

Democratic legitimacy: Is there a legitimacy crisis in contemporary politics?

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Abstract: Against the background of a renewed debate about democratic legitimacy, this essay discusses its conceptualization, its development over time and space, as well as its driving forces. The conceptual discussion leads to a typology of four distinct bases of democratic legitimacy. Tracing their empirical scope and depth shows that democratic values are developing world-wide – even in non-democracies, but that they are often shallow and badly understood. For established democracies, the empirical trends are not so much indicative of a continuous erosion of democratic legitimacy, but more compatible with equilibrium models that allow for performance-driven short- or medium term fluctuations of democratic legitimacy around stable equilibrium levels. These levels, in turn, are shifting as a function of long-term cultural trends and exogenous economic shocks like the current economic crisis.

Keywords: Democratic legitimacy, meaning of democracy, satisfaction with democracy, trends in democratic legitimacy, determinants of democratic legitimacy (institutional, cultural, and economic)

Schlagwörter: Demokratische Legitimität, Bedeutungsgehalt der Demokratie, Zufriedenheit mit der Demokratie, Trends der demokratischen Legitimität, Determinanten der demokratischen Legitimität (institutionell, kulturell und ökonomisch)

1. Introduction

In the late 1960s and 1970s the work of political scientists and political sociologists reflected preoccupations with ‘a breakdown in consensus’, ‘a crisis of democracy’ and ‘political and economic decline’. For different reasons, all the crisis theories assumed an overloading of the state by the escalating demands of citizens, with a consequent shortfall in the performance of the state triggering a legitimacy crisis. This crisis talk came in basically two versions (Held 2006): those arguing from the premises of a pluralist theory of politics and those arguing from the perspective of Marxist theory. The first suggested that the form and operation of democratic institutions was essentially dysfunctional for the efficient regulation of economic and social affairs: rising expectations and overpromising politicians, applying strategies of appeasement for fear of losing future votes, induced an ever increasing expansion of the state, which was less and less capable of providing

effective management. The second focused on class relations and the constraints on politics imposed by capital, and argued that an inherently unstable economy required extensive state intervention for stabilization, a task which the state could no longer adequately fulfill within the systematic constraints it encountered. The expected result was a 'rationality crisis', i.e. a 'crisis of rational administration', which in turn was expected to induce both a 'legitimation' and a 'motivation crisis' (Habermas 1973). As Held (2006, p. 196) has pointed out, there was an underlying common thread in these two versions of crisis talk: the progressive erosion of the democratic state's capacity to implement adequate policies, which was ultimately seen to undermine the acceptance of its authority (overload theorists) or its legitimacy (legitimation theorists). According to these theories, the liberal democratic state had become increasingly hamstrung or ineffective in the face of growing demands, which were either 'excessive' (Huntington 1974; King 1976) or the 'inevitable result of the contradictions within which the state is enmeshed' (Offe 1984; Habermas 1973).

This scholarly debate on the crisis in Western democracies triggered a large-scale investigation into the relationship between the citizens and the state in West European democracies – the 'Beliefs in Government Research Program' of the ESF, which gave rise to the publication of no less than five edited volumes by Oxford University Press in 1995. By the time the results of this program were published, the world had fundamentally changed, however, as a result of the third wave of democratization, and the scholarly debate had in the meantime moved on to problems linked to democratic transition and consolidation. As Fuchs and Klingemann (1995a, p. 7) observed in their introduction to the volume on the 'Citizens and the State', the question of the continued existence of these democracies (in the West) in their basic institutional structure could be shelved for the time being. This question had also lost its urgency, because there was no clear empirical evidence to support the claim of a progressively worsening crisis of state authority/legitimacy in Western democracies, nor was state power unambiguously eroding in these countries.

The results of the 'Beliefs in Government program' actually rather confirmed the authors' 'normality hypothesis', which they put forward in opposition to the 'crisis hypothesis': Western representative democracies proved to be perfectly capable of absorbing and assimilating growing pressure from societal problems, and the forms of political expression taken by such pressure could be understood as the normal manifestations of democracy in complex societies. They showed that (Fuchs and Klingemann 1995b, p. 435) 'the citizens of West European countries have not withdrawn support from their democracies in recent decades. This', they wrote, 'holds true for both democracy as a form of constitutionally defined government and for the reality of democracy. For this reason alone, there can have been no challenge to representative democracy of Western societies. However, there was change nevertheless, and the authors adopted the notion of 'democratic transformation' to characterize it (Fuchs and Klingemann 1995, p. 435): there was change in the interaction between the actors of the polity and the public, a process that actually produced greater responsiveness on the part of the major political actors towards the demands of the citizens. A process of successful

adaptation of representative democracy to the new participatory demands of their citizens took place, and new collective actors emerged, articulating new issue demands in their collective actions. Citizens became generally more active as well as more effective in the political process. As a result of this transformation, the authors noted high levels of satisfaction with democracy in Western Europe.

Almost twenty years later, the issues raised by the debate of the late 1960s and 1970s have returned and are as pressing as ever. The world is in the grip of an economic crisis that is again expected to threaten the legitimacy of Western democracies as well as the consolidation process of the new democracies. If we listen to the prophets of doom, we are heading straight for another ‘rationality crisis’ of unknown proportions, which, in turn, is likely to give rise to a ‘legitimation crisis’ as theorized in the old days. Thus, in the age of austerity and global economic interdependence, Streeck (2011) identifies a sharp decline of political manageability of democratic capitalism, of the national governments’ capacity to mediate between citizens and the requirements of capital accumulation, and somberly hints at the possible consequences (p. 28): ‘Where democracy as we know it is effectively suspended, as it already is in countries like Greece, Ireland and Portugal, street riots and popular insurrection may be the last remaining mode of political expression for those devoid of market power.’ Similarly, Scharpf (2011, p. 38) suggests that the current political efforts to save the euro might undermine democracy as we know it. And Bordo and James (2013) fear that the resulting domestic political pressure may yet come to threaten the integration process. Even if we do not share the strong apprehensions of these observers, the challenge posed to established democracies by the current economic crisis and the increasing erosion of the scope of national governments in Europe in general and in the Eurozone in particular is real and may lead to a legitimation crisis in the established as well as the more recent European democracies.

At the same time, as most vividly but not exclusively illustrated by the faltering Arab spring, the consolidation of the newly emerging democracies proves to be more difficult than expected, which also raises the question of a legitimation crisis of democracy for the newly emerging democracies. In many countries, democracy has been only partially implemented. In many of the newly democratized countries, elections often are not fair, or the chief executives – whether they are spiritual leaders, generals or monarchs – do not have to expose themselves to elections. But also in those countries where these executives are chosen in free and fair elections, the people often are not really free: the majority seeks to impose itself without regard for minorities, civil liberties are flouted, and some are more equal before the law than others. Even if the democratization process has been enormously extended in the third wave, it takes time for democracy to take root. And though mass attitudes toward democracy are only one of a number of domains in which democratic consolidation occurs or fails to occur, it is, as Chu et al. (2008, p. 36) argue, a crucial domain with implications for all the rest. The consolidation of democracy requires ‘broad and deep legitimation, such that all significant political actors, at both the elite and mass levels, believe that the democratic regime is the most right and appropriate for their society, better than any other realistic alternative they can imagine’ (Diamond 1999, p. 65). As Dahren-

dorf (1990, pp. 79-96) has pointed out in his reflections on the revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe, constitutions can be changed in a few months and laws can be elaborated in a few years. But it takes a few generations before the political elites and the citizens have really adopted the democratic values that are indispensable for the stabilization of democratic legitimacy.

Against the background of a renewed relevance of the question of democratic legitimacy, I would like to discuss three topics – the conceptualization of democratic legitimacy, the development of its scope and depth over time, and the question of its origins. My discussion will stick to the empirical literature and, given the limits of what this literature is able to tell us with reasonable certainty, raise more questions than it answers. Each part of the discussion will necessarily be brief, and of course, each part would require a much more extended treatment than is afforded here. I would still like to address each of the three topics in order to show the ramifications of the key question – is there a crisis of democratic legitimacy in contemporary politics? – and the difficulty of answering it convincingly.

2. Conceptualization of democratic legitimacy and support

Democratic legitimacy is composed of two terms – democracy and legitimacy, each one of which needs clarification. Let me first discuss ‘democracy’. At the most general level, democracy is about the relationship between individual citizens and the collectivity (represented by the state), as suggested by the title of the volume by Klingemann and Fuchs (1995a) in the ‘Beliefs in government’ project. More specifically, democracy provides a set of procedures for collective decision-making. Tilly (2007, pp. 8-9) distinguishes between procedural and process-oriented approaches to democracy, but this distinction seems rather arbitrary and vague to me. As long as we do not reduce the procedures to purely formal stipulations in legal texts, I do not think that there is any relevant difference between procedure and process. Note, however, that both the definition by procedures and by processes rules out the inclusion of substantive criteria in the definition of democracy. It is clear that, ultimately, democracy is expected to promote the collective welfare of the citizens involved in the process, but there is no guarantee that it does so. While sticking to a procedural definition of democracy, I would grant the points made by Dowding (2004) that the justifications for democracy are ‘not without one eye on the types of outcomes we should expect from democratic routines’ (p. 28), that no matter what the procedures of democracy (and justice) are, they should be open to challenge once the results of those procedures do not conform to what was expected when those procedures were formed (p. 33), and that legitimate arguments for changing the procedures ‘will come from the injustice wreaked on some by the operation of those institutions’ (p. 32).

Dahl (2000, pp. 37-38), in a classic statement, has identified five criteria for a democratic process: effective participation, voting equality, enlightened understanding, final control over the agenda and inclusion of all adults. Applied to contemporary ‘large-scale democracy’ he suggests (p. 85) that these criteria are implemented in six distinctive institutions – elected officials; free, fair and fre-

quent elections; freedom of expression; alternative sources of information; associational autonomy; and inclusive citizenship. Under contemporary conditions, democracy essentially means representative government. Elections of the political decision-makers at regular intervals constitute the key institution of representative democracy today (Manin 1995, p.18; Powell 2000, p. 3). Elections establish a double link between the political input (the citizens' preferences) and the political output (public policies adopted by the elected representatives) by allowing a combination of responsiveness and accountability (Bühlmann and Kriesi 2013): the 'chain of responsiveness' links the citizens' preferences to the results of policy making. Democratic responsiveness occurs when the democratic process induces the government to form and implement policies that citizens want (Powell 2004, p. 91). The chain of accountability, in turn, links public policies to the citizens' preferences. It refers to the obligation of incumbent governments to assume responsibility for their acts and to enable voters to respond with sanctions if the political output does not respond to their preferences. In order to make this process work, democracy requires a functioning public sphere, freedom of expression, rights of assembly, to form parties and pressure groups, and a relatively free media, allowing citizens to form their preferences and to express them freely. As theories of deliberative democracy have stressed (e.g. Manin 1987, Dryzek 2000), the formation of the citizens' preferences constitutes a crucial element of the democratic process.

The procedures provided for decision-making by democracy are designed to implement the three basic values of the immortal battle cry of the French Revolution: freedom, equality and fraternity (or, as we would say today, solidarity) (Thomassen 2007, p. 421). Given that these different fundamental values cannot all be implemented at one and the same time, democracy is a *multidimensional* and essentially *contested* concept. In democratic theory, the trade-off between freedom and equality has constituted a classic dilemma (Thomassen 2007, p. 422), which different theoretical strands, alternatively labeled as 'Madisonian' versus 'populist' democracy (Dahl 1956), or 'protective' versus 'developmental' democracy (Held 2006), have resolved in contrasting ways. Following different theoretical recipes, the really existing variety of democracies combine these basic principles in different ways. Unfortunately, as the contemporary events in Egypt amply demonstrate, the democratic ideals which are preached in practice are often too simple, and do not take into account that there are contradictions between democratic principles which cannot be dissolved, but only balanced in a complex, differentiated set of procedural rules (Blatter 2013). However, whatever the specific values democratic procedures refer to, it is important to recognize that these procedures are always rooted in basic values that they seek to implement.

This brings me to the concept of legitimacy. There are different motives for compliance within an authority relationship, motives such as 'custom, personal advantage, purely affectual or ideal motives of solidarity', but, following Weber (1968, p. 213), it is generally accepted in the social sciences that these motives are usually not a sufficiently reliable basis for domination. There is an additional element that is required: the belief in legitimacy. Weber has famously distinguished between three types of beliefs in legitimacy: legitimacy based on rational grounds,

tradition and charisma (p. 215). Legitimacy based on rational grounds was conceived by him as 'resting on a belief in the legality of enacted rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands (legal authority)'. As is also well known, Weber's definition of rationally based legitimacy was sufficiently ambiguous to give rise to contrasting interpretations: if decisions are considered legitimate only because they have been made in formally correct procedures for the creation and application of laws, the belief in legitimacy shrinks to a belief in legality. However, as Habermas (1973, p. 139) has pointed out, the authorities who are responsible for making and applying the laws are in no way legitimated by the legality of their modes of procedure, but by the norms which support the system of authority as a whole. In the case of democratic procedures, they are legitimated by the norms and values which these procedures attempt to implement. Following this type of reasoning, legitimacy is generally defined today as 'the normative justification of political authority' (van Ham and Thomassen 2012, p. 9). This conception of legitimacy is shared by authors such as Easton (1965, p. 278, 1975, p. 451), Lipset (1959, pp. 86-87, 1994, p. 8) or Zürn (2011, pp. 606-607).

Conceptualizing legitimacy as the normative justification of political authority implies that those authorities are considered legitimate who live up to the normative standards of the citizens – the ultimate arbiters of legitimacy (Patberg 2013; Zürn 2013). Accordingly, van Ham and Thomassen (2012, p. 9) suggest that it is the comparison between the democratic ideals and the really existing functioning of democracy that makes for a judgment about the legitimacy of a democratic regime. If norms and reality match, the regime will be considered legitimate; if reality falls short of the ideal, there will be more or less of a '*legitimacy deficit*' or '*democratic deficit*'. Note that, in order to be able to make a normative judgment about democracy, the person making the judgment has to fulfill two conditions: she must a) know the principles of democracy and b) consider them important. Only someone who knows a given democratic principle will be able to make an assessment of the extent to which the political authorities are living up to it, and someone's normative judgment will only be relevant to the extent that the person in question considers the corresponding principle important for democracy.

Empirically, it is not obvious how we should measure this 'deficit'. In one of her recent books, Norris (2011) attributes a central place in her argument to the concept of the 'democratic deficit', which she defines as the 'gap' (=the difference) between the support of democratic principles and the evaluation of the extent to which the really existing democracy lives up to these principles. More specifically she defines it as the gap between aspirations for democracy (measured by the question 'how important is it for you to live in a country that is governed democratically?') and satisfaction with the democratic performance of one's own country (measured by the question 'how democratically is this country being governed today?'). Taking the difference between two variables that are measured in two different units ('importance of democracy' on the one hand, 'satisfaction with democratic government' on the other) does, however, not make much sense. Even if both variables are measured on the same 10-point scales, 'importance' is not the same as 'satisfaction'. Moreover, the difference does not correspond to the

theoretical relationship between meaning and evaluation, which is a conditional one and rather points to a multiplicative combination of the two concepts. As just pointed out, only if people perceive a given dimension as a necessary condition for democracy does their negative evaluation of the really existing democracy in their country contribute to a perceived 'legitimacy deficit'.

Empirical research on the way citizens view and evaluate democracy has largely relied on the concept of *political support*. Building on Easton (1965), most scholars have used this concept in order to describe and explain people's orientations to democracy (e.g. Klingemann and Fuchs 1995a, Norris 1999, 2011, Dalton 2004). Easton (1975, p. 436) defined support in abstract terms as 'an attitude by which a person orients himself to an object either favourably or unfavourably, positively or negatively.' In the political context, the 'object' may correspond to the political community, the political regime, political institutions, or political authorities. As defined by Easton, support is a broader concept than legitimacy. Democratic support may derive not only from beliefs in the legitimacy of democracy, but also from other motives such as the ones mentioned by Weber. Most importantly, democratic support may derive from pragmatic considerations: one may support the democratic regime or the democratically chosen authorities, because the system works in the sense that the authorities deliver the desired collective (and individual) goods.

Famously, Easton (1965, p. 273; 1975, p. 444) distinguished between *diffuse* support and *specific* support, a distinction that refers to the motives of compliance and should not be confused with the distinction between the support of democratic principles and the evaluation of the extent to which the really existing democracy lives up to these principles. Easton characterized diffuse support as a 'reservoir of favorable attitudes or good will that helps members to accept or tolerate outputs to which they are opposed or the effects of which they see as damaging to their wants.' Diffuse support comes close to Weber's concept of legitimacy, and Easton expected it to be expressed in the form of trust or legitimacy beliefs. Another related concept is Hirschman's (1970) concept of 'loyalty'. Diffuse support or belief in democratic legitimacy corresponds to the unconditional loyalty and trust in the democratic regime, its institutions and authorities. By contrast, specific support refers to 'the satisfactions that members of a system feel they obtain from the perceived outputs and performance of the political authorities' (Easton 1975, p. 437). Specific support, in other words, results from the other motives mentioned by Weber, especially instrumental ones.

In the subsequent discussion of these concepts (e.g. Norris 1999, 2011), the objects of support, the evaluative criteria (principles, norms, values) and the evaluative judgment of performance (satisfaction) were not always clearly differentiated, giving rise to much confusion. While Norris distinguishes objects that are more diffuse from others that are more specific, authors such as Dalton (2004, p. 24) or Torcal and Montero (2006) have, in my view correctly, pointed out that every political object – not only democratic norms, but also political institutions and authorities – may be subject to both specific and diffuse support. For our purposes, it is important to keep in mind that, according to Easton's (1975, p. 446; 1965, pp. 119-20) conception, diffuse support is not only based on nor-

mative procedural beliefs, but may also be ‘a product of spillover effects from evaluations of a series of outputs and of performance over a long period of time.’ In other words, specific support based on one’s own experiences with the authorities, institutions or with the regime as a whole may give rise to diffuse support in the long run. If socialization into the ideals of democracy plays a central role for fostering diffuse support, the regime’s ability to find and implement satisfactory solutions to basic policy problems or the fact that your own party is in government may also contribute to the ‘reservoir of favorable attitudes and good will’. Conversely, as Linz (1978, p. 54) has observed: ‘Unsolved structural problems [...] undermine the efficacy and, in the long run, the legitimacy of the regime [...]’. Or, in the terminology of the crisis theorists I have referred to in the introduction, the ‘rationality crisis’ may give rise to a ‘legitimacy crisis’.

This brings me to Scharpf’s (1999, 2000) important distinction between *input* and *output legitimacy*. As he argued, there are two faces of democratic self-determination: government by the people (political decisions reflect the ‘will of the people’), which refers to input-oriented legitimacy, and government for the people (political decisions promote the common welfare of the citizens), which refers to output-oriented legitimacy. While input legitimacy is based on the electoral process, output legitimacy is based on the government’s capacity to solve problems requiring collective solutions because they could not be solved through individual action, market exchanges or voluntary cooperation in civil society. Both input and output legitimacy contribute to the overall democratic legitimacy. I would like to suggest that both input and output legitimacy have a normative basis that is to be distinguished from additional motives which, in the long run, may contribute to democratic legitimacy as well. On the input side, the procedures of representative democracy allow the implementation of the fundamental values of freedom and equality by a combination of responsiveness and accountability as discussed above. It is the perceived extent of responsiveness/accountability which contributes to democratic legitimacy. In the ideal case, the belief in input legitimacy is unconditional, i.e. does not depend on the outcome of the procedures, but only on the quality of the process itself. One’s belief in the input legitimacy may, however, also be conditional on the outcome; in particular, the perceived responsiveness/accountability may depend on partisanship: the winners of the election may view the legitimacy of the procedures through a prism that is different from that of the losers. Support based on partisanship builds on partisan advantage, i.e. on the quality of partisan linkage, which may be purely symbolic (e.g. the satisfaction of being on the ‘winners’ side), but may also involve more tangible advantages (e.g. jobs for clients).

On the output side, we may similarly distinguish between unconditional and conditional legitimacy. Output legitimacy is not only a (long-term) product of instrumental considerations, but also based on the perceived quality of governmental procedures. At least this is suggested by the literature on ‘good governance’. As is observed by Rothstein and Teorell (2012: 20), the rule of law is usually identified as the procedural norm that is to guide government with respect to the output side. The rule of law embodies the principle of ‘equality before the law’, i.e. it entails ‘a crucial principle of fairness – that like cases be treated alike’

(O'Donnell 2004, pp. 33-34). It is the opposite of 'favoritism' or 'corruption'. However, Rothstein and Teorell (2012, p. 21) believe that the rule of law does not cover the entire scope of state action. Thus, they suggest that the discretionary powers of lower-level government officials and professional corps responsible for implementing policy require that they adapt actions to the specific circumstances in each case, which makes it impossible to enact the principle literally. Instead, they propose an alternative norm – impartiality, which they define in the following way (p. 24): 'When implementing laws and policies, government officials shall not take anything about the citizen or case into consideration that is not beforehand stipulated in the policy or the law.' This principle of the 'quality of government' is, again, a strictly procedural norm confined to the exercise of public power; the substance of policies is not relevant for this concept. As far as I am concerned, however, there is not much difference between the norm of 'impartiality' and the principle of 'equality before the law'.

Combining the distinction between input and output legitimacy with the distinction between a normative procedural basis of beliefs in legitimacy and alternative motives of compliance gives us four distinct bases of democratic legitimacy, as illustrated in *Table 1*: normatively based procedural legitimacy on the input side (expressed by satisfaction with the quality of representative democracy, i.e. with the accountability and responsiveness of government) and on the output side (expressed by satisfaction with the quality of governance, i.e. with the impartiality and fairness of governance), as well as conditional legitimacy on the input and output side that is not based on normative beliefs – partisan legitimacy (expressed by satisfaction with the outcome of elections) and outcome legitimacy (expressed by satisfaction with the policy performance of the government). According to Putnam (1993, p. 9), high performance institutions must be both responsive and effective – sensitive to the demands of their constituents and effective in using limited resources to address those demands. In Norris's (2011, pp. 190-209) terms, such institutions must fulfill criteria of both process and policy performance. In my own terms, they must be both procedurally legitimate (responsive/accountable and impartial) as well as effective in the long run.

Table 1: Conceptualization of democratic legitimacy

Normative basis	Input legitimacy	Output legitimacy
Yes	Procedural legitimacy I: satisfaction with the quality of representative democracy (responsiveness and accountability)	Procedural legitimacy II: satisfaction with the quality of governance (rule of law, impartiality, fairness)
no	Partisan legitimacy: satisfaction with electoral outcome	Outcome legitimacy: satisfaction with policy performance

3. Development of democratic legitimacy

We are today in a much better position to evaluate the support of democracy around the world than our predecessors who assessed the legitimacy crisis back in the 1970s/80s, because we can rely on surveys on democratic support in a large

number of countries. The six waves of the World Value Survey, the European Value Survey, the European Social Survey, the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES-2001/2006), the ISSP Surveys on the role of government, and the regional barometers (Eurobarometer, Central and Eastern Eurobarometer, Latino-barometer, Afrobarometer, East Asia Barometer, Arab Barometer) provide us with a better idea of how citizens of the world view and evaluate democracy.

The surveys conducted around the world essentially confirm Amartya Sen's (1999) assertion that democracy is a universal value. Thus, based on Global Barometer evidence, Diamond (2008) reports that 'the belief that democracy is (in principle at least) the best system is overwhelming and universal'. While there is a slightly higher preference among Western countries, in other regions of the world, too, an overwhelming majority of people polled by the Global Barometer say that democracy is best, even in the former Soviet Union and the Muslim Middle East. More recent data from the World Values Survey (2005-2007) that was conducted in more than 50 countries – older and younger liberal democracies, electoral democracies and autocracies – confirm this conclusion (Norris 2011: Tables 5.3 and 5.5): roughly 9 out of 10 respondents across the world confirm that democracy is either a 'very good' or 'fairly good' way of governing a country. Asked how important it was to them to live in a country that is governed democratically, the average response on a scale from 0 ('not at all important') to 10 ('absolutely important') varied between 8.4 for autocracies to 8.9 for established liberal democracies. For Europe, existing studies show a particularly widespread support for democracy (Inglehart 2003, Dalton 2004). According to the most recent data, it is quite clear that very few Europeans would prefer to live in a non-democratic country (e.g. European Values Survey 2009).

In the age of globalization the rhetoric of democracy has been pervasive and there is a floor of shared understandings which emerges across cultures. Most people in most nations do offer some definition of democracy when asked to do so in an open question (Dalton et al. 2007, p. 146). A procedural minimum definition is gaining acceptance that includes elections and guarantees of civil liberties. Surprisingly, the liberal principle of freedom and civil liberties appears to be crucial: 'People across the globe associate democracy primarily with liberty, followed at a far distance by more procedural aspects of democracy like "government by the people", "electoral choice", and this other basic value, "equality (before the law)"' (Thomassen 2007, p. 421). This is equally true of East Asians (Chu et al. 2008, p. 11) as it is of Africans (Bratton et al. 2005, p. 68).

However, while democracy as an abstract idea is widely endorsed, support of the principles of democracy often proves to be rather shallow. The survey questions often do not probe sufficiently to assess how deeply rooted the support of democracy really is. But when they do, they show that in the newly emerging democracies or in non-democratic countries, democracy may not (yet) be the only legitimate game in town. Thus, in their study of how East Asians view democracy, Chu et al. (2008, p. 24) find that not so many people in this part of the world endorse it as the preferred form of government under all circumstances, and that few East Asians prefer it to economic development. Their survey identified pockets of authoritarian inclination among the people of most countries. They suggest

that, except for South Korea and Japan, most East Asian democracies do not enjoy deep legitimation and they conclude that, 'none of the new democracies in East Asia appear firmly consolidated at the level of mass public opinion, and all are vulnerable to public disaffection' (p. 36). Similarly, probing deeper into the attitudes of Africans revealed that 'widespread popular support for democracy is loose, sometimes contradictory, formative, perhaps temporary, and based on experience with hybrid regimes that have not completed the process of democratization' (Bratton et al. 2005, p. 85). The authors found that popular understandings of democracy are susceptible to manipulation, especially among less-educated segments of the population or in countries that have limited exposure to regime alternatives (p. 87), that pockets of authoritarian nostalgia remain even in countries where majorities support democracy (p. 89), and that only a minority of the people they interviewed (48 percent) can be described as 'committed democrats', while substantial parts of the population remain 'proto-democrats' who seem to 'harbour nostalgic feelings for more forceful forms of rule'. Third, a detailed study of Mexicans found a lot of 'illiberal democrats' (intolerant, paternalistic or homophobic democrats', i.e. 'citizens who claim democratic rights and liberties for themselves, but seem to be ready to deny them to others' [Schedler and Sarsfield 2007, p. 653]. The incomplete adoption of democratic values among the citizens of newly emerging democracies is closely associated with the way these democracies function: as is shown by a recent analysis based on data from the 'Democracy Barometer', the newly emerging democracies are generally less liberal than established democracies (Kriesi and Bochsler 2013).

Probing deeper in surveys also reveals that not all the people endorsing democracy understand the concept in quite the same way. As is observed by Schedler and Sarsfield (2007, p. 640), 'the literature on democratic support is dotted with statements of caution alerting against the possibility that "democracy can mean all things to all people"'. The divergence of understandings both within each country and across nations remains great. Take just the most glaring example – China. Democratic values are widespread in China, they are present to an extent that Inglehart and Welzel (2005, p. 191) boldly predicted some years ago 'that China will make a transition to a liberal democracy within the next two decades'. Yet, in China, democratic values function to engender citizen support for the non-democratic regime (Shin 2008, p. 209). This paradox can be explained by the fact that the Chinese adhere to distinctive ideas about democracy that are not part of the conventional understanding of the term. For example, over 80 percent of the Chinese agreed in 2002 with having elections for national leaders, but only one in six agreed with multiparty competition – a contradiction for a liberal democrat, but apparently not for many Chinese (Shin 2008, p. 216). At the same time, the Chinese are optimistic about the changes their country has made in the direction of democracy and they have great trust in their political institutions. This situation is not only an example of the conversion of specific (the public's positive evaluation of the regime's economic performance) into diffuse support (regime legitimacy and trust in institutions and authorities). It also reflects the fact that the Chinese live under a political regime that promotes its own idea of democracy, an idea that has deep roots in the nation's historical culture (that endorses

hierarchy and collectivism) and more recent roots in its ideology of socialism (Shin 2008, p. 236).

The enduring legacy of communism is not only visible in China. For example, a comparison of the support of democratic principles by East and West Germans in the 1990s has revealed that the former tended to favor what Fuchs (1999) calls a 'socialist model of democracy', while the latter preferred a liberal model. More generally, based on data from the three most recent waves of the World Values Survey, Pop-Eleches and Tucker (2013) found that citizens of post-communist countries were on average less supportive of democratic forms of government than citizens from other countries, even controlling for a broad range of short- and long-term developmental and institutional differences.

If, in the new democracies and non-democracies, the support for democracy is not as deep-rooted as we might wish it to be, how about the development of democratic legitimacy in established democracies? Has it indeed declined, as suggested by the prophets of doom? Unfortunately, data on time trends with regard to the support of democracy are scarce. They are most detailed at the level of support for political authorities, but virtually non-existent as far as adherence to democratic values are concerned. To the extent that they exist, trends in support for democratic values from 1995 to 2005 show a rather flat pattern for the established democracies (ESP, FIN, GER, JAP, SWE, US, UK), but also for some new democracies (ARG, SAF, MEX). Only in South Korea does there appear to be an erosion of support for democratic values during this decade (Norris 2011, pp. 107-108). Nor do west European data on the evaluation of regime performance, measured by the overall satisfaction with the way democracy works, provide any indication of a deterioration of satisfaction with democracy (Wagner et al. 2009, Dalton 2004, Norris 2011). Although 'satisfaction with democracy' is a far-from-perfect measure of regime support (see below), it is the only indicator for which longer time series are available. For the original six EU member states, the trend is essentially flat from the early seventies until the end of the nineties (Dalton 2004, p. 40). For a more recent time period (1990-2009) covering 12 European countries, the results are even rather positive: the overall pattern across these countries is one of significantly increasing satisfaction. Thus, satisfaction with democracy has improved in six countries (Denmark, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and the UK, all 1973-2009), while in four countries (Belgium, France, Spain, Greece) there is no discernible trend, and only one country (Portugal, 1990-2009) shows a clearly negative trend (Norris 2011, pp. 77-79).

Better longitudinal data exist with regard to individual institutions and political authorities, and in this respect the interpretations vary from highly pessimistic (Dalton 2004, p. 191) to cautiously optimistic (Norris 2011, p. 241). Both authors find evidence of a decline in confidence in parliament over time in many countries. Although these trends are only significant for a limited number of countries, Dalton asserts a decline, while Norris acknowledges that there is no clear trend. It is at the level of political authorities, however, that Dalton (2004, pp. 25-31) finds the most consistent and widespread evidence of a decline in support over time, a finding that rests on data about trust in politicians and governments in the US and 15 other established democracies for a period from the sev-

enties to the mid-nineties. The trend is visible in all countries except for the Netherlands, although it is not always significant. The data presented by Norris (2011, pp. 63-66; 70-72) for 15 European countries covering the decade from 1998 to 2009 shows that, for this period, confidence in European governments varied in direction and size by country. There has been a steady decline in Portugal and the UK (in this case in continuation of the earlier trend), and a precipitous decline in the aftermath of the crisis in the countries most heavily hit by it (Greece, Ireland, Italy and Spain), while other countries (Belgium and Sweden) experienced a net rise in trust.

The longest time series exists for the US and the Americans' trust in the federal government (e.g. Norris 2011, p. 65). These data cover the period from 1958-2008. Overall, these data show a clear negative trend. If we look more closely at these data, however, we notice a steep decline in trust in the late sixties and early seventies, followed by trendless ups and downs between the late seventies and the late 2000s. It was the steep decline in public trust in the aftermath of the 'silent revolution' of the late sixties that triggered the crisis literature in the seventies referred to in the introduction. But this decline reached its nadir at the end of the seventies. Afterwards, trust picked up again, although it never again reached the high levels of the 'golden age of democratic capitalism' of the fifties and sixties. In the US, Ronald Reagan made the transition from one of the least to one of the most approved presidents. And as he did, citizens began to approve everybody else who governed (the Senate, Congress and even state governors) more than they had before (Stimson 2004, p. 139). Then, under George Bush sr. and Bill Clinton, trust in government declined again to reach another low point around the time of Bill Clinton's first mid-term elections in 1994. From there onward, trust increased to reach a climax in the aftermath of 9/11 in 2002, after which it fell off again. What is striking is the parallel development of approval for and trust in different members and branches of government. In Stimson's (2004, p. 154) interpretation of this pattern, we are actually observing 'generic approval and trust, a spirit that moves up and down over time and seems to respond to generalized satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the state of things'. This generic approval is broadly moved by economic performance, although it is not exactly identical with it, as is illustrated by the impact of a crisis like 9/11, when Americans 'rally around the flag' (see also Dalton 2004, pp. 49-52). In the twenty-year period covered by Stimson (1981-2001), apart from these moments of crisis, approval of and trust in politicians in the US seem to have moved around an equilibrium of roughly 50 percent, in response to how well things were going in the country.

Stimson's findings are supported by Soroka and Wlezien's (2010) work on the thermostat model. This is a model to study the dynamic relationship between public opinion and policy. Just like Stimson's argument, it presupposes an equilibrium level of public preferences and an orderly variation of preferences around this equilibrium. The 'preferences' studied are, however, not the trust in or approval of authorities as in Stimson's case, but the preferences for public policy. Following Stimson et al.'s (1995) model of dynamic representation, the model assumes positive policy responsiveness on public preferences, but it adds and puts

into evidence a negative feedback of policy on preferences: other things being equal, when policy in a given domain increases (decreases), the preference for more policy in that domain will decrease (increase). Wlezien (1995) first showed this negative feedback for the US. Based on ISSP data (1985-2006), Wlezien and Soroka (2012) tested the model for no less than 17 countries and showed that it works in other countries as well, although the strength of the negative feedback and of policy responsiveness is conditioned by the institutional context.

This suggests that Stimson's findings with respect to the variation of trust and approval might be generalizable across time and space today: in other places and periods, too, trust in and approval of authorities may generally vary around a country- and period-specific equilibrium, mainly as a result of an evaluation of the economic performance. What these models cannot explain, however, is the level of the long-term equilibrium. As we have seen, it was much higher in the US before the 1980s. And there are certainly countries – Italy, for example – where it has been much lower than in others for many years. Nor do these models explain possible shifts in the equilibrium. These are 'fair weather' models for the times of 'normal politics'. They do not work in times of crisis, when the equilibrium is punctuated and positive feedbacks lead to decisive shifts (Baumgartner and Jones 2002). The question is, of course, how we know when we are in a time of crisis. More specifically, the question is whether and to what extent an economic crisis like the current one is capable of shifting the equilibrium.

4. The origins of democratic legitimacy and support

For the study of the origins of democratic legitimacy, it is useful to distinguish studies of the relationship between overall democratic legitimacy and process performance (on the input and output side) from studies of the effect of broader cultural, economic and institutional factors on both process performance and overall democratic legitimacy. I shall discuss the two sides of process performance first, before turning to the influence of the broader cultural and economic factors. The effect of the institutional design is included in the discussion of input performance.

There is an increasing number of empirical studies addressing these issues, stimulated by the availability of data sets covering ever larger numbers of countries and periods, and by an increasingly sophisticated set of statistical tools for the (multilevel and panel) analysis of these large-scale data sets which have become standard these days. Still conspicuously lacking, however, are adequate measures of the concepts we intend to measure. When it comes to analyzing democratic legitimacy, the available studies mostly rely on an overall assessment of the respondents' 'satisfaction with democracy', which is an ambiguous concept that not only measures various aspects of process performance, but may also reflect a country's overall economic performance (Canache et al. 2001, Linde and Ekman 2003). Moreover, this indicator does not allow us to distinguish between diffuse and specific motives of support, i.e. it does not allow us to separate normative judgments about legitimacy from instrumental motives of support. In the final analysis, the problem is not, as Patberg (2013) suggests, that the empirical

legitimacy research applies the wrong model – a ‘measurement model’ instead of a ‘judgment model’. I agree with Zürn (2013, p. 174) that the distinction between these two types of models is not very plausible, given that measurement always implies interpretation. The real problem is inadequate measurement, a problem that is tackled by the module on democracy of the European Social Survey 2012 which takes up precisely the key ideas of Patberg’s ‘judgment model’.

4.1 Process performance: input side

At the macro level, Norris (2011, p. 198) finds some modest correlations (of the order of magnitude of 0.3 to 0.5) between indicators of process performance (Freedom House indices, gender empowerment and CIRI human rights index) and satisfaction with democracy. Controlling for individual level characteristics in a multilevel model, input-oriented process performance (measured at the macro level) remains a strong and significant predictor of satisfaction with democracy. While this result is encouraging, the problem is, of course, that we do not know by which mechanisms the macro level influences individual judgments at the micro level. Or, in other words, we do not know what kind of input processes are responsible for the citizens’ overall assessment of democracy.

The same problem also applies to the work that looks into the relationship between the institutional context and democratic legitimacy (still measured by ‘satisfaction with democracy’). As is well known, Lijphart (1999, pp. 286-287) suggested that citizens in *consensus democracies* are significantly more satisfied with democratic performance in their countries than citizens in majoritarian democracies. Several studies have tried to substantiate this claim. Most recently, Bernauer and Vatter (2012), in a study based on CSES data for 24 countries, were not able to replicate Lijphart’s finding. Instead, they showed that, in addition to the two dimensions identified by Lijphart, there is a third dimension characterizing the institutional context of democracies – a ‘cabinet-direct democracy’ dimension, which, indeed, has a positive effect on the citizens’ level of satisfaction with democracy. Accounting for this finding, Bernauer and Vatter argue that broad cabinets make for predictable and reliable policies, while direct-democratic institutions not only constitute an effective instrument to discourage rent-seeking, but also provide additional opportunities for participation which are inherently gratifying to citizens. Their results confirm earlier findings by Frey and Stutzer (2005). On the basis of an ingenious comparison of Swiss and foreign residents in different Swiss cantons with variable participation rights, these authors found that Swiss citizens in cantons with more elaborate direct-democratic rights are happier in life. Frey and Stutzer attribute these results to the ‘procedural utility’ of direct-democratic rights and argue that such rights are ‘important in terms of a feeling of control, self-determination or influence on the political sphere’.

Aarts and Thomassen (2008) reduce the length of the causal chain between the institutional context and democratic legitimacy by attempting to link satisfaction with democracy (we are still stuck with this dependent variable) to individual perceptions of accountability and representativeness. Based on CSES (2001-2006) data from 36 countries they find that citizens who believe in being represented

(‘elections ensure that the views of voters are represented by MPs’) and in representatives being accountable (‘voting can make a difference’) are more satisfied with democracy than citizens who do not share these beliefs. Moreover, citizens who share both beliefs turn out to be particularly satisfied with democracy. These findings suggest that, indeed, normatively based input legitimacy is a key component of overall satisfaction with the way democracy works.

Once Aarts and Thomassen also allow for the possibility that these two beliefs vary systematically with the institutional context, they get unexpected results, however, which attests to the difficulty involved in clarifying the causal chain linking the institutional context and democratic legitimacy with the available individual-level data. According to received wisdom (e.g. Powell 2000), perceived accountability should be stronger in majoritarian democracies, and perceived representativeness more pronounced in consensus (proportional) democracies. As it turns out, however, accountability beliefs appear to be stronger in consensus democracies (whether old or new), while there appear to be no appreciable differences with regard to perceived representativeness between consensus and majoritarian democracies. Understandably, Aarts and Thomassen distrust these results and suspect that their indicator for perceived accountability may not be measuring what they intend to measure. Instead of measuring perceived clarity of responsibility and sanctioning opportunity, their measure might, indeed, refer to the perceived distinctiveness of the political supply, which is in fact likely to be greater in proportional than in majoritarian systems, where the parties have a greater tendency to converge to the median.

However, their analysis also suffers from the fact that it does not take into account *partisanship*. There are at least two ways in which partisanship matters for the way citizens perceive how democracy works. First, independents view the representation process differently from partisans. Thus, focusing on beliefs of being represented, Anderson (2011) shows that, in general, median voters, whom we could consider to be the equivalent of independents, feel less represented than the rest. Taking into account this difference, contextual effects are more in line with received wisdom in his analysis, although he relies on virtually the same data as Aarts and Thomassen: he finds that consensus (proportional) democracies enhance the belief of being represented. He also documents how the electoral context modifies the median voters’ perceived lack of representation: while proportional representation (PR) proper reduces the perceived representation gap between median voters and the rest only by a small amount, it is party polarization, i.e. the supply of more distinct vote choices, which serves to aggravate it considerably. This suggests that the worst of all worlds for the perceived representation of median voters is a polarized majoritarian system (such as we currently have in the US).

This result also suggests that the effect of the electoral context is mediated by *party strategies*. As we know from Rohrschneider and Whitefield’s (2012) study, the parties’ task of representation is complicated by the fact that they have to compete for both types of voters – partisans and independents, who require contradictory mobilization strategies: given that independents cluster around the median, while partisans are more broadly spread out across the political space, par-

ties are hard put to be responsive to both. This predicament is, as they see it, at the origin of the ‘strain of representation’, from which (West European) parties are expected to suffer increasingly as the share of independents in the electorate increases. With respect to the impact of electoral systems on this strain, Rohrschneider and Whitefield (2012, p. 169) present results which to some extent confirm Anderson’s findings: while electoral systems do not seem to have much effect on the parties’ responsiveness with respect to partisans, they matter with respect to independents. However, this effect is contingent on the number of partisans in the system (i.e. on its degree of polarization): majoritarian systems in highly partisan electorates tend to do less well in responding to independent voters than PR systems, whereas majoritarian regimes in highly dealigned electorates appear to do slightly better in representing independent voters.

The second way partisanship matters for the citizens’ perception of how democracy works refers to the effect of election outcomes on the perceptions of *winner and losers*. As is argued by Anderson et al. (2005, p. 3), ‘the experience of winning and losing and becoming part of the majority or minority leads people to adopt a lens through which they view political life.’ Losers tend to develop more negative attitudes about the political regime than winners – partly because losing gives rise to negative feelings in general, but partly also because cognitive processes of dissonance reduction lead to more negative evaluations of the regime. I would like to add that losers can also expect less in terms of material benefits from the government than winners. The extended analysis by Anderson et al. (2005) shows that there is, indeed, a ‘winner-loser gap’ with respect to different measures of democratic legitimacy across a wide range of countries. Magalhaes’s (2006) study of confidence in parliament, based on Eurobarometer data on the 15 EU member states in 1999 confirms their results: his indicator for winners (supporter of the incumbent party) has the greatest explanatory power of all the variables in the model. Winners have more confidence in parliament than losers, even after controlling for ideological self-placement and the overall macro context. Institutional rules also make a difference, but they have a mixed, though quite plausible effect: confidence in parliament is enhanced by factors (characteristic of consensus democracies) which, by sharing power within the lower house of parliament, enhance the parliament’s representativeness, and it is undermined by factors (also characteristic of consensus democracies) which, by increasing the number of institutional veto players in the system, undermine the power of the lower house of parliament.

Given that democratic legitimacy crucially depends on the ‘losers’ consent’, three sets of results presented by Anderson et al. (2005) are of particular interest. First, building on CSES (1996-2000) surveys, Anderson et al. (2005) show that while losers are less supportive of democracy than winners their overall level of consent is still quite positive. Moreover, losers turn out to be more positive in proportional systems, suggesting once again that such systems are more responsive than majoritarian systems. I might add at this point that the ‘winner-loser’ gap turns out to be particularly small in a country like Switzerland, where grand coalitions make for few losers and direct-democratic procedures allow electoral losers to become winners in issue-specific votes between elections (Bernauer and

Vatter 2012). Second, based on the European Values Study 1999, Anderson et al. (2005) document that, except for when it comes to democratic principles, the ‘winner-loser gap’ is greater in the newly emerging Central and Eastern European democracies than in the established West European ones. These results suggest that in the newly emerging democracies there are many more ‘big losers’, i.e. adherents of the old regime who were used to being on the winning side and whose fall has been particularly deep, and they also suggest that losing needs to be learnt.

Third, and probably most importantly, based on Eurobarometer data on Britain, Germany and Spain, they document the dynamics of the ‘winner-loser gap’: there is, indeed, a pre-/post-election switch in the satisfaction with democratic performance – the winners become clearly more satisfied, the losers more dissatisfied. Moreover, the difference created by the electoral outcome is not ephemeral, but persists over longer periods of time, regardless of who is in power. Even more importantly, repeated losing reinforces the gap. The decline in the losers’ satisfaction is less noticeable early in the period of losing and much more pronounced later on. These results suggest that the lack of alternation in majoritarian systems, or the durable lack of integration of minorities in proportional systems is particularly problematic and prepares the ground for upheavals. Illustrative examples are the Japanese political crisis in the early 1990s, and, even more serious, the ‘troubles’ in Northern Ireland that broke out in the late 1960s and lasted until the mid-1990s.

4.2 Process performance on the output side

For process performance on the output side, Norris (2011, p. 198) also presents modest correlations (of the same order of magnitude as those for the input side) between indicators of process performance (the World Bank’s indicators of government effectiveness [Kaufmann et al. 2010]) and satisfaction with democracy at the macro level. Controlling for individual-level characteristics in a multilevel model output performance also remains a strong and significant predictor of satisfaction with democracy. These results are in line with a series of other studies.

Magalhaes’ (2013) study of the impact of government effectiveness on three measures of support for democracy is the most recent one. Magalhaes also measures government effectiveness at the aggregate level with the World Bank’s government effectiveness indicator, and, for measuring democratic support, he also uses data from the more recent waves of the World Value Survey. He makes a special effort, however, to arrive at valid indicators for democratic legitimacy by creating three factors, which he calls ‘democratic-autocratic preference’, ‘democratic performance evaluation’, and ‘explicit democratic support’. In a multilevel model based on 72 country-years, he finds that, for the first two (but not for the third) of the three measures, more effective governments increase support for democracy *in democratic countries*, while they decrease such support *in non-democratic countries*. In democracies, government effectiveness turns out to be by far the most important predictor of support at the macro level. Its effect is weaker in non-democracies, but it tends to be negative in such countries. This result not

only confirms the notion that democratic legitimacy is a function of the government's procedural performance; it also suggests that non-democratic regimes may stabilize when they develop an effective government. This is illustrated by the Chinese case as already mentioned above. Once Magalhaes controls for government effectiveness, most macro-control variables have no effect at all on democratic legitimacy, and the only significant effect – that of economic growth – turns out to be negative. This result is in line with the study by Wagner et al. (2009), who, analyzing a series of Eurobarometer surveys from 1990-2001, also found that quality of governance indicators for rule of law, well-functioning regulation, and low corruption strengthened satisfaction with democracy more strongly than economic considerations.

Neither of these studies allows us to judge, however, whether, at the individual level, the association between the quality of government and democratic legitimacy is mediated by beliefs in the impartiality of the policy-making and implementation process, or whether it is based on purely instrumental considerations. To clarify this question, the study of corruption provides us with additional insights. For example, in their study of the impact of corruption (measured at the macro level by the Corruption Perception Index developed by Transparency International) on the evaluation of democratic performance and on trust in civil servants, Anderson and Tverdova (2003) show that corruption breeds discontent: it gives rise to more negative evaluations of democratic performance and to reduced trust in civil servants. Once again, however, the impact of the macro-level variable is conditioned by the individuals' partisanship: voters of the parties in government not only have generally more positive attitudes; among them the effect of corruption on democratic support is also less pronounced. In other words, partisans of a corrupt government are inclined to turn a blind eye to the wrongdoings of their representatives, while partisans of the opposition do not suffer from such partial blindness.

Most importantly, there are two studies that include explicit measures for the perception of procedural fairness. Linde's (2012) study of democratic support (support for regime principles and satisfaction with democratic performance) in ten post-communist democracies based on the New Europe Barometer (2004) includes a measure for perceived equal and fair treatment by authorities, and one for perceived corruption among civil servants. These two measures prove to be the most important sources of support for democratic principles, and they have an even stronger impact on the satisfaction with the way democracy works. Jointly, the impact of the two indicators of procedural fairness is really impressive: thus, a citizen who believes that she is being fairly treated and that only a very few officials are corrupt has an 83 percent chance of being satisfied with democratic performance, compared to a 16 percent chance for a citizen who feels unfairly treated and sees almost all officials as corrupt (Linde 2012, p. 424).

Finally, Dahlberg et al.'s (2013) preliminary analysis of 'dissatisfied democrats' in 24 countries based on the CSES (2001-2006) data includes measures for perceptions of procedural performance on both the input and the output side. A dissatisfied democrat is someone who endorses the principles of democracy, but is rather dissatisfied with democratic performance. For dissatisfied democrats the

democracy of their country tends to lack legitimacy. Dahlberg et al. seek to account for dissatisfied democrats using three key variables measured at the individual level: perceived political corruption ('how widespread do you think corruption such as bribe-taking is amongst politicians in [country]?'), evaluation of government performance ('how good or bad a job do you think the government has done over the past years?'), and an assessment of representation ('to what extent do elections result in members of parliament having views mirroring what voters want?'). Each one of these indicators of input and output legitimacy proves to be of greater importance for understanding democratic discontent than any other individual characteristic. The evaluation of government performance has the strongest overall effect, suggesting that the output side might be more important than the input side in determining democratic legitimacy. Its effect turns out to be equally strong in established and newly emerging democracies. By contrast, perceived corruption and subjective representation have stronger effects in established democracies, suggesting that 'there are greater expectations in terms of performance, both on the input as well as on the output side of the democratic system in older more established democracies' (Dahlberg et al. 2013, p. 21).

4.3 Broader determinants of democratic legitimacy

Two theories of political culture have argued that cultural factors drive the way democracy works. On the one hand, in a revised version of modernization theory, Inglehart and Welzel (2005) have singled out value change as the driving force: rising self-expression values facilitate the adoption of democracy, and, once democracy has emerged, they are the precondition for the transformation of the new democratic institutions into a genuinely effective democracy. On the other hand, in a new version of de Tocqueville's theorizing about democracy, Putnam (1993) has argued that social capital is the driver: dense social networks foster interpersonal trust (social trust) and civic engagement (associational activism), which ultimately underpins democratic attitudes. This is not the place to discuss these theories in more detail. Taking the example of Inglehart and Welzel, I would like to discuss their relevance for the explanation of the equilibrium level of democratic legitimacy.

At the macro level, Inglehart and Welzel (2005, pp. 149-209) are able to show that there is a close link between self-expression values and the levels of 'formal' and 'effective' democracy respectively. It is interesting to note how they measure the two versions of democracy in the light of the distinction between input- and output-oriented procedural performance: while 'formal' democracy is operationalized by the combined Freedom House index (i.e. a measure of input performance), their measure of 'effective' democracy corresponds to the product (or the interaction) of the Freedom House score and a measure for 'elite integrity' (i.e. a measure of output performance, based on World Bank data). It is also important to note that the relationship between the two measures is curvilinear (J-shaped) and relatively weak (Inglehart and Welzel 2005, p. 195; Charron and Lapuente 2012, p. 107): non-democracies and illiberal democracies are all characterized by rather low levels of output performance; it is only among the liberal democracies

that output performance really varies a great deal (roughly from low performance in Central, Eastern and Southern European as well as East Asian democracies to high performance in the remaining Western European democracies and, above all, in Scandinavia). This means that, apart from some exceptions like Singapore, Malaysia and the Gulf states, only liberal democracies have high-quality governments. Another way of stating the same is that the existence of a liberal democracy is (almost) a necessary (although not sufficient) condition for high-quality government. The interaction between input and output performance in the measure for 'effective' democracy takes care of this necessary condition: only when both types of performance are high, will 'effective' democracy be high. Given these conceptual distinctions and the corresponding operationalizations, it is interesting to observe that the closest link (an astounding correlation of $r=.89$) exists between the share of the population emphasizing self-expression values and the level of 'elite integrity' (Inglehart and Welzel 2005, p. 207). Self-expression values seem to be particularly instrumental for reinforcing the quality of government. Charron and Lapuente (2010, 2012) confirm this conclusion, although they make a somewhat different argument (they interact level of economic development [as a proxy for self-expression values] and 'formal' democracy to predict quality of government).

Even if this demonstration relies on macro-level data only and cannot be replicated at the individual level (Norris 2011, p. 128), it shows the powerful implications of cultural change for the equilibrium level of democratic legitimacy. The question is, of course, how a culture suitable for effective democracy emerges in the first place. There are two usual suspects for driving this process – economic development and institutional learning. Modernization theory counts on economic development and disregards institutional learning. Inglehart and Welzel (2005, p. 159) explicitly discard the possibility that 'pro-democratic values are caused by the presence of democracy, emerging through "habituation" or "institutional learning" from living under democratic institutions'. They argue that 'even the best-designed institutions need a compatible mass culture'. This is, of course, true. But it begs the question how cultural change might occur in places where the democratic values are insufficiently developed. Inglehart and Welzel (2005, p. 159) refer to the experience of most of the Soviet successor states, where, in spite of these countries' transition to democracy, people have not become more trusting, tolerant, happier, or post-materialist. They take this as evidence against the institutional learning model. However, the mechanism of institutional learning cuts both ways: it not only facilitates, but also inhibits the development of a democratic culture. Thus, as Pop-Eleches and Tucker (2013) show, the experience of the post-communist countries is actually a prime example which confirms the relevance of institutional learning. Their 'regime exposure socialization' model posits that the length and intensity of regime exposure as well as possible resistance factors against regime exposure (such as pre-regime experience with democratic governments) jointly determine an individual's democratic support. Based on the three most recent waves (1994-8, 1999-2004 and 2005-2009) of the World Values Survey, which include among others 53 surveys from 24 post-communist

countries, they essentially confirm the mechanisms posited by their model. In this case, the cultural legacy has proved to be very hard to shed.

More generally, as Persson et al. (2012) suggest, it may be very hard to get out of a political culture that condones corruption and makes for low-quality government. Rather than a 'principle-agent' problem, endemic corruption seems to be a 'collective action' problem. It may actually constitute a 'social trap', from which it is difficult to escape, since no one wants to be the sucker who assumes the costs of effective government, when everybody else is continuing to benefit from the way things are going. This was already pointed out by Putnam's (1993) analysis of the 'institutional performance' of the Italian regions, which he explained by the presence of a 'civic culture' in the north and the persistent lack of such a culture in the south.

Finally, turning to economic factors, they not only are plausible drivers of the cultural shifts (in addition to institutional learning), they may also shift the equilibrium of democratic legitimacy independently of cultural change. Thus, I would like to point out that an economic crisis like the current one may be able to shift the equilibrium of democratic legitimacy to a considerable extent – even in established democracies. Of course, the experience of the Weimar Republic in particular, and of the interwar period in general, reminds us of the devastating potential of economic crises for democratic legitimacy. To gauge the impact of the current crisis on satisfaction with democracy and trust (an index including trust in politicians, parties and national parliaments), Polavieja (2013) compared pre- and post-crisis values based on the ESS 2004 and 2010. He observed a significant decrease in both values across the 19 countries included in both surveys, a decrease which is entirely driven by the effect of the economic recession. Moreover, this is a 'sociotropic' effect, influencing all citizens regardless of their own economic conditions. As could have been expected, the effect varies by country: the erosion of democratic legitimacy is most pronounced in Greece, where it reaches alarming proportions. It is also sizeable in countries such as France, Ireland, Slovenia and Spain. More detailed analyses indicate that the recession effect has been restricted to Eurozone countries. Dropping Greece from the analysis, however, even this Eurozone effect becomes insignificant, which suggests that there is a threshold below which the recession effect may not be that disturbing. Having observed the possibility of a threshold, the question is, of course, when it is reached and whether countries other than Greece are going to reach it, too.

The Euro crisis is not only influencing the democratic legitimacy of national governments. It is, as suggested by Scharpf (2011), also aggravating the democratic deficit of the EU. Armingeon and Ceka (2013) analyze the decreasing trust in the EU as a result of the Euro crisis, based on five Eurobarometers covering the period 2007-2011. During this period, support for the EU has indeed dropped to varying degrees in all but two countries (Sweden and Finland). The drop in trust in the EU has been generally steeper in countries under IMF conditionality (Greece, Ireland and Portugal in Western Europe, Hungary, Latvia and Romania in Central and Eastern Europe), and it has again been most pronounced in Greece (-33 percent). Even in Greece, however, Clements et al. (2013) only speak of the rise of 'soft' Euroskepticism, i.e. even if the Greeks experience a deep crisis of

confidence in the EU, they still very much want to be part of the EU, including the single currency and the EMU, since they seem to realize that the alternatives would be much worse. Armingeon and Ceka show that the decrease in trust in the EU is a result of two factors: in addition to the effect of the (sociotropic) perception of the economic situation, declining trust in *national* governments is, as Hobolt (2012) has shown before, spilling over to the EU level. What the Euro crisis has done is to increase the ranks of those who distrust governments at both the national and the EU level. Increasingly, those who used to trust the EU but not their national government have become disillusioned with the EU, too, especially in the countries under IMF conditionality, where their share rose from 30 to 45 percent.

5. Conclusion

The three discussions leave us with some tentative conclusions. First of all, the question of whether there is a crisis of democratic legitimacy is no longer posed, as it was back in the 1970s for the 'trilateral' countries only. In the meantime, it is a question to be asked worldwide – for the established democracies, the new democracies and the non-democracies. The answer, as the previous discussions suggest, depends on the part of the world we are looking at. Democratic values are developing worldwide – even in non-democracies. But they are often shallow and badly understood. Moreover, it may even occur that, paradoxically, they stabilize non-democratic regimes, especially if such regimes, as is the case in China, prove to be performing well in terms of government effectiveness and economic growth. The results with respect to procedural performance on the output side, however, also suggest that such regimes might be particularly vulnerable to corruption and deteriorating government effectiveness.

For established democracies, which remain of particular interest for the key question, I have been at pains to detect long-term trends pointing to an erosion of democratic legitimacy. The results are more compatible with equilibrium models that allow for performance-driven short- or medium-term fluctuations of various indicators of democratic legitimacy around stable equilibrium levels. What has become clear from the discussion of the literature is that both procedural and policy performance matter for democratic legitimacy. Moreover, procedural performance matters with respect to both the input and the output side. If anything, procedural output performance may be even more important than input performance for the overall level of democratic legitimacy. This was certainly news to me, since this aspect has been traditionally neglected by discussions of democratic legitimacy.

Short- and medium-term factors play a role in the determination of the different components of democratic legitimacy, most notably partisanship. Whether you are an independent or a partisan, and whether you are a supporter of the incumbent government or of the opposition makes a large difference with respect to your satisfaction with the way democracy works. This means that there is little reason to worry about democratic legitimacy as long as there is reasonably frequent alternation in government and as long as politics are not too polarized.

Citizens who appear to be particularly critical of democratic legitimacy are those losers who have not yet been sufficiently socialized into the experience of losing (especially in newly emerging democracies), as well as the long-term losers who despair of ever winning again. The latter may choose exit strategies (such as abstention), but they may also constitute a potential for mobilization by new (populist) contenders in the party system or by new social movements outside of the established systems of interest intermediation.

This discussion has remained rather inconclusive with respect to the question of an optimal institutional design in terms of democratic legitimacy, even if, as generally expected, (some versions of) consensus democracies seem to be more responsive to citizens' interests than majoritarian systems. Based on the research discussed, it is obvious that the effect of institutions on democratic legitimacy interacts in complicated ways with partisanship, with the make-up of the party system and with parties' strategies. It is up to future research to clarify this interaction. Generally, however, experience with both non-democratic and democratic institutions (whatever their specific design) appears to have long-lasting consequences for democratic legitimacy, as is most graphically illustrated by the experience of the post-communist countries. Just as the practice of democracy, in the long run, contributes to shaping a democratic culture, long-term experience with a non-democracy continues to pose limits to the consolidation of such a culture far beyond the demise of the non-democratic regime.

The empirical evidence for the importance of cultural factors in determining the level of effective democracy, and by implication, for determining the long-term equilibrium level of democratic legitimacy, is impressive. In particular, cultural change is of utmost importance for the output side of democratic legitimacy. Allowing for the fact that institutional learning and economic development are the two main drivers of cultural change, and, accordingly, of the long-term equilibrium level of democratic legitimacy, the question of how a country can get out of the 'social trap' of an unsuitable culture is still very much an open one.

Finally, I have discussed the impact of economic factors on the equilibrium level of democratic legitimacy in the European Union, which is at present undoubtedly the most pressing question concerning a possible democratic legitimacy crisis for Europeans. The evidence has again been less alarming than one might have expected. The erosion of legitimacy has of course been most serious in the countries most hit by the crisis, and it has reached dramatic proportions in Greece. But even there, the political consequences have been contained – so far. Challenging the prophets of doom, Schimmelfennig (2013) points out that European governments have remained in control of the integration process by excluding Euroskeptic parties from government coalitions, by avoiding referendums, and by the delegation of decision-making to non-majoritarian, technocratic supranational organizations. As a result, the undeniable politicization and Europeanization of the Euro crisis has not affected the integration outcomes so far, which prompts him to question the post-functional theory of integration (Hooghe and Marks 2009).

The question is, of course, whether the price in terms of democratic legitimacy has not been excessively high. Thus, as discussed by Kitschelt and Rehm (2012),

in the countries most hit by the crisis we are not only witnessing processes of cartelization (formation of technocratic or grand coalition governments in Greece and Italy), but also of dealignment (dramatic loss of voters of pro-European mainstream parties in Greece, Ireland, Italy, and – for the time being only in the polls – Spain). The fact that these party systems have never fully articulated programmatic alignments like the parties in the other established democracies makes them most vulnerable to the challenge by Euroskeptical populist outsiders under the stress of the crisis. The decline and decomposition of the pro-European mainstream parties in these countries and the corresponding rise of populist contenders on the left and the right has been most apparent in Greece and Italy, but it is also manifesting itself in Spain and Portugal. Nevertheless, it is still an open question what the implications of these developments are for democratic legitimacy in these most critical countries. In response to this question, I would like to answer with the words of Zhou Enlai, who, when asked about the consequences of the French Revolution, replied: ‘it’s too early to tell’.

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