On the substantive theme and questions of CSES Module 2

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Supporting Election Studies in Africa
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Theoretical focus: Representation
Theoretical focus: Accountability
Theoretical focus: Representation and accountability

Via three key theoretical questions:

1) To what extent are elections a mechanism to hold government accountable, as opposed to a means to ensure that citizens' views are properly represented in the democratic process?

2) New set of items on citizen engagement and cognition across democratic polities.

3) The module further elaborated the question how voters' choices are affected by the institutional context within which those choices are made.
Module 2: Continuity and change

Continuity

Demographic variables
  Added: Membership in associations; Spouse SES

District-level variables
Topic 2 “on citizen engagement and cognition across democratic polities”

Political participation

Examples:

Here is a list of things some people do during elections. Which if any did you do during the most recent election? ...talked to other people to persuade them to vote for a particular party or candidate? ....showed your support for a particular party or candidate by, for example, attending a meeting, putting up a poster, or in some other way?
Political participation

Examples:

(Have you) taken part in a protest, march or demonstration?

(Have you) worked together with people who shared the same concern?
Most important issue

What do you think has been the most important issue facing [country] over the last [...] years?

Evaluation of government performance

With reference to the most important issue

In general

Performance of party r voted for in previous election

How well did the party you voted for then perform over the past [...] years? Has it done a very good job? a good job? a bad job? a very bad job?
(Topic 1) Perceived representation

How well voters' views are represented in elections

Thinking about how elections in [country] work in practice, how well do elections ensure that the views of voters are represented by Majority Parties: very well, quite well, not very well, or not well at all?

Is there a party [leader] that represents r's views

Would you say that any of the parties in [country] represents your views reasonably well?

Party [leader] that represents r's views best
Please tell me how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Democracy may have problems but it's better than any other form of government."

How much respect is there for individual freedom and human rights nowadays in (country)? Do you feel there is a lot of respect for individual freedom, some respect, not much respect, or no respect at all?

How widespread do you think corruption such as bribe taking is amongst politicians in [country]: very widespread, quite widespread, not very widespread, it hardly happens at all?
Removed topics and questions

Assessment of the fairness of electoral process

Evaluation of political parties
  Political parties care what people think
  Political parties are necessary

Evaluation of economic performance

Do people express political opinion
Continuity and change in macro variables

New topics

- European Parliament political group
- Significant parties not represented in parliament before [after] the election
- Consensus on the left-right placements
- Number of portfolios before [after] (by party)
- Size of the cabinet before [after]
- Items on Federalism
‘The key theoretical question to be addressed by the second module is the contrast between the view that elections are a mechanism to hold government accountable and the view that they are a mean to ensure that citizens' views and interests are properly represented in the democratic process. It is intended to explore how far this contrast and its embodiment in institutional structures influences vote choice and satisfaction with democracy.’

*Source material: Satisfaction with democracy: do institutions matter?, by Kees Aarts & Jacques Thomassen
Function of elections: Majoritarian view

Selection of government

Concentration of power - elected majority
Under control of majority of electorate

Requirement 1: clarity of responsibility
  Who responsible for government policy
  Alternative government identifiable

Requirement 2: voters’ sanction effective

Condition: majoritarian system
  Clear choice between two (groups of) parties
  Winning party takes over government responsibility
Function of elections: The consensus (proportional) view

Elect parliament as representative as possible of the people

- Multi-party system » coalition governments
- No coercive relation between outcome election and government formation
- Government responsibility blurred
Research Design

**Political Institutions**
- Majoritarian
- Proportional

**Perceptions**
- Accountability
- Representativeness

**Evaluations**
- Satisfaction with democracy
Accountability

Q10 ‘Some people say that no matter who people vote for, it won’t make a difference to what happens. Others say that who people vote for can make a difference to what happens. Using the scale on this card, (where ONE means that voting won’t make a difference to what happens and FIVE means that voting can make a difference) where would you place yourself?’
Perceived representation

Q15 ‘Thinking about how elections in {country} work in practice, how well do elections ensure that the views of voters are represented by MPs: very well, quite well, not very well, or not well at all?’
Analytical scheme: Micro-level relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception of representativeness</th>
<th>Perception of political accountability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>low</td>
<td>low, low satisfaction, intermediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>high</td>
<td>high, high satisfaction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Results: Hungary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception of representative</th>
<th>Perception of accountability</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>low</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(very) satisfied</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>high</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“For the pool of all elections in the data set, the question whether people feel represented by their members of parliament is much more important for their satisfaction with democracy than whether they think it makes a difference whom they vote for.”
The effect of macro-level characteristics

Hypotheses:

Majoritarian > Accountability
Proportional > Representation

Results:

“compared with their counterparts in majoritarian systems, citizens in proportional systems are more positive about both the representation and the accountability functions of democracy, which is clearly at odds with the theories outlined earlier ...”
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