

Electoral Institutions and Satisfaction With Democracy

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Elections as instruments of democracy

Elections are instruments of democracy; they are instrumental in linking the preferences of citizens to the behaviour of policymakers (Powell 2000). What exactly ‘linking the preferences of citizens to the behaviour of policy makers’ is supposed to mean, is the subject of normative theories of political representation and representative democracy. Political representation, as much as democracy, is an essentially contested concept (Connolly 1993) and its meaning and implications differ from one normative view on political representation to the other.

A main point of difference between theories of political representation is the function of elections. Whereas in majoritarian theories the function of government *accountability* is emphasized, proportional theories emphasize the selection of a *representative* legislature. This difference is reflected in the choice of electoral systems, which can be ordered according to the degree of proportionality or representativeness and to the degree of accountability they tend to produce. But in the end the performance of electoral systems cannot only be assessed by examining their mechanics. These mechanics have to be perceived and evaluated by the voters. How do the voters in different political systems perceive accountability and representativeness, and what effects does this have for their satisfaction with democracy? This is the general question addressed here.

In the next section, we elaborate the accountability-representativeness distinction. This discussion results in a set of more specific research questions. After a description of the data used for the analysis, and the operationalization of the key concepts, we will answer our research questions.

Which instruments for what kind of democracy?

This is not the place to review the extensive literature on theories and models of political representation (but see Andeweg and Thomassen 2005; Birch 1971; Manin 1997; Pitkin 1967; Powell 2000; Przeworski, Stokes, and Manin 1999; Thomassen 1994). Instead, we focus on the majoritarian and consensus models of democracy (Lijphart 1999). The major difference between the majoritarian and proportional vision is their view on the essence of democratic government and consequently the function of elections. Both visions agree that the very essence of democracy is

government by the people, be it directly or indirectly. But the two visions disagree with regard to the question who should do the governing and to whose interests the government should be responsive when the people are in disagreement and have divergent preferences.

According to the majoritarian view the answer to this question is: the majority of the people. In the proportional view the answer should be: as many people as possible (Lijphart 1999: 1-2). As a consequence these two visions attribute different functions to elections.

In the majoritarian view the single most important function of an election is the selection of a government. It requires that the voters have a clear choice between two competing (groups of) parties. The concentration of power in the hands of an elected majority government brings the government under tight control of the majority of the electorate. This control can be based on two different mechanisms, depending on voters' time perspective or rather the considerations they take into account when they decide how to vote.. If voters base their choice on what the (two) competing parties have on offer in their party manifestos, the winning party can be said to have a policy mandate from a majority of the electorate (Powell 2000: 8). This is basically the mechanism assumed by the Responsible Party Model (Association 1950; Klingemann, Hofferbert, and Budge 1994; Schattschneider 1942; Thomassen 1994).

However, this model of political representation is very demanding, in particular with regard to what is required of the voters. Also, a single vote can hardly provide a policy mandate for a multiple package of issue-dimensions. Therefore, this model is often claimed to be totally unrealistic and unfeasible (Riker 1982; Thomassen 1994). An alternative and perhaps more feasible model is based on Schumpeter's idea of a competitive democracy. According to this view 'modern political democracy is a system of governance in which rulers are held accountable for their actions in the public realm by citizens'. In this model elections are an accountability mechanism, where the sanctions are to extend or not to extend the government's tenure (Schumpeter 1976 (1942), Chapter 22). The major difference with the policy mandate model is that voters make their vote choice on the basis of their evaluation of the performance of the incumbent government. If they are satisfied with that performance they will vote for the party or parties in government, if they are dissatisfied, they will 'kick the rascals out'. Or as Walter Lipmann wrote more than fifty years ago: 'To support the Ins when things are going well; to support the Outs

when they seem to be going badly, this . . . is the essence of popular government' (cf. Powell 2000: 10). This model of accountability is far less demanding of the voters because all they need to know is which party, or coalition of parties, is in power and which one in the opposition. Their information about the content of government policy can be limited. Being satisfied or dissatisfied with the government, its policies or the outcomes thereof, is all it takes. In the minimal definition of Riker: 'The essence of the liberal interpretation of voting is the notion that voting permits the rejection of candidates or officials who have offended so many voters that they cannot win an election.'

An essential requirement of this model of accountability at the system level is the *clarity of responsibility*. Accountability is by definition close to impossible if it is not perfectly clear who, i.e. which political party or coalition of parties, is responsible for government policy. But not only the incumbent but also the possible alternative future government must be identifiable. A second requirement is that the voters' sanction of the party or parties in power is effective, i.e. that they really can kick the rascals out without the risk that they (or some of them) will return to power after having lost the elections. This mechanism can only work in a majoritarian system where two (blocks of) parties compete for a majority of the votes and the winner automatically takes (over) government responsibility.

In consensus models of democracies, or proportional systems, the major function of elections is to elect the members of parliament who together should be as representative as possible of the electorate as a whole. The criterion for the democratic quality of the system is how representative parliament really is. There is no coercive relationship between the election outcome and the formation of the government. As a multi-party system is one of the characteristics of a consensus model of democracy, a coalition of several parties will be needed to form a majority government. Coalitions will usually be broad, making it inevitable that at least some parties will return in government after the elections even if at the elections voters clearly demonstrate their dissatisfaction with the outgoing government. Therefore, usually there is an overlap between the new and the old coalition, blurring the clarity of responsibility and making the sanction of elections as an instrument of accountability into a rather blunt weapon.

Just as in the case of a majoritarian system, we can distinguish between voters basing their vote on retrospective or prospective judgments. However, for our

purposes this distinction is not really relevant. In both cases the single most important criterion of the democratic quality of the system is the representativeness of parliament.

Between them, the two models of democracy fulfill the two most important functions which elections in a representative democracy have according to mainstream normative democratic theory. First, elections allow voters to determine the political colour of their government, making government accountable to the judgment of the people. Secondly, elections should produce a legislature that is representative of the division of political opinion amongst the electorate. However, it may be obvious that there is a certain tension between these two functions. Electoral systems and more in general democratic systems cannot optimally serve both functions at the same time. Majoritarian models of democracy are supposed to optimise the *accountability function*, consensus models of democracy the *representation function*.

The key question then is which model serves democracy best. This, however, is hard to say because the two visions on representative democracy represent two different normative views on democracy and incorporate different electoral institutions which are supposed to serve different purposes or at least different aspects of democracy. As Powell (2000: 7) argues: ‘empirical predictions about the nature of the citizen-policymaker relationship will focus on dissimilar dependent variables and not really be alternative theories about achieving the same goal’.

One way out of this dilemma is to transform these dependent variables into independent variables, and make a comparative assessment of the extent to which majoritarian and proportional systems of government are instrumental for democracy, defined at a higher level of abstraction (cf. Brecht 1959). This is the approach taken in several major pieces of previous research. Powell for instance starts from the normative assumption that democratic policy makers should do what their citizens want them to do. The role of elections then is to link the preferences of citizens to the behavior of their policy makers (Powell 2000: 251). His empirical findings prove that if this is taken as the main function of democratic elections ‘the proportional vision and its designs enjoyed a clear advantage over their majoritarian counterparts in using elections as instruments of democracy’ (Powell 2000: 254).

In a similar vein Lijphart in his *Patterns of Democracy* (Lijphart 1999) tries to assess whether the distinction between majoritarian and consensus democracy makes

a difference for how well democracy works. By comparing majoritarian and consensus democracies on a number of performance indicators he comes to the conclusion that consensus democracies perform better in almost every respect. They score better on the best-known indexes of democracy, women are better represented in parliament, consensus democracies are more egalitarian, turnout is higher, citizens in consensus democracies are significantly more satisfied with democratic performance in their countries than citizens of majoritarian democracies.

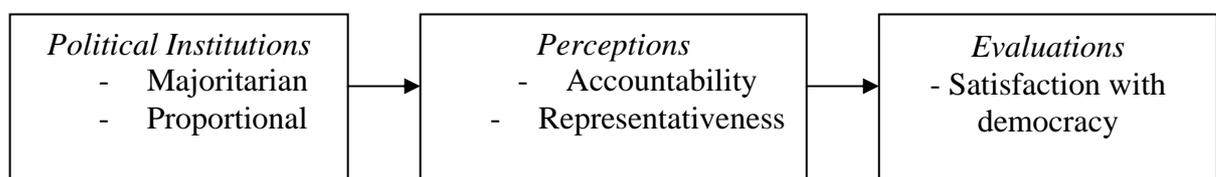
Part of Lijphart's argument is based on people's *satisfaction with democracy*. Referring to earlier work of Klingemann (1999), Lijphart comes to the conclusion that citizens in consensus democracies are significantly more satisfied with democratic performance in their countries than citizens of majoritarian democracies. The difference is approximately 17 percentage points.¹

Research questions

In this paper we will take these latter findings as a point of departure. The problem with these findings is that we still don't know how to explain the relationship between an institutional characteristic (type of democracy) and a characteristic at the micro-level (satisfaction with the functioning of democracy). In this paper we will try to assess to what extent this relationship can be interpreted by introducing people's perception of the accountability and representativeness of the political system in their country.

This main research question is represented in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Research Design



¹ Lijphart also refers to Anderson and Guillory (1997) who found that in all countries respondents who voted for the winning party or parties were more likely to be satisfied with democracy than respondents who had voted for the losing party or parties. They also found that in consensus democracies the differences between winners and losers were significantly smaller than in majoritarian democracies (Lijphart 1999: 286-7). In a later version of this paper we will try to assess to what extent these findings can be explained by introducing people's perceptions of accountability and representation.

The Comparative Study of Electoral System's (CSES) second module makes it possible for the first time to unravel the relationship between these three sets of variables. It contains questions on people's *perception* of both the *accountability* and the *representativeness* of their political system in addition to a question on how satisfied people are with the functioning of democracy in their country.

We will use these questions to explain the relationship found in previous studies between models of democracy and satisfaction with democracy. We will develop our analysis in three consecutive steps. We will start by exploring the relationships at the micro level, i.e. the relationships between people's perceptions of the accountability and representativeness of the political system and their satisfaction with the functioning of democracy in their country. In this analysis our main analytic instrument will be based on the following scheme (Figure 2). Entries refer to satisfaction with democracy.

Figure 2 Analytical scheme

		Perception of political representation	
		low	high
Perception of political accountability	low	low satisfaction	intermediate
	high	intermediate	high satisfaction

If we assume that both the perception of accountability and of representation have an effect on satisfaction with democracy, we can expect the highest satisfaction with democracy among people who are satisfied with both functions and the lowest level among people who are dissatisfied with both. But the most interesting question refers to the off-diagonal cells. By comparing these two cells we will be able to assess to what extent people give different weights to the two functions in their assessment of the quality of democracy in their country

Secondly, we will analyze the relationship between the type of political system (majoritarian versus proportional) and people's assessment of their political system: are the differences between these two types reflected in people's perceptions of accountability and representativeness, i.e. are people in majoritarian systems more

satisfied with the accountability of the system, whereas people in consensus democracies are more satisfied with the representativeness of the system? And are people in proportional systems indeed more satisfied with democracy than people in countries with a majoritarian system?

And if so – and this is the third step in our analysis –, can this relationship be explained by introducing people's perceptions of accountability and representativeness as intervening variables?

It would however be naive to suggest that differences in satisfaction are caused exclusively, or even predominantly by institutional differences. The CSES data set includes both advanced industrial democracies and newly established democracies. In a new democracy it is difficult for people to distinguish between the performance of the incumbent government and the (new) democratic regime. Only gradually will people learn to make a distinction between the performance of the incumbent government and the performance of the regime and not to blame the regime for a poor performance of the incumbent government. Therefore, we can expect that people who are dissatisfied with government policy will be inclined to extend their dissatisfaction to the system of government, at least more so than in established democracies. If we take into consideration that the (economic) performance of many of the newly established democracies is poor, we should expect that the satisfaction with democracy in these countries, whatever their institutional arrangements, is low. Therefore, we shall take the distinction between old and new democracies into account as well.

Data and operationalization of main concepts

Data

In this paper we make use of the December 15, 2004 release of CSES Module 2 (second advance release).² This interim release has been compiled from sixteen election studies for fifteen different elections in fifteen countries, between 2001 and 2003. Two studies of the 2002 German Bundestag elections have been included in the release. In this paper, we will only use one of these two studies, namely the telephone survey. Most of our analyses will employ data from only fourteen elections, since one

² Data and documentation can be downloaded from <http://www.umich.edu/~cses/> (accessed April 1, 2005).

essential question for our purposes is missing in the 2001 Norwegian Storting election study.

Variables at the micro level

Satisfaction with democracy

This concept was measured in CSES, module 2, in the same way as in many previous studies, by simply asking:

Q8 *'On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not satisfied, or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in {country}?''*

Perception of accountability

In the CSES module several questions trying to measure the perception of accountability were asked. The most relevant one for our purposes is:

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?'*³

Perception of representativeness.

As in the case of accountability, several CSES questions measure (aspects of) people's perception of the representativeness of the political system. The following question on how well people think voters' views are represented in elections serves our purposes best.

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?'*

³ The validity of this question as an indicator of the perception of accountability is disputable. What we really want to measure is the clarity of government responsibility and the possibility of voters to sanction government parties they are dissatisfied with. A majoritarian system like the British is almost perfect on both variables, but if the two main parties have learned their lessons from Downsian theory the voters will be faced with a choice between Tweedledee and Tweedledum. What this implies for people's answers to the question whether it makes a difference which party people vote for, we simply don't know. Still, this question is the best indicator for the perception of accountability available in the CSES questionnaire.

Variables at the macro level

Measuring accountability and representation at the macro level: constitutional design

At the outset, we note that accountability and representativeness in Powell's view are characteristics of *elections* rather than systems. Powell (2000) argues that the extent to which an election can be seen as "accountable" depends on the answers to two questions. The first question is: can a voter identify the alternative future governments before the election? Pre-election identifiability may take any of the following forms (Powell (2000, 71-72):

- electoral law creates a legislative majority for a single party
- alternative future governments are offered to the voter
- there are "strong expectations" about post-election coalitions.

The second question is whether the election produces a majority for one of the identified possible future governments. This may take one of the following two forms (Powell 2000, 77-78):

- majority support of citizens of voting age for one of the identified future governments (an extremely rare event)
- majority support in the legislature for one of the identified future governments

The answers to these two questions for a number of elections result in a basic mandate score for each country, which is subsequently transformed into a net mandate score by taking the possibility of a blocked mandate into account. A blocked mandate occurs if, after the election, the opposition controls a strong upper house or a strong presidency, or if the main government party lacks cohesion.

Effective representation is measured as the sum of the percentage of voters who voted for parties that entered government and a measure of effective opposition representation (compiled from the the percentage of parliamentary seats for the opposition weighted by the probable influence of these opposition seats in parliament).

Powell then validates his measures of accountability and effective representation by comparing them with the constitutional design of the country: is it primarily a proportional, a majoritarian, or a mixed design? Pure proportional design is characterized by a proportional electoral rule and facilitation of opposition influence in parliamentary committees. Pure majoritarian design is characterized by single-member electoral districts and government domination of parliamentary committees. Mixed designs include multimember districts and/or weak committees

with shared chairs. Constitutional design appears to be a very good predictor of the measures of accountability and (to a somewhat lesser extent) of effective representation.

Applying Powell's measures of accountability and effective representation as outlined above in our analysis poses some serious problems. First, several of the election studies in CSES Module 2 have been conducted in relatively new democracies, in which the institutions of accountability and representation are hardly solidified yet. In these new democracies, institutions can relatively easily be changed. Secondly, we already noted that in Powell's definition accountability and representation are characteristics of elections. These measures provide reliable information about a country's institutions only when several, and preferably many elections are observed per country. When, in contrast, a single election per country is observed (as is usually the case in CSES), the observed accountability and representation will be subject to serious (nonsystematic) measurement error. Thirdly, Samuels (2004) has recently questioned the issue of government accountability (for the economy) in presidential systems. Depending on whether elections for the legislature are concurrent or nonconcurrent with presidential elections (i.e., the president is, or is not elected at the same time as the legislature), government accountability will be high (concurrent) or low (nonconcurrent). Samuels's argument requires that presidential systems are treated as a category of its own when studying accountability.

In conclusion, Powell's measures of accountability and effective representation at the macro level are probably the most detailed and well-developed that are available, but they will not do for our purpose in this paper. Instead, we decided to use Powell's simpler, but effective characterization of countries by their constitutional design as explained above, and have accordingly labeled the cases in CSES Module 2. In addition, the presidential systems of France, Mexico and Taiwan require special consideration. In Mexico, the parliamentary elections are always concurrent with the presidential election - therefore, following (and generalizing) Samuels (2004), government accountability in Mexican elections for parliament or president should be relatively high. In Taiwan and in France, the elections are nonconcurrent. The 2002 French election was a presidential contest, whereas the 2001 Taiwan election was a legislative Yuan election. For both cases, we should expect relatively low government accountability. We have created a special category for

these presidential systems with nonconcurrent elections. In our analyses, we will designate the systems with a proportional constitutional design as the category of reference.

These considerations result in the categories depicted in Table 1. It is clear that the available data in the second advance release of CSES Module 2 do not yet include a straightforwardly majoritarian constitutional system. Powell (2000: 39) places France in the majoritarian category, but referring to French presidentialism (with nonconcurrent elections), we have labeled France together with Taiwan as a class of their own.

Table 1 **Constitutional design**

Proportional	Bulgaria Germany Israel New Zealand Norway Poland Portugal Sweden Switzerland
Mixed	Czech Republic Hungary Mexico Ireland
Majoritarian	(no cases)
Presidential (nonconcurrent elections)	France Taiwan

Old and new democracies

We argued that citizens will only gradually learn to distinguish between the performance of the incumbent government and the performance of the democratic regime. In our analyses we will therefore introduce a control for the age of the democratic systems. We distinguish between old, established democracies and new, recent democracies.

Most of our cases can easily be classified according to this scheme. Germany, Israel, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, Ireland and France are classified as old democracies, with at least several decades of free and fair elections and other civil liberties. Bulgaria, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary are

among the newer democracies established after the breakdown of the Soviet empire. Somewhat problematic are Mexico and Taiwan. Until 2000, Mexico - for many decades dominated by one single party - was rated lower than “2” on the Freedom House index⁴ - meaning that it was “partly free” at the best. Something similar applies to Taiwan until the late 1990s (“partly free” according to the Freedom House index), when the newly formed Democratic Progressive Party and the Chinese New Party gradually increased their impact on Taiwan politics. For these reasons, we have classified Mexico and Taiwan under the “new democracies” as well. In our analyses, we will treat the old democracies as the reference category.

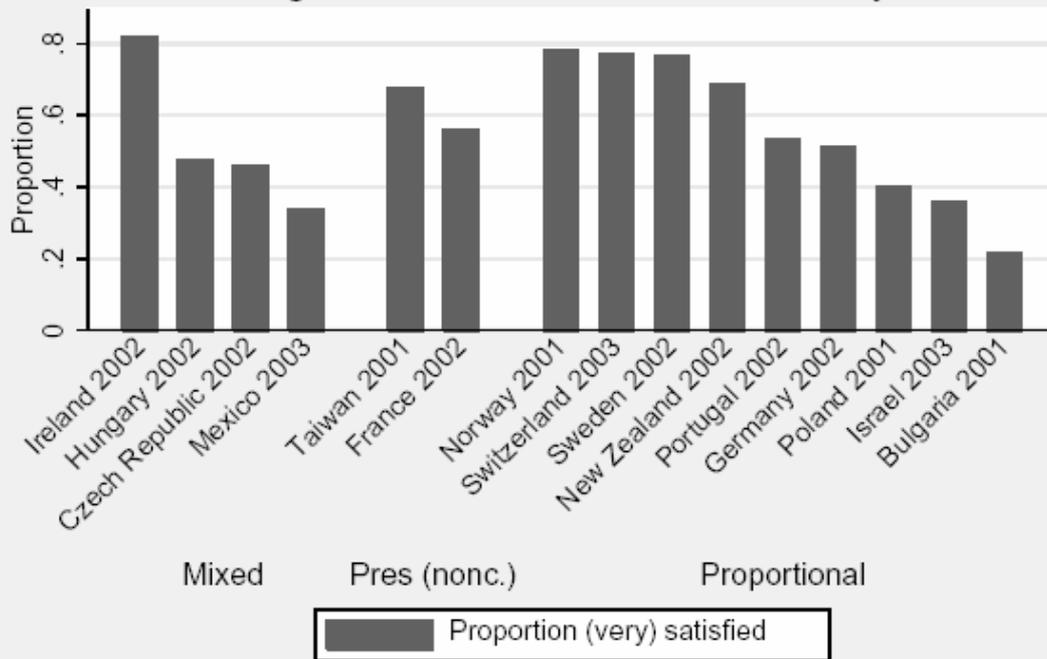
Perceptions of accountability and representation, and satisfaction with democracy

Figures 3, 4 and 5 offer a first impression of how different countries are in terms of our three main variables at the micro-level. Satisfaction with democracy (Figure 3) varies from more than 80% being (very) satisfied with democracy (Ireland) to just over 20% (Bulgaria). These differences clearly suggest that we are unlikely to be able to explain most variance in satisfaction with democracy by institutional differences. As all the newly established democracies in Central and Eastern Europe have a low, and most advanced industrial democracies in Northern Europe have a high average satisfaction with democracy, the age of democracy and the level of economic development are probably more relevant for the satisfaction with democracy than institutional differences. And, of course, we know from previous research how important these characteristics are.

The country differences with regard to the other two variables are less extreme. Figure 4 presents the proportion of respondents per country answering that it makes a difference who people vote for. In most countries a large majority of the people think that it does make a difference. What is striking though is that Germany with its semi-two-party system is at the bottom of these figures whereas Switzerland with its permanent grand coalitions is close to the top.

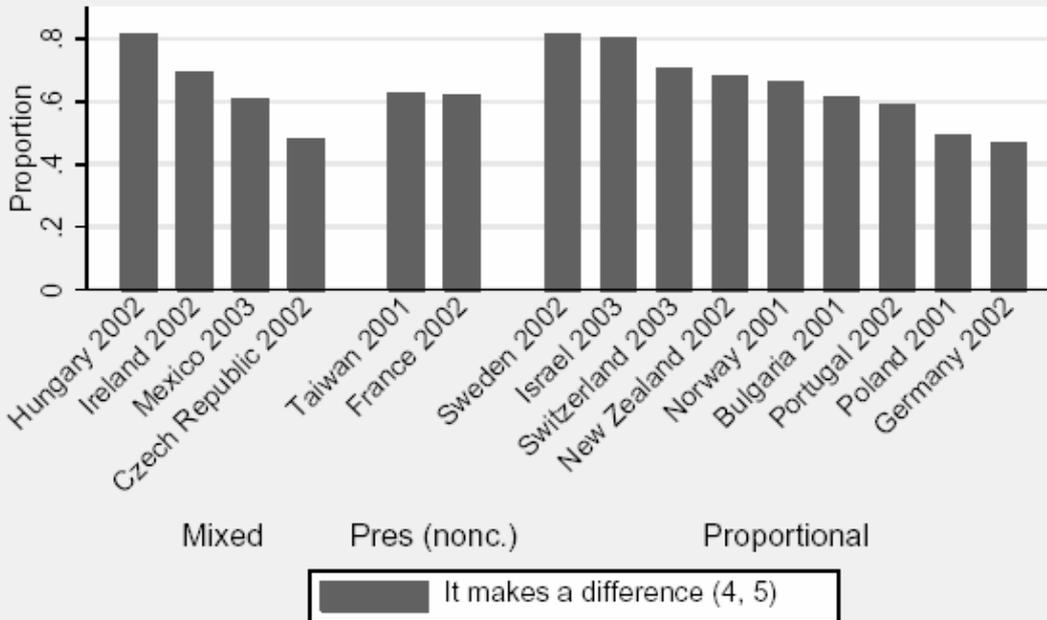
⁴ Refer to: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/ratings/index.htm> (accessed April 1, 2005).

Figure 3 Satisfaction with democracy

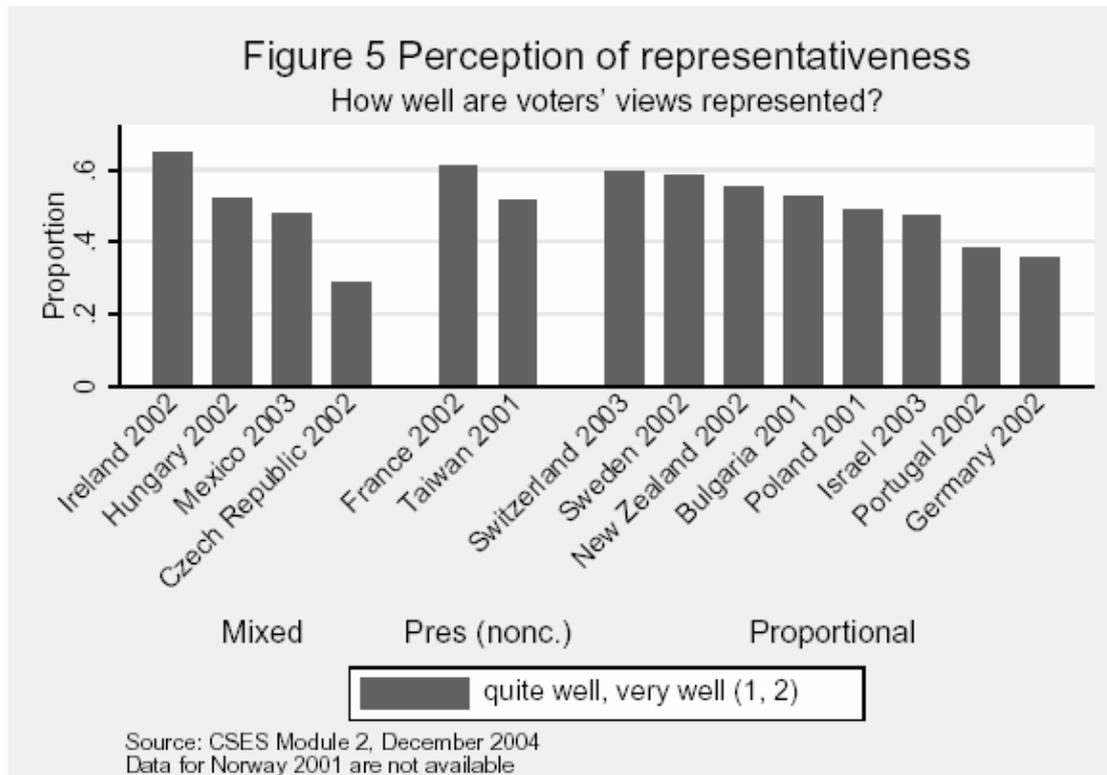


Source: CSES Module 2, December 2004

Figure 4 Perception of accountability
Does it make a difference who people vote for?



Source: CSES Module 2, December 2004



In Figure 5 the answers to the question how well respondents think voters' views are represented do not lend themselves for an immediate interpretation either. In the next section we will try to explain these differences by the two macro-variables introduced in the previous section. In this section we will further explore the relationships between the three variables at the micro-level.

The basic trivariate relationships between accountability, representativeness, and satisfaction with democracy are presented by election in Table 2. The data in Table 2 enable us to assess for each country the relative contribution of people's perception of accountability and representativeness to their satisfaction with democracy. The table corresponds with the analytical scheme presented in Figure 2.

Table 2 Average Satisfaction with Democracy, by Perception of Accountability and Perception of Representativeness

	Accountability				Accountability		
Bulgaria		Low	High	Czech Rep		Low	High
Representativeness	Low	0.22 (173)	0.22 (200)	Representativeness	Low	0.36 (288)	0.36 (242)
	High	0.32 (103)	0.30 (306)		High	0.62 (71)	0.74 (150)
France		Low	High	Germany		Low	High
Representativeness	Low	0.36 (169)	0.49 (213)	Representativeness	Low	0.35 (746)	0.51 (512)
	High	0.57 (204)	0.69 (386)		High	0.69 (299)	0.69 (389)
Hungary		Low	High	Ireland		Low	High
Representativeness	Low	0.28 (115)	0.36 (407)	Representativeness	Low	0.60 (291)	0.71 (459)
	High	0.50 (80)	0.63 (498)		High	0.90 (333)	0.90 (1044)
Israel		Low	High	Mexico		Low	High
Representativeness	Low	0.25 (130)	0.32 (454)	Representativeness	Low	0.21 (387)	0.31 (527)
	High	0.31 (93)	0.44 (419)		High	0.39 (315)	0.42 (518)
New Zealand		Low	High	Poland		Low	High
Representativeness	Low	0.45 (304)	0.54 (383)	Representativeness	Low	0.28 (426)	0.41 (290)
	High	0.77 (172)	0.85 (680)		High	0.45 (278)	0.51 (433)
Portugal		Low	High	Sweden		Low	High
Representativeness	Low	0.47 (244)	0.47 (315)	Representativeness	Low	0.53 (110)	0.67 (285)
	High	0.61 (127)	0.60 (229)		High	0.81 (69)	0.86 (498)
Switzerland		Low	High	Taiwan		Low	High
Representativeness	Low	0.60 (206)	0.67 (311)	Representativeness	Low	0.62 (307)	0.58 (454)
	High	0.80 (152)	0.88 (594)		High	0.73 (251)	0.74 (545)

Note: Entries denote the proportion of respondents who are (very) satisfied with the way democracy works in their country, and the number of respondents between parentheses.

As explained above, we expect in Table 2 additive effects of the perception of accountability and the perception of representativeness on satisfaction with democracy. This implies that we should expect:

- a. A positive effect of accountability on satisfaction with democracy within each row of the table.
- b. A positive effect of representativeness on satisfaction with democracy within each column of the table.
- c. The highest level of satisfaction with democracy in the lower-right hand cell of each sub-table.
- d. The lowest level of satisfaction with democracy in the upper left-hand cell of each sub-table.

We have no clear expectation with regard to the off-diagonal cells. Still, knowing the difference between these cells is of the utmost importance for our purposes because this difference is an indication of the relative weights of the perception of accountability and representativeness in people's evaluation of the quality of democracy in their country.

The effect of accountability

Of the twenty-eight differences in satisfaction with democracy between people with a different perception of the degree of accountability in their country, twenty are positive, i.e. people who perceive their political system as more accountable are more satisfied with democracy than people who do not share this perception. In five cases there is no effect (levels of satisfaction are the same between columns), whereas in three cases the effect is negative. Therefore, in general our expectation is borne out. In most cases a positive perception of the degree of accountability in one's country contributes positively to the satisfaction with democracy, even when we control for the perception of the degree of representativeness. Why it is that in some countries this effect is larger than in other countries, is not immediately clear. We will come back to this in the next section where we will try to explain these differences by taking the macro-characteristics of these countries into account.

The effect of representativeness

The conclusion with regard to representativeness is more unequivocal. In all twenty-eight cases the effect is positive. Moreover, the effect of representativeness is almost without exception much larger than the effect of accountability. However, we should not overinterpret this finding given our misgivings about the operationalization of the perception of accountability.

The combined effect of accountability and representativeness

The remaining expectations and questions all refer to the combined effect of the two perceptions. In most subtables the lowest satisfaction with democracy is to be found in the upper left-hand cell, i.e. among people who have a negative perception of both the accountability and the representativeness of the political system, whereas the combination of a positive perception on both dimensions leads to the highest level of satisfaction. The few exceptions to this general rule without exception refer to the few cases where the perception of accountability does not have a positive effect on the satisfaction with democracy.

A comparison of the two off-diagonal cells only confirms that the effect of representativeness is much stronger than the effect of accountability. This is the case in all countries with the exception of Israel. But once more we don't want to jump to conclusions because of the disputable operationalization of the perception of accountability.

Constitutional design, age of democracy, perceptions, and satisfaction with democracy

In this section we will try to answer the two remaining research questions. Our second research question refers to the relationship between the type of political system (majoritarian vs proportional) and people's assessment of their political system: are the differences between these two types reflected in people's perceptions of accountability and representativeness, i.e. are people in majoritarian systems more satisfied with the accountability of the system, whereas people in consensus democracies are more satisfied with the representativeness of the system? And are people in proportional systems indeed more satisfied with democracy than people in countries with a majoritarian system as Lijphart argues? As argued in section 3 we will also take into account a second macro-variable, the age of democracy.

In Table 3, proportional systems are the reference category in a logistic analysis of the impact of constitutional design on perceptions of accountability and representativeness. Following the arguments just rehearsed, we therefore expect *positive* effects (odds ratios exceeding 1.00) of mixed and presidential systems on accountability, and *negative* effects (odds ratios lower than 1.00) of these two dummy variables on the perception of representativeness.

Table 3 Explaining perceptions of accountability and representativeness with macro-variables

	Perceived accountability			Perceived representativeness		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Mixed design	1.12** (0.04)	1.29** (0.04)	1.18** (0.06)	1.15** (0.04)	1.30** (0.05)	1.96** (0.10)
Presidential (nonconcurrent) design	0.96 (0.04)	1.11* (0.05)	0.85* (0.06)	1.27** (0.05)	1.45** (0.07)	1.66** (0.11)
New democracy	--	0.71** (0.02)	0.62** (0.03)	--	0.73** (0.02)	1.08 (0.05)
New democracy * Mixed design	--	--	1.25** (0.09)	--	--	0.41** (0.03)
New democracy * Presidential (nonconcurrent) design	--	--	1.63** (0.15)	--	--	0.63** (0.06)
n =	22,671	22,671	22,671	19,128	19,128	19,128
Pseudo-R ² =	0.001	0.004	0.006	0.002	0.005	0.011

Notes: Dependent variables: perception of accountability (refer to Figure 4)), and perception of representativeness (refer to Figure 5). Entries denote odds ratios from a logistic regression analysis, and robust standard errors within parentheses.

For both perceived accountability and perceived representativeness, Model 1 summarizes a logistic regression on the two institutional dummy variables (mixed design and presidential design) only. We see that the coefficient for mixed designs in the model for accountability is in the expected direction. In mixed systems, perceptions of accountability are higher than in proportional systems. For presidential designs, we did not formulate a clear expectation. The associated effect for

accountability is nonsignificant - i.e., perceptions of accountability in nonconcurrent presidential designs are not significantly different than in proportional designs.

But surprisingly, Model 1 also shows positive effects of both mixed designs and presidentialism on the perceived representativeness. This contradicts our expectation. Apparently, people living in mixed and in presidential systems feel more often politically represented than people in proportional systems. However, it is possible that this finding is actually caused by omitting important variables. We explained why the age of democracy should be taken into account in the analysis, and this is done by Model 2.

The first thing to be noted in Model 2 is that new democracies have a strong depressing effect on both perceived accountability and perceived representativeness. This is in line with our expectations. In new democracies, citizens will find it harder to distinguish between regime and incumbents, and will therefore probably show less satisfaction with democracy. For the same reason, they are also less likely to perceive their political system as accountable and representative: this will also depend on their support for the incumbent government (cf. footnote 1).

The other coefficients of interest in Model 2 are those that also appeared in Model 1: the effects of mixed and presidential designs. We see that presidential design now also has a clear effect on accountability in the expected direction, but again, the direction of the effects on representativeness is in the wrong direction. At this point, we do not have a ready explanation for these counterintuitive findings. They may be attributed to the particular sample of countries in this release of the data set, but of course we simply don't know.

Model 3 contains, in addition to the explanatory variables of Model 2, two interaction terms: mixed design with new democracy, and presidential design with new democracy. The reason for introducing these interaction terms into the model is that the age of a democracy may work differently for different constitutional designs. In proportional systems, new democracies may be expected to acquire a certain level of representativeness sooner than in mixed or presidential systems; and vice versa: accountability may sooner be visible in new democracies in the latter two types of systems than in proportional systems. We therefore expect positive effects for the interaction terms when perceived accountability is the dependent variable, and negative effects when perceived representativeness is explained.

The results for Model 3 in Table 3 show that our expectations are borne out this time. Perceived accountability increases in new democracies which are mixed or presidential, when compared with proportional systems. Perceived representativeness decreases in mixed or presidential new democracies, when compared with proportional systems. However, the main effects of mixed and presidential systems on perceived representativeness remain strong but in the opposite direction of what we expected.

Two final cautionary remarks are made at this point. Firstly, it can be seen that the explanatory strength of our models, as measured in the pseudo- R^2 , is invariably negligible or very low. This means that people's perceptions of accountability and representation are affected by probably many other factors: the system characteristics are important but in no way "explain" individual variation in perceptions. Secondly, the small number of countries/elections in the analyses (15 for accountability; 14 for representativeness) implies that at some points we have relatively few degrees of freedom. Introducing interaction terms in Model 3 leads to a good case in point: the interaction term "New democracy * Presidential (nonconcurrent) design" effectively covers only one case, namely Taiwan, which is compared with one other case, namely France.

Our third research question is to what extent the relationship at the macro-level between the constitutional design of the political system and satisfaction with democracy can be explained by people's perception of representativeness and accountability. We answer this question in two steps. We first look at the relationship between satisfaction with democracy and the macro-level variables introduced in Table 3. Thereafter, we introduce the perception-variables, which were dependent in Table 3, as additional explanatory variables in the model.

In Table 4, these two steps are decomposed into four consecutive models which are tested by logistic regression analysis. Model 1 helps us to assess the effect of constitutional design. Bearing in mind the results discussed earlier, it will not come as a surprise that this effect is very modest. A mixed design does not lead to a significantly different level of satisfaction from the reference category, a proportional system. A presidential system (nonconcurrent design) apparently leads to a somewhat higher level of satisfaction with democracy than proportional systems. However, the effect is small and the explained variance is – again – almost negligible.

In Model 2 of Table 4, the age of democracy is added to the equation. The outcome of the analysis confirms what we suggested above: age of democracy is far more important for satisfaction with democracy than the constitutional design and irrespective of the constitutional design. However, what is at least as interesting is that once the age of democracy is taken into account, the constitutional design does have a significant effect. Apparently it was hidden by the dominating effect of the difference between old and new democracies. Also, the effect is in the opposite direction than we should expect from Klingemann's and Lijphart's analyses (see above). Both in mixed systems and presidential systems satisfaction with democracy is higher than in proportional systems. However, so far our findings are based on a very limited number of cases. In particular the number of majoritarian systems in our present data set is too small to warrant any reliable conclusions.

Table 4 Explaining satisfaction with democracy by macro- and micro-level variables

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Mixed design	0.98 (0.03)	1.66** (0.06)	2.59** (0.15)	2.65** (0.16)
Presidential (nonconcurrent) design	1.34** (0.06)	2.36** (0.13)	0.73** (0.05)	0.77** (0.05)
New democracy	--	0.29** (0.01)	0.26** (0.01)	0.35** (0.02)
New democracy * Mixed design	--	--	0.57** (0.04)	0.49** (0.04)
New democracy * Presidential (nonconcurrent) design	--	--	6.20** (.58)	4.91** (0.50)
Perceived accountability	--	--	--	1.37** (0.05)
Perceived representativeness	--	--	--	2.56** (0.08)
n =	22,365	22,365	22,365	18,184
Pseudo R2 =	0.002	0.052	0.070	0.101

Notes: Dependent variable: Satisfaction with the way democracy works (0: not (very); 1: (very) satisfied). Entries denote odds ratios from a logistic regression analysis, and robust standard errors within parentheses.

Model 3 in Table 4 includes the interaction terms of age of democracy and constitutional design. We see that the main effect of presidential design is now negative, but its interaction with age of democracy is strongly positive – again, this interaction in fact refers to the comparison of Taiwan, which has a relatively high

satisfaction with democracy, with France (cf. Figure 3). Additional elections in future releases of the data should enable us to avoid this “variables into proper names” (freely adapted from Przeworski and Teune 1982 (1970)) trap.

Finally, Model 4 in Table 4 introduces the two perception variables of accountability and representativeness in addition to the macro-variables already included. Not surprisingly, given the results presented in Table 3, the perception variables appear to have a clear impact of their own on the satisfaction with democracy, also when the macro characteristics have been taken into account. These individual perceptions are simply too weakly correlated with the macro characteristics to expect a genuine, or even a partial interpretation model. Instead, we observe that individual perceptions of system accountability and representativeness contribute to (individual) satisfaction with democracy *in addition to* system properties. In line with our trivariate analyses presented in Table 2, the effect of perceived representativeness on satisfaction with democracy clearly exceeds that of perceived accountability as measured here.

Conclusion and future work

The central aim of this paper was to assess to what extent the relationship between an institutional characteristic (type of democracy) and a characteristic at the micro-level (satisfaction with the functioning of democracy in one’s country) can be interpreted by introducing people’s perceptions of accountability and representativeness into account. Using an advance release of CSES Module 2, with fourteen or fifteen distinct elections, we presented a very preliminary test. The results of this preliminary test can be summarized in the following points:

- Perceptions of both accountability and representativeness of the political system affect satisfaction with the functioning of democracy. The impact of perceived representativeness is greater than that of perceived accountability
- Constitutional design (in our adaptation from Powell (2000) and Samuels (2004), age of democracy, and their interactions) are related to perceptions of representativeness and accountability, but our findings for constitutional design and representativeness contradict common wisdom

- Constitutional design, age of democracy and their interactions affect the satisfaction with democracy, but in the case of constitutional design this effect is not in the expected direction.
- Once the macro characteristics have been included, perceptions of accountability and of representativeness still exert their own impact on people's satisfaction with the way democracy works in their country (in the expected direction). Therefore, micro-level, perception variables should be regarded as independent explanatory factors of satisfaction with democracy rather than as mere reflections of a country's democratic institutions.

In future work, we will hopefully be able to present analyses of a larger set of elections. Additional cases will help us to avoid some of the pitfalls of comparative research that could hardly be avoided in this paper. Furthermore, we have already indicated the importance of people's position towards the government of the day: did they vote for a winning party, or a losing party, and how does that affect their perceptions of the working of the system and their satisfaction with democracy (cf. footnote 1)? These questions will be addressed in a next draft.

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