to gain from being an advocate for increased spending of the oil money? Table 13.2 demonstrated that voters' attitudes towards the use of

the oil income did not by itself explain very much of voters' support of the government. However, what if we turn the question and ask: how important has this issue been for the support of the opposition parties, most notably for the Progress Party? When running the same regression model as presented in Table 13.2, but this time with voting for the Progress Party as the dependent variable, Narud and Aardal (2007: 197) leave no doubt about the importance of the oil issue for the party's recent success. The explained variance was more than doubled when attitudes towards the oil revenues were included in the model. In other words, what the Progress Party wins from its views on the oil issue is a potential loss for the incumbent parties advocating a stricter policy.

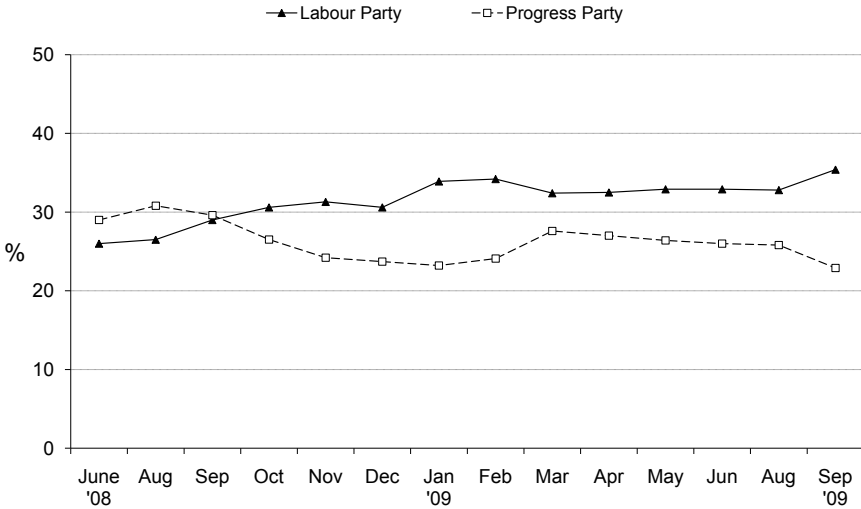
In sum, voters' attitudes towards public spending in general, and the oil fund more specifically, has been a constraint on Norwegian governments in recent years. The contrast between the pile of money generated from the oil industry and the unsolved problems in the welfare sector has surely contributed to the negative incumbency effects. Even with the spending levels of the past years, long waiting lists have been reported at hospitals, public care for the elderly has been filled to capacity, and school buildings have been described as falling apart. These types of concerns have fueled discontent. As was the case with Labour in 2001, voters in the 2005 election gave the incumbent government poor credits for its performance in welfare policies (health-care, care for the elderly etc.).

If we turn to the election of 2009, we face a quite different situation. Not only were the red-green parties able to hold on to government power, Figure 13.4 shows that the number of voters with a *restrictive* view on using more of the oil fund increased substantially from 2005 to 2009. Indeed, the two groups holding opposite views are of almost the same size in 2009. A closer look at individual parties reveals that the Progress Party voters are amazingly stable in their views. A great majority is still in favor of spending more oil money, whereas all other party voter groups have taken a more moderate stand. Hence, the discrepancy between the attitudes of the political leaders and their voters are less obvious in 2009 than it has been in previous elections. Nevertheless, the Progress Party is still the main recipient of frustrated voters wanting to show their discontent with the established parties.

13.5 2009: The 'blessing' of the economic shock

One explanation for these changes is most likely related to the effect of the financial crisis, and the necessity of the government to actually use more of the oil fund.⁴ Because of the global problems in the economy, the run-up of the 2009 election was therefore quite different from the other two elections (2001 and 2005). Around the world stock markets had fallen, large financial institutions had collapsed, and governments had to come up with rescue packages to counteract the effects of the financial 'tsunami.' Regarding the Norwegian government, the crisis started to show its effects in the second half of 2008, as the support for the government

Figure 13.5 The popular support of Labour and Progress Party, June 2008-September 2009 (average percent of all polls)



increased markedly from September and onwards. The effect, however, was restricted to the Labour Party alone and did not influence the support for the other two coalition parties, the Socialist Left and the Center Party. At the same time the largest opposition party, the Progress Party, experienced a downturn in popular support, as demonstrated by Figure 13.5.

The surge for Labour was in line with similar trends for incumbent government parties in other European countries at the time. As the arrows for the banks and the stock markets pointed downwards, they pointed upwards for Gordon Brown in the UK, for Merkel in Germany, Sarkozy in France and Berlusconi in Italy. In other words, the economic crisis seemed to favor the parties in office. Some commentators related these trends to the phenomenon of ‘risk aversion’, and people’s general preference for certainty over uncertainty in times of emergency (see e.g. Colomer (2008) for this line of argument). When subject to serious shocks people seek refuge in the arms of the sitting government under the maxim: “you know what you’ve got, but not what you’ll get.”

In the Norwegian context some commentators attempted to attribute the negative trends for the Progress Party to its neo-liberalist ideology. The neo-liberalists ideas of extreme capitalism had triggered the financial crisis, and this now came back like a boomerang hurting the popular support of the prime spokesman of this ideology, the Progress Party. However, the opinion polls did not show the same tendency for the other advocate of neo-liberalist ideas, the Conservative Party, which actually gained support in the autumn of 2008. Moreover, Figure 13.5 shows that the

Progress Party regained some of its popular support in the spring of 2009, only to see its popular support decline again as the general election came closer. The party nevertheless achieved its best election in its entire history and ended up with 23 percent of the votes in the September election. However, due to splits among the parties of the center-right, the red-green alliance was not challenged by a viable government alternative.

The lack of a credible alternative, as well as the government's handling of the financial crisis with an expansive government budget, are among the likely causes of the incumbent government's victory. The result must be credited to the Labour Party since the support for the other two parties declined in the election (only slightly for the Center Party). The positive surge for Labour, however, started long before the election campaign (cf. Figure 13.5). The party was able to hold on to its new voters as it entered the election campaign in August 2009. During the campaign Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg expressed the government's willingness to increase public spending in order to avoid a worsening recession. This included breaching the aforementioned 4 percent rule of money from the oil fund. Indeed, this limit was already severely broken through various sets of stimulus packages before the election. The observed changes in voters' attitudes towards the use of oil money between 2005 and 2009 (Figure 13.4) are probably partly a reflection of the economic measures already implemented by the government. An interesting question is therefore how voters' looked upon the various government initiatives. Were they satisfied with the government's handling of the financial crisis?

As we write this chapter the national election surveys are not yet available, and we can only offer a tentative answer to the question. However, we can lean on the aforementioned pre-election survey from June 2009 in which the respondents were asked a question about the government's handling of the crisis. The results are presented in Table 13.3.

It is evident from Table 13.3 that a great majority of the voters were satisfied with the way the government had handled the financial crisis. 70 percent of the

Table 13.3 Voters' perceptions of how well the government has handled the financial crisis. Pre-election study of June 2009. Per cent (N = 916)

	Soc.Left	Labour	Centre	Christians	Liberals	Cons.	Progress	Total
Well	89	86	93	62	65	61	41	70
In between	8	6	-	20	16	15	18	12
Badly	4	7	7	18	19	24	41	18

Note: The wording of the question is the following: *We now have a question about the financial crisis that has struck Norway the last year. How do you think that the red-green government has handled this crisis? Do you think it has handled the crisis well, fairly well, fairly badly, or very badly?* In the table we have merged the two values very well and fairly well into "well," and very and fairly badly into "badly." The respondents who answered "don't know" have been removed from the analysis.

respondents indicated this view, whereas only 18 percent were critical towards the government's actions. Of course, the happiest voters were the supporters of the governing parties - Labour, the Center Party, and the Socialist Left. However, a majority of the Conservative and the centrist parties' voters (Liberals and Christian People's Party) looked favorably upon the government's performance on this issue as well, even though close to one quarter of them were critical or took a stand in between. The Progress Party voters expressed the most negative opinions on how the government had dealt with the crisis. However, these voters are divided in two equally sized groups; 41 percent thought that the government had done a bad job, whereas the other 41 percent believed that the red-green parties had done a good job. The rest are placed in between these two options.

No doubt, the financial means available to the Norwegian government through the oil fund must have been a tremendous asset for the incumbent government in the 2009 election. It gave the government the opportunity to show 'muscles' in a situation where the economic recession created insecurity among many voters. In so doing, they were able to meet a long-standing demand among many voters to use more of the oil money to solve domestic problems. It seems like a paradox therefore that economic issues did not have a more prominent place on the voters' agenda in 2009, at least according to the exit polls (Narud 2009; Jenssen 2010). Neither did they stand out in the media agenda (Allern 2010). Economic issues did, however, dominate a great part of the public debate in the year leading up to the election, and they certainly formed an important underlying premise in the competition between the political parties. In addition, Jenssen (2010: 14) shows that Labour was rated very highly by those voters who mentioned economy and labor-market policy as the most important issues in the election. The 'issue ownership' of Labour was not shared by the junior partners of the coalition, the Center Party and the Socialist Left (in spite of the latter holding the Minister of Finance portfolio), and could help explain why Labour was the only incumbent party which seemed to benefit electorally from the crisis. Even though we have no means at this point by which we can test this assumption empirically, we should also be open to the possibility that the economic recession had a moderating effect on voters' expectations towards the government. These were exceptional circumstances, however, and the question is what will happen when the government returns to a normal spending of oil money.

13.6 Conclusion

We started this chapter by noting that electoral politics in Norway has changed. The center-periphery cleavages have weakened and the peculiar characteristics that Stein Rokkan and Henry Valen emphasized in their models are not dominant today. Although Norway is still a unique case in Europe, it is now for other reasons. It has become a country of oil wealth. History has shown that wealth from oil is not necessary a blessing and many countries have squandered their petro incomes.

Norway has attempted to regulate and control the income from oil by creating a fund which invests the income abroad and sets limits to how much of the fund can be used in the national economy.

By investing the income in foreign countries and saving it for the pensions of future generations, most of the wealth from oil is kept out of the country but not out of the minds of voters. The strong growth of the fund creates frustrations as voters, and some of the parties (most notably the populist Progress Party), as well as interest groups point to problems and issues that are not solved despite the accumulation of money. The parliamentary elections in 2001 and 2005 saw record losses for the incumbent parties despite the fact that economic conditions were favorable at both elections. It is likely that the growing oil fortune created expectations that government policies could not meet. The ensuing voter frustrations may have contributed to incumbency losses.

In the 2009 election the pattern was reversed. The financial crises now dictated an increase in spending by government and the oil wealth came in handily for this purpose. Survey data show that voters gave good marks to how the government handled the crisis. The three parties in power received almost the same support (in sum) as in 2005 and were able to stay in power. In this case the oil fortune may have been a blessing. Now it remains to be seen if the government is able to reign in the overspending to get back to the 4 percent rule. The political consequences of tighter use of money may well increase incumbency losses at the next election.

Acknowledgement

We would like to thank Peter Aimer for valuable suggestions.

Notes

- 1 These are the two populist wing parties on the left-right scale in Norwegian politics. At present, following parliamentary elections in September 2009, there are seven parties represented in parliament. Two are left-of-center parties (the Socialist Left and Labour), three are centrist parties (the Center Party, the Christian People's Party, and the Liberals), and two are right-of-center parties (the Conservatives and the Progress Party).
- 2 Identical wording has been used in all surveys. *Personal economy*: "We are interested in how people have it economically nowadays. Would you say that you and your household have a better or worse economy than a year ago? Is it much better or a bit better? Is it much worse or a bit worse? National economy: Would you say that the economic situation in the country has become better in the last 12 months, almost as before or worse? Would you say much better or a bit better? Would you say much worse or a bit worse?"
- 3 The wording of the question (which has been the same in all four surveys) is as follows: "Let's think about two people, A and B discussing a present question. We provide you

with two assertions they came up with. A says: To avoid an increase in interest, and higher prices, we should not use more of the oil income than we do at present. B says: To solve current problems in society we may use considerably more of the oil income than we do at present. Which one of these persons would you agree more with?" In the figure we have excluded the number of voters holding a middle view (i.e. agree both with A and B, which was about 10 percent in all the surveys) and voters who responded 'don't know.'

- 4 It is important to note that the results for 2009 are based on data that are collected *before* the election, whereas the results for the other three elections are based on post election interviews, in other words after the voters have been subject to the election campaign. Parts of the differences may therefore stem from methodological artifacts. However, we do believe that the data report real changes in the electorate due to the effects of the financial crisis and the subsequent willingness of the government to spend more of the money from the oil fund.

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Appendix: Publications by Jacques Thomassen

A.1 Books

- Thomassen, J.J.A. (1976). *Kiezers en gekozenen in een representatieve democratie*. Alphen aan den Rijn: Samsom.
- Thomassen, J.J.A. (Ed.) (1981). *Democratie. Theorie en praktijk*. Alphen aan den Rijn: Samsom.
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In *How Democracy Works: Political Representation and Policy Congruence in Modern Societies* a group of leading scholars analyzes the functioning of contemporary democracies by focusing on two basic principles: political representation and policy congruence. Drawing on recent survey data from a variety of national and international research projects, they demonstrate how political representation works and mostly leads to a fair degree of policy congruence between citizens and their representatives. They also present new insights on the sources of satisfaction with democracy and the impact of the economy on elections and political trust.

This book is published on the occasion of the retirement of Jacques Thomassen as distinguished professor of political science at the University of Twente. The contributors include Russell Dalton, Hans-Dieter Klingemann, Pippa Norris, Ola Listhaug, Hanne Marthe Narud, Jan van Deth, Peter Mair, Cees van der Eijk, Hermann Schmitt, Sören Holmberg and Rudy Andeweg.

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978 90 8555 036 5

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