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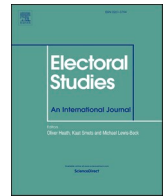
When long-distance relationships don't work out: Representational distance and satisfaction with democracy in Europe

Marcel van Egmond [a],[*], Robert Johns [b], Heinz Brandenburg [c]

[a] *Department of Communication & Amsterdam School of Communication Research (ASCoR), University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands*
[b] *Department of Government, University of Essex, United Kingdom*
[c] *School of Government and Public Policy, University of Strathclyde, United Kingdom*

A B S T R A C T

We assess the impact of party representation on satisfaction with democracy. Our proposition is that such representation is not only about having a chosen party in government; citizens also derive satisfaction from having their views represented by a political party. We test this through an individual-level measure of policy (in) congruence: the ideological distance between a voter and his or her closest party. Via multi-level modelling of European Election Study data from 1989 to 2009, we find that perceived policy distance matters: the further away that voters see themselves from their nearest party – on either a left-right or a European unification policy dimension – the less satisfied they are with democracy. Notably, this effect is not moderated by party incumbency or size. Voters derive satisfaction from feeling represented by a nearby party even if it is small and out of office. Our results caution against a purely outcomes-driven understanding of democratic satisfaction.

1. Introduction

This is not a golden age for electoral democracy in Europe. Turnout has long been declining in most countries, party identification likewise, established party systems have been breaking down, and the recent populist surge seemed to expose a worrying disconnect between elites and electors. When Schmitter and Trechsel, 2004 asserted that "one of the most striking features of European democracies is an apparently widespread feeling of political discontent, disaffection, scepticism, dissatisfaction and cynicism among citizens" (2004, p. 15), they can be accused of exaggeration but not fabrication. Admittedly, there is debate about just how new is this discontent, and whether the current situation constitutes a 'crisis' (Van de Walle et al., 2008; Norris, 2011). But this should not obscure the key point which is that, across Europe, the competition between the major parties at election time leaves a large (and probably a growing) proportion of citizens unimpressed.

In this article, we examine one possible source of such disillusionment: the (un)representativeness of European party systems. Our argument is that citizens derive satisfaction from having a party that represents their views – regardless of whether that party gains office. Conversely, those voters feeling that no party out there shares their preferences are liable to feel let down by electoral politics. There is an

analogy here with social or descriptive representation (Heath, 2015), which bonded citizens to the political system by making them feel that there was a party catering for the interests of 'people like them'. Ideological or policy representation has the potential to do the same, making people feel that views like theirs are given expression at election time. Essentially we propose that voters care not just about what they get out of government, but also about having their views represented – between elections as well as at them.

While there is no shortage of prior research seeking to predict, explain and understand satisfaction with democracy (see, *inter* numerous *alia*, Anderson and Guillory, 1997; Blais and Gélineau, 2007; Lühiste, 2014), relatively little of this has focused on aspects of representation. A first important exception is Myunghee Kim's study study showing that 'incongruence' – defined as the distance between a voter's ideological position and the position of the median party in parliament – generates dissatisfaction with democracy. This provides a useful departure point for our own work but we move beyond it, conceptually as well as empirically. The conceptual shift is to allow voters' policy preferences to be represented by parties as well as by parliaments or governments. Following from this, the empirical shift is to examine whether satisfaction is driven by a different measure of incongruence, namely the ideological distance between a voter and his or her closest

party. Using European Election Study (EES) data from 1989 to 2009 (Marsh and Mikhaylov, 2014; Author, 2013), we show that it is. Citizens perceiving a party – even a relatively minor player in the system – as closer to them, whether on a left-right ideological or a European unification issue scale, were more satisfied with democracy in their member state. In short, parties matter. Individual parties matter to individuals, and the representativeness of the party system matters to electorates. In the next two sections, we explain why that is, before presenting the data and measures, the results and our conclusions about the representation-satisfaction nexus.

2. How parties represent voters

This article is about representation. More specifically, it is in that subfield of research assessing how far parties or governments manage to represent or respond to citizens' policy preferences. Prior research in this field has been concerned with one citizen in particular: the median voter (Blais and Bodet, 2006; Huber and Powell, 1994; Ezrow and Xezonakis, 2011; Kang and Powell, 2010). When asking whether governments enact the popular will, and how far institutional arrangements encourage them to do so, researchers have interpreted the popular will as represented by that median voter. As Matt Golder and Jacek Stramski summarise, 'the predominant way to conceptualize and measure citizen–representative congruence is in terms of the absolute ideological distance between the median citizen and the *government*' (2010, p. 90, emphasis added).

There are two related limitations in that approach. First, as Golder and Stramski went on to point out, it emphasises the central tendency as opposed to the distribution of citizen preferences. In other words, it takes no account of whether and how opinions vary. Second, it undersells the representational capacity of political parties. While the 'responsible party' model of representation (Miller and Stokes, 1963; Powell, 2004; Schmitt and Thomassen, 1999) acknowledges parties as the crucial linkage between public preferences and policy making, the focus remains on governments. It is by gaining office and enacting their programmes that parties are held to represent their voters. The notion that parties might fulfil representative functions while in opposition is largely ignored.

In response to those limitations, recent studies have begun to examine the representativeness of the party system. The relevant congruence here is not one-to-one, between the median citizen and the government, but many-to-many, between the distributions of ideological preferences in the electorate and in the party system. Golder and Stramski themselves led the way, citing 'the ideal of having a legislature that accurately reflects the ideological preferences of the citizenry as a whole' (2010, p. 91; for a forerunner of this analysis, see Weissberg, 1978). On this reading of congruence, they find that proportional representation systems outperform majoritarian systems, generating parliaments that better represent the ideological diversity within their electorates (see also Dow, 2011).

This helps to explain why Andeweg (2011), examining the highly proportional system of the Netherlands, found high and increasing levels of congruence between the distribution of voters' and MPs' left-right positions. At the other extreme, Brandenburg and Johns, 2014 find that centripetal pressures in the UK's majoritarian system have eroded congruence. Dramatic ideological convergence by the major parties has left them unable to cater for the broader spread of opinion within the electorate. This is a specific example of the general tendency, highlighted in the agent-based models reported by Laver and Sergenti (2011), for vote-seeking parties to outperform parties that remain ideologically representative of their traditional or current supporters. Downsian party competition may increase the representativeness of governments, but it is prone also to work against the representativeness of the party system unless – as in the case of the Netherlands – new parties can emerge to occupy the territory vacated by converging major parties.

While these studies share a broad purpose, they differ somewhat in their empirical approach to many-to-many representation. Golder and Stramski (2010) draw cumulative distribution functions (CDFs) for both citizens and parties within a country. (See Andeweg, 2011 for a similar approach.) The (un)representativeness of a party system is thus a matter of how far the area between those two CDFs differs from zero. One inevitable source of disjuncture is the fact that, while voters are distributed quasi-continuously across the ideological spectrum, parties are few and (sometimes) far between. That point underlies the different approach taken by Laver (2011) and Brandenburg and Johns, 2014, who focus on distances rather than distributions. For them, the hypothetical ideal is one in which every voter has a party at his or her ideological location but, given a limited number of parties, the ideal configuration is one which at least minimises voter-party distances. Laver, for example, shows that if voters are normally distributed along a spectrum then representation in a two-party system is maximised where those parties are roughly ±0.8 standard deviations from the mean voter (2011, 494). This points to a straightforward measure of party system representativeness: *the mean distance between citizens and their nearest party.* Thus, although party system representativeness is a characteristic of a political system, it can be operationalized by aggregating an individual-level indicator. And that individual-level variable, the distance between an elector and his or her nearest party, is central to this article because we are interested in individual citizens' sense of being represented. For brevity and variety, we will sometimes refer to this individual-level variable as representational distance. While the hypothetical ideal, as outlined above, is a distance of zero where the party represents exactly what a voter wants, citizens probably accept that they cannot demand a party in full and precise agreement with them. What they would seek is a party that is at least close to them ideologically. How close is close enough, of course, is an empirical question.

The literature reviewed so far has been based conceptually on a single ideological spectrum. In practice, this has invariably been the left-right dimension which is the predominant structuring principle in the Western democracies covered. It is worth noting, however, that representational distances can be conceived of and calculated on more than one dimension. At the individual level, a citizen may be well represented on one dimension but have no nearby party on another. Or she may be well represented on both dimensions but by different parties. In this article, we extend research in this field by examining the effects of being represented by a party on a European unification dimension as well as on the left-right spectrum – and by showing that both of those matter.

3. Representational distance and satisfaction with democracy

Laver's (2011) study was titled "Why vote-seeking parties may make voters miserable". The implicit claim is that voters who cannot find a party which shares their policy outlook are likely to be dissatisfied with the situation. The core idea is encapsulated in the CSES question "Would you say that any of the parties in [country] represent your views reasonably well?" Not surprisingly, those who answered 'yes' to this question proved much happier with electoral democracy more generally (Wessels, 2011, 106; Harding, 2011, 230). While there is nothing in that question which presupposes a spatial form of representation, the general point – that voters derive intrinsic satisfaction from feeling that there is a party that shares their views – underlies the more specific hypothesis in this paper.

As indicated by the phrase 'intrinsic satisfaction', our argument is that ideological representation goes beyond tangible policy outputs and the composition of governments. There is an analogy here with party identification, which is also positively associated with satisfaction with electoral democracy, again independently of whether the party gains office (Clarke et al., 2004, 306). In other words, attachment to the political system is fostered by a feeling of connection to one of the players. And representation offers another way in which citizens might identify 'their' party. Party identification may make for stronger ties than spatial

representation but, in a world of 'parties without partisans' (Dalton, 2002), the representational role of parties is if anything even more important. For the increasing proportion of voters with loose partisan moorings, the next best thing could well be to feel that at least there is a party sharing their political outlook.

However, there are also what might be termed instrumental explanations for an effect of representational distance. Sartori's (176) distinction between 'coalition potential' and 'blackmail potential' highlights two of these. Citizens may appreciate that a party sharing their outlook has at least the potential to apply it in future administration. They may also feel that a party expressing their views, even from opposition, has the potential to influence governing parties and, in turn, policy. These more instrumental arguments suggest interaction between distance to the nearest party and characteristics of that party such as size or incumbency. It seems plausible that the satisfaction derived from a proximate option is tempered if that party is too small or too remote from office to be able to deliver the shared objectives. But our core claim remains that there will be some such satisfaction, even if tempered. Even a small party can offer citizens a political voice.

While there are a number of specific system evaluations that could be influenced by representational distances, our focus in this article is on satisfaction with democracy. There are three reasons why democratic satisfaction is an apt dependent variable. One is that, as a general measure of political support, it tests the capacity of representational perceptions to shape not only immediate assessments of elections and voting but also broader evaluations of the system. The second is its ubiquity in this subfield of comparative research. Significant issues of content and measurement validity notwithstanding (Canache et al., 2001; Linde and Ekman, 2003), satisfaction with democracy has become comfortably the most common means of gauging the effects of various institutional and political variables on public opinion (Anderson and Guillory, 1997; Karp et al., 2003; Blais and Gélineau, 2007; Aarts and Thomassen, 2008; Wagner et al., 2009; Hobolt, 2012). Specifically, it has been used in the few studies to date to examine the impact of the party system's spatial characteristics on system support. Ezrow and Xezonakis (2011) show that mean satisfaction in a country increases as the average party converges on the mean voter. Moving from the aggregate to the individual level, Kim's (2009) analysis confirms that a voter's distance from the ideological position of the median party in parliament is negatively associated with her satisfaction with democracy. (The same is true if distance is measured in terms of issue priorities rather than in policy space: Reher (2015), using the same EES database as we do, compares the concerns of individual voters with those of representatives in their country, and finds that a closer match boosts that individual's satisfaction.) Finally, Mayne and Hakhverdian (2016) investigate both the individual- and aggregate-level effects of congruence on citizen satisfaction: they find that 'egocentric congruence', i.e. an individual's closeness to either the government or the median legislator, matters strongly, while the 'sociotropic' version, i.e. living in a country with higher levels of many-to-many congruence (measured through Golder and Stramski's cumulative distribution functions) does not.

None of this addresses the central question for this article, however, which is whether satisfaction is also dependent on a voter's distance from the position of her *nearest party* – that is, whether representation is about parties as well as governments or legislatures. There are two forms of indirect evidence pointing in that direction. First, there are the findings cited earlier (Wessels, 2011; Harding, 2011) showing that those who report feeling that a party 'represents their views reasonably well' are more satisfied with elections and democracy. The second comes courtesy of Lefkofridi et al. (2014), using a specifically spatial independent variable like us but a different dependent variable. They show that the more distant a voter's policy position is from that of her most proximate party, the higher the likelihood of electoral abstention, and most notably so when PR systems fail to cater to citizens that hold more ideologically extreme positions. While their research interest lies with the behavioural rather than attitudinal consequences of representational distance, the findings are of relevance here exactly because we highlight a potential reason why distance might induce abstention: that is, disillusionment due to an insufficiently representative party system. Such disillusionment is of course likely to extend – and to matter – beyond non-voters.

We therefore want to know whether representational distance affects deeper system attachments beyond simply shaping the voter's calculus at election time. To our knowledge, two studies have considered this. In the British context, and focusing only on the two major contenders for office, Brandenburg and Johns, 2014 found a clearly significant relationship between representational distance and satisfaction with democracy. The size of that effect was considerable, too, being exceeded only by the effects of variables like political trust and approval of the government's record, variables that are troublingly similar – and thus potentially endogenous to – the dependent variable. However, given the idiosyncrasy – especially within a European context – of the British electoral and party system, it is at least worth investigating whether the same is true in countries with more parties, more ideological diversity and a less pronounced trend to convergence? Dahlberg and Holmberg (2014) analysis of CSES data suggests that it does. They find a significant and substantively (if not democratically) healthy negative association between a voter's distance to the party for which they voted and her satisfaction with democracy.

Since Dahlberg and Holmberg's main interest lay in comparing ideological proximity with more valence-flavoured influences on democratic satisfaction, they do not look in detail at that effect of representational distance. One way that we move beyond their work is to consider this important effect: its size, its form and its plausible moderators. Another is to reintroduce a group not included in their analysis but, in this context, arguably the most important: non-voters. By measuring distance in terms of the party voted for, Dahlberg and Holmberg exclude exactly those citizens shown by Lefkofridi et al. (2014) to be on average furthest from their nearest party – and in many cases likely to be frustrated into abstention by it.

A third way in which we build beyond this previous work is to extend analysis beyond the left-right dimension. While this is indeed the main structuring dimension in European politics (Hellwig, 2008; McAllister and White, 2007), that is not to say that the unidimensionality of the Hotelling-Downs model reflects the reality of party competition in most European countries. Other issues and dimensions are at play, too. And, insofar as voters are concerned with these other dimensions, here too they should be more satisfied if their views are represented. Stecker and Tausendpfund (2016) have recently shown as much in the closely related context of citizen-government congruence. In what is effectively an extension of Kim's (2009) work, they found that citizens are less satisfied with democracy when their views differ from that of the government on various policy dimensions beyond the general left-right axis. One such was the issue of European integration, a significant divider now in many EU member states (Steenbergen and Scott, 2004; Hooghe and Marks, 2005; Marks et al., 2006; De Vries, 2007). The use of EES data allows us to test for effects of representational distance – in our case, not from government but from the nearest party – on that additional and cross-cutting policy dimension. Our core thesis thus translates into two specific hypotheses:

H1. Those further from the nearest party on the left-right scale are less satisfied with democracy

H2. Those further from the nearest party on the European unification scale are less satisfied with democracy

The relationship between these two dimensions has been the focus of much previous research (Hooghe et al., 2002; Marks and Steenbergen, 2004; Bakker et al., 2015). For present purposes, two things stand out. First, the dimensions are sufficiently distinct or cross-cutting for us to expect distances on each to have an independent impact on satisfaction

with democracy. Second, since left-right remains generally the dominant dimension across the continent (Hellwig, 2008), we also hypothesise that:

H3. The effect on satisfaction with democracy is stronger for distance on the left-right dimension than for distance on the European unification dimension

Two additional points are worth noting about H1 and H2 in particular. The first concerns the functional form of the relationships hypothesised. Both Dahlberg and Holmberg, 2014 and Brandenburg and Johns (2014) assume a linear effect of distance from the nearest party – or, at least, they do not test for any non-linearity whereby, for example, citizens tolerate a certain amount of distance before becoming irate at the lack of representation. While our expectations about functional form are not strong enough to warrant a specific hypothesis, there are certainly grounds to doubt linearity and so we will relax that assumption. This allows us to address the question of "how close is close enough?" - that is, to identify the amount of representational distance that citizens will tolerate - and to see whether the answer to that question is consistent across both ideological dimensions.

The second point is that these effects should be robust to controlling for characteristics of those nearest parties. Two related such characteristics are of particular interest here: the size of that nearest party and whether it is in government. Neither has been considered in previous work but both are highly relevant in some of the more fragmented party systems in Europe, where many citizens' nearest party will be very small and/or stand little chance of participating in government. The plentiful evidence of "winner's bonuses" leads us to expect a main effect of incumbency: that is, those whose nearest party is in office are likely to be more satisfied with democracy (Anderson and Guillory, 1997; Blais and Gélineau, 2007; Curini et al., 2012). For similar reasons of enhanced representation, we would also expect a main effect of size of nearest party. However, our core claim is that citizens can derive satisfaction from knowing that their views are represented in the party system, even if by a smaller and less powerful player. We provide a dual test of that claim: first, by establishing whether H1 and H2 hold when controlling for size and incumbency; second, by specifying interactions between representational distances and these variables. As argued above, there are theoretical reasons to expect the effect of distance to be partly moderated by incumbency or size. But our main concern is whether a main effect of distance remains even allowing for those interactions. This would provide clear support for our claim that citizens appreciate ideological proximity in itself.

3.1. Data and research design

While the analyses in this paper are cross-national, the unit of analysis remains the individual citizen. We could shift up a level and correlate mean distance to the nearest party with mean satisfaction across countries and across time. But that kind of aggregate-level analysis is plagued by a shortage of observations and a surfeit of variables that really need to be controlled to allow for causal inference. More fundamentally, unless and until we establish that the individual-level relationship hypothesised above actually holds, there is no theoretical basis to anticipate an aggregate-level effect.

There are two major cross-national survey data sources which offer the key individual-level variables – ideological placements and satisfaction with democracy – necessary for testing our hypotheses. These are the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) and the European Election Study (EES) series. Although the former offers a wider range of countries, the latter nonetheless offers plenty of diversity in party systems and country characteristics. It also offers the crucial advantage over the CSES that it includes placements on a consistent and comparable second dimension, namely attitudes to European unification, allowing us to test the effect of distances along two dimensions of varying political importance. This is an important step beyond previous

studies in this sub-field – and is therefore why we opt for the EES.

The EES takes the form of post-election surveys fielded in EU member states following each European Parliament election. By combining data from five EES, from 1989 to 2009,[1] we accumulate a huge sample of over 60,000 respondents. All five studies include the same battery of questions based on a 1 to 10 scale,[2] with respondents asked to place both themselves and their perceived positions of all political parties with parliamentary representation. Given hefty proportions of non-response on the ideological placement scales, especially when respondents were asked to locate smaller parties, our inclusion criterion is permissive: the analyses are based on every respondent that located herself and at least one party.

Any analysis based on voter-party distances involves a choice between subjective (i.e. respondents' own) placement of parties and more objective measures. We opt for the former, since our theoretical argument is about the way that citizens see the party options around them. The fact that individual party placements measure the perceived rather than the 'true' positions of parties is, as Golder and Stramski point out, "not a problem if we are interested in evaluating how well citizens feel they are being represented; indeed, it would seem to be an advantage in these circumstances" (2010, 99). Consider two citizens who both place themselves at point 2 on a left-right scale but who disagree about whether the mainstream left party is at point 3 or 4. This is variation that we suggest matters for satisfaction. Yet it would be lost if both citizens were placed at the same distance from the party's mean placement of 3.5. This simple example illustrates why we opt for individual placements over one likely alternative, which is to use data from all respondents to calculate a mean party placement. This 'wisdom of crowds' approach is a sensible one if the aim is to clean away individual variation in order to obtain a single party placement to use in aggregate-level analysis (e.g. Alvarez and Nagler, 2004; Reher, 2015). However, that individual variation is central to our theoretical mechanism. That same objection would apply to the use of external sources such as expert judgments of party positions or content analysis of platforms; these also raise various issues of comparability – notably differences in the meaning and measurement of the ideological dimensions (Golder and Stramski, 2010, 98–99).

We therefore calculated, for all respondents across up to 27 countries (in 2009) and five European elections, their nearest party and distance to that party on the left-right scale. We did the same for distances on the EU unification scale which is available for the later three EES in the series. It is worth emphasising that our analysis is not intended to take account of voting behavior. We could have followed Dahlberg and Holmberg (2014) in measuring distance to the party for which a respondent voted, either at that European or the previous general election. However, excluding non-voters might lead to understating both the extent of representational distance and its effect. Our choice of distance to the nearest party reflects our core argument that citizens derive satisfaction from having an ideologically proximate party that shares and expresses their views, at least to some extent independently of electoral calculations.

The dependent variable is the long-established question measuring respondents' satisfaction with democracy in their own country, using a four-point scale from very satisfied to very dissatisfied. While there has been much valid criticism of this measure (Canache et al., 2001; Linde and Ekman, 2003), it remains ubiquitous in cross-national survey research and, for reasons discussed earlier, is substantively a good choice for this analysis.

While individual EES questionnaires offer an extensive range of control variables, the field narrows when we seek questions asked in all five election studies. Nonetheless, we are able to include a reasonable

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[1] The 2014 study is left out because it did not include a measure of our dependent variable, satisfaction with democracy.

[2] This was changed to a 0–10 scale for the 2009 study.

battery of controls that have been shown to influence satisfaction with democracy at the individual level, notably age, sex, education, subjective social class, party identification, and of course left-right and EU positions themselves (and their squared terms, measuring extremity).[3] We also included a measure of how the respondent's ideologically closest party was treated by the electoral system: a ratio of its seat share to vote share (standardized by country). This proves more influential over satisfaction than does the overall proportionality of the system (Ferland, 2015). The models also feature key predictors from previous aggregate-level models of democratic satisfaction (e.g. Reher, 2015; Ezrow and Xezonakis, 2011; Bernauer and Vatter, 2012; Curini et al., 2012): GDP per capita, disproportionality of the electoral system (as measured by the Gallagher index); and Eastern European dummy for years in which it offers variation within the EES; a dummy and the logged number of days since the last national election. We also include a measure of the overall range of ideological choice, as captured by the standard deviation of respondents' mean party placements on both the left-right and the EU dimensions.

At the party level, as discussed above, we include incumbency and party size as control and interacting variables. We use vote shares – from the national election directly preceding the EP election in question – to measure the size of the nearest party.[4] In the plenty of cases in which respondents are equidistant from two or more parties, we measured the size of the largest party. By a similar logic of assuming that citizens focus on the strongest option, we measured incumbency in terms of whether *any* of a respondent's closest parties was in national government at the time of the EP election. It is worth clarifying that, while we use the EES because it provides comparable data and on both left-right and European integration dimensions, our interest is in how ideological distance plays out in national politics. This is why our measures of party size are based on the previous national election and not measured at the European Parliament election in question (where the second-order flavour of the contest tends temporarily to inflate – and thus to exaggerate the representational potential – of smaller parties).

Finally, in models including both left-right and EU distance variables, we take into account whether it is the same party that is closest to the respondent on the two dimensions. The argument here is that, since citizens can ultimately only vote for one party, there should be a satisfaction bonus from being catered for by the same party on both dimensions. However, since our theoretical argument is about feeling represented in general, not at a specific election, we do not wish to preclude the possibility that a citizen can derive satisfaction from representation by different parties on the different dimensions. This is one reason why we otherwise analyse distances separately rather than, for example, calculating a Euclidian distance to the nearest party in two-dimensional space. Another reason is that combining the two dimensions into one distance measure would involve assumptions about

relative importance, something that instead we want to emerge empirically from analysis. A third reason is that the two dimensions are largely orthogonal in two respects: neither self-placements nor distances to the nearest party are much correlated across the two dimensions.[5] Being separate, then, they are treated as such in our analysis.

4. Results

Prior to investigating their effects on satisfaction with democracy, it is useful to describe the distributions of our key representational distance variables. These, based on the pooled sample across countries, are shown in Table 1 for the left-right and European unification dimensions in each EES year for which those scales were available (i.e. 1989-2009 for left-right and 1999–2009 for European unification, which is why the sample size for the European unification analysis is smaller throughout). The upper panel reports the distributions of the two distance variables, while the lower panel reports descriptive statistics for distances on each scale by year. The first thing to note is that zero is comfortably the modal distance on both the left-right and European unification scales. This explains why the means are uniformly on the low side – less than one point on each dimension in each year. It is very unusual for respondents to lie a long way away from their nearest party. On the whole, this is heartening. It means that party systems are not widely perceived as unrepresentative and that dissatisfaction from feeling unrepresented is likely to be the province of a minority.

Several caveats are necessary, however, before drawing too sanguine a conclusion. First, many of those with zero distance will be party identifiers, prone to assimilation whereby they bring either their chosen party's placement into line with their own or vice versa. Even if this bias has an important substantive corollary – party identification being an

Table 1

Descriptive statistics for distances to nearest party on left-right and European unification scales.

Distance to nearest party	Left-right % of respondents (pooled, 1989–2009)			European unification % of respondents (pooled, 1999–2009)		
0	66			59		
1	25			24		
2	6			9		
3	2			4		
4	1			2		
5+	0			2		
Mean	0.47			0.71		
s.d.	0.81			1.12		
N	61,074			38,880		
Distances by year	**Mean**	**s.d.**	**N**	**Mean**	**s.d.**	**N**
1989	0.41	0.70	4064			
1994	0.44	0.72	9678			
1999	0.42	0.78	9088	0.67	1.09	7355
2004	0.47	0.80	17,452	0.68	1.05	14,482
2009	0.51	0.89	20,792	0.76	1.19	17,043

important channel through which many citizens feel represented – it does mean that the picture in terms of party system representativeness is probably less rosy than implied by Table 1. Second, the proportion of zeros will be further inflated by the widespread tendency among respondents to satisfice on these cognitively arduous items by using the midpoint of the scale. If they do the same for themselves and any

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[3] It is worth adding that the nature of our independent variable eases concerns that its measured effect is inflated by omitted variable bias. If we had measured representational distance by a single direct item, like for example the CSES question "Would you say that any of the parties in [country] represent your views reasonably well?", there would rightly be concern that a general disillusionment was creating a spurious association between that variable and satisfaction with democracy. However, our measure is based on separate placement questions, less directly or immediately connected to the dependent variable.

[4] In the very few cases where no national election data was available – such as with newly emerged parties or electoral coalitions, or those which stand only in European elections – then we used the results from the European election corresponding to that EES.

[5] As Appendix Table A1 shows, the correlations between nearest-party distances on the two dimensions are non-significant in most country-years (and not large in the other cases). Finding a perfect match with a party on one dimension does not make a respondent much likelier to find the same on the other dimension.

unfamiliar party, they will automatically record a distance of zero.[6] On the more concrete European unification scale, along which citizens are less clustered at the scale midpoint, nearest parties tended to lie more at a distance. Third, if distance does indeed lead to dissatisfaction and disengagement, non-response bias has probably attenuated these mean distances – those who feel less well represented are more likely to refuse to complete an election survey. Finally, there is evidence that representational distances have recently widened. Table 1 shows no steady upward trend but clear evidence that the mean distance on both dimensions increased appreciably between 2004 and 2009. If representational distances do take a toll on democratic satisfaction, then that toll will have increased recently.

Our main business in this section is to test whether representational distance does indeed negatively affect satisfaction. In the first analysis, we pool all five EES datasets to generate an overall indication of any impact of left-right representational distances over the 1989–2009 period. In order to test for possible nonlinearity of distance effects, we transform our main independent variable into a series of dummy variables and use zero distance as the base category. Given that, as Table 1 showed, only small minorities of respondents lie a very long way from their nearest party, we collapse these into a '3+' category.[7] To reflect the non-independence of observations in the data, we run multi-level mixed-effects regressions, nesting respondents within countries.[8] These are ordered logistic models, reflecting the categorical nature of our dependent variable. We relax the proportional odds assumption, not only because a Brant test suggests that we should but also because we have *a priori* grounds at least to question that assumption. Given that most people are adjacent or at least close to a party, it seems quite feasible that distance's primary impact is to exacerbate dissatisfaction rather than to dampen satisfaction, and hence it will have different effects along the range of our dependent variable. The results – coefficients and standard errors – for the main left-right variables are in Table 2. Full tables, including results for all control variables, are in Appendix Table A2.[9]

Model 1 provides the first straightforward test of H1, and it passes that test. All three distance coefficients are negative and significant (at the p < 0.01 level). Other things remaining the same, the further away a voter's nearest party is on the left-right scale, the less satisfied is that voter with democracy in her country. The coefficients tend to vindicate our decision not to assume linearity in the distance effect, implying instead a more sigmoid form. Citizens are not much less satisfied if their nearest party lies just one point away (and, given the very large sample, the fact that the difference is statistically significant is not telling). Once

representational distance stretches to two points, however, there are more marked effects on satisfaction, but these then level off judging by the limited difference between the second and third coefficients.[10]

We now subject the distance effect to a series of tests – of its conditionality, of its robustness and of its size. First, in Model 2, we introduce the size of the nearest party and incumbency status. Both size of nearest party and incumbency show significant and positive effects on satisfaction with democracy. Neither of these comes as a surprise, although it is perhaps noteworthy that citizens feel a benefit in having a larger party nearby, even if it is in opposition. The more important point, however, is the continued significance and increased strength of the distance effect. Voters derive satisfaction from feeling represented by a nearby party even if it is small and out of office.

In Model 3, we introduce interactions between representational distance and these party characteristic variables, testing whether distance effects are conditional on incumbency or size. None of the interactions is statistically significant (and the same is true if the incumbency and size interactions are entered separately). The benefits of having a proximate party are not dependent on that party's size or its access to power. And that main effect of distance remains clearly negative and significant. This is clear support for our broader argument that satisfaction is not just about winners and outputs.

One approach to robustness is to check whether the distance effect is replicated in each EES year. Full results from these single-year models are reported in Table A3 in Appendix. The key points are these: First, fourteen out of fifteen distance coefficients are negative. Ten of these are significant (p < 0.05, for most p < 0.01) and the exceptions are usually healthy in size but with large standard errors given the limited overall sample size or small numbers of respondents at three or more points from their nearest party. So there is fairly consistent support for H1. What is less consistent is the amount of distance tolerated. In some years, there is no significant effect among those who are one point from their nearest party, while in other years even that distance is enough to erode satisfaction. Another point worth noting is that there is no clear indication of distance effects either strengthening or weakening over time. Table 1 shows that mean distance on left-right has increased in recent years; the results for the 2009 model in Table A3 show that this continues to matter for satisfaction.

A second robustness test takes advantage of the fact that the 2009 EES offers a wider variety of individual-level controls than was available for the full set of study years. As Appendix Table A4 shows, some of these variables – notably government approval and economic evaluations – are very powerful predictors of satisfaction with democracy. However, as that table also shows, controlling for these variables does rather little to dampen the effect of distance to nearest party. The significant negative effects remain so. This is true despite the fact that, because variables like government approval and political interest are if anything causally *posterior* to representational distance (as well as potentially endogenous to satisfaction with democracy), we are almost certainly overcontrolling in this model.

A third robustness test comes from checking whether the effects for left-right distance are much weakened once we also consider self- and party-placements on the second dimension, that of European unification. These variables are introduced in the two models in Table 3: first, in Model 4, including only the EU distance variables; second, in Model 5, including left-right and EU distances together.[11] Comparing the left-

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[6] We considered omitting from analysis any respondents who placed both themselves and every party at the midpoint, on the grounds that they did not seem to understand the questions. However, such a stringent exclusion criterion would have removed less than 1% of all cases. Rather than applying some looser but ultimately arbitrary criterion based on frequent use of the midpoint, we prefer simply to warn that our data will understate mean distances among that subgroup that does recognise and understand left and right.

[7] We ran alternative models, only collapsing those at five or more points distance from their nearest party, but the additional dummy variables offer little extra explanatory power since distance effects tend to plateau.

[8] Strictly, respondents are nested within country-years. However, since there were too few survey years to allow us to treat 'year' as another level within the mixed-effects modelling, we instead simply include survey year as an additional control variable. The analyses were run using R's clmm command (package Ordinal). Full replication code and data are available.

[9] The tables presented here and in appendix are based on identical models, Table 2 (in text) merely omits figures for the control variables for the sake of brevity. In this and subsequent tables, statistical significance is denoted as follows: * = p < 0.05; ** = p < 0.01.

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[10] Alternative analyses including dummy variables for distances from nearest party of up to 5+ points confirm this pattern (See the online appendix for these analyses.).

[11] Since the interactions with party size and incumbency were uniformly non-significant in Model 3, for simplicity and to avoid collinearity problems we omit them from subsequent specifications.

Table 2
Left-right distance coefficients from mixed-effects ordered logistic regressions of satisfaction with democracy (pooled EES 1989–2009).

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	B	s.e.	b	s.e.	b	s.e.
Left-Right self-placement	0.047**	0.003	0.038**	0.003	0.039**	0.003
Left-Right self-placement^2	−0.014**	0.001	−0.012**	0.001	−0.012**	0.001
LR distance to nearest party (base = 0)						
Distance = 1	−0.072**	0.018	−0.112**	0.018	−0.091**	0.028
Distance = 2	−0.188**	0.034	−0.203**	0.034	−0.236**	0.053
Distance = 3+	−0.216**	0.047	−0.282**	0.047	−0.241**	0.075
Size of nearest party on LR (log)			0.048**	0.010	0.049**	0.012
*LR distance * party size interactions:*						
Distance = 1 * size					0.009	0.024
Distance = 2 * size					0.009	0.046
Distance = 3+ * size					0.052	0.061
Nearest LR party incumbent			0.383**	0.018	0.385**	0.021
*LR distance * incumbency interaction:*						
Distance = 1 * incumbency					−0.062	0.039
Distance = 2 * incumbency					0.054	0.076
Distance = 3+ * incumbency					−0.085	0.108
Thresholds						
Not at all ∣ Not very satisfied	−1.640	0.358	−2.138	0.195	−1.653	0.314
Not very ∣ Fairly satisfied	0.297	0.358	−0.175	0.194	0.305	0.314
Fairly satisfied ∣ Very satisfied	3.107	0.358	2.681	0.195	3.164	0.314
N (respondents)	61,074		61,074		61,074	
N (systems)	29		29		29	
Var. (countries)	0.715		0.534		1.024	
Log-Likelihood	−67,717		−67,318		−67,333	
AIC	135,484		134,691		134,732	

Summarized table: control variables included, reported in Table A2 (appendix).
*p < .05, **p < .01.

right coefficients between Model 2 and Model 5 is the cleanest way of examining the impact of including distances on the EU dimension.[12] All three left-right distance coefficients in Model 5 are a little weaker than their equivalents in Model 2, but each remains negative and significant. Unsurprisingly, given the meagre correlation between distances on the two scales that we noted earlier, the dimensions operate at least partly independently and representational distance on the left-right spectrum continues to matter.

Of course, our main interest in Models 4 and 5 is in whether distance to nearest party on the European unification scale has the independent effect on democratic satisfaction as specified in H2. The answer is that it does – but only after a certain point. Only those who are three or more points from their nearest party on the EU scale are significantly less satisfied with democracy than those at the same point as their closest party (i.e. with a distance of zero). This same pattern obtains in both models – that is, regardless of whether left-right distances are also taken into consideration. So representational distance matters – eventually – on more than one dimension. The fact that distance effects take longer to 'kick in' on the European unification scale provides some support for H3, i.e. that left-right distances matter more in these European party systems. Even at three points or more, when the EU distance effect becomes clearly significant, it is marginally weaker (at -0.194) than the equivalent on left-right (-0.205) – although the overlapping standard errors confirm that those coefficients are not statistically significantly different. Considered as a whole, however, the effect sizes for left-right distances are appreciably larger than for the EU scale.

Moving on from robustness tests, we also want to assess how sizeable our effects are. In a first step, we look at relative effect size by comparing

them with those of other familiar predictors from the satisfaction with democracy literature. Since mixed-effects ordered logistic models do not yield easily comparable coefficients, we use a model-improvement strategy to assess the relative importance of our variables of interest vis-a-vis other independent variables from the 2009 EES model presented in Appendix Table A4. Having calculated the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) for a base model, we then compared the effect on that AIC of adding each predictor separately to that model. The collective effect of representational distance (left-right and EU) relative to that of other variables was less than that of the heaviest hitters such as retrospective economic evaluations but equal to that of party identification, an important source of affective system attachments, and greater than that of political interest. Consistent with the suggestion above that left-right and EU distances ultimately have equal importance (given the stronger coefficients for left-right but the longer average distances on the EU scale), the two sets of representational distance dummies had a near equal effect on AIC. In any event, we can conclude that representational distances are one of the factors making a noteworthy contribution to explaining democratic satisfaction.

To examine the absolute size of these effects, we plot the effect of distance on the predicted probabilities of being in each category of the satisfaction dependent variable.[13] The patterns indicated by the regression are clear enough (even if overall statistical significance can be obscured by graphs which break the effect down across points on the dependent variable scale). The effects of left-right distance are stronger and kick in sooner; things barely change in the EU graph until the distances of three or more points. The gradients are not dramatic: as acknowledged above, these distances make an incremental rather than a major contribution to satisfaction with democracy. This is particularly true when it comes to the extreme categories: in particular, those finding

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[12] Even this comparison is confounded by the fact that Model 5 is estimated only on the latter three EES. For cleaner comparison, we re-ran Model 2 but only on the 1999–2009 subset of the sample (N = 38,880) used to estimate Model 5. The left-right distance effects in this re-estimated Model 2 were very similar to those in the original version in Table 2. So the perceptible weakening of the left-right coefficients in Model 5 is the result of introducing the EU dimension rather than losing 1989 and 1994 from the base sample.

[13] These probabilities are calculated holding other interval-level independent variables at their means and dichotomous predictors at their modes. Fig. 1 therefore shows the predicted probabilities for a female party identifier whose closest party is not an incumbent and whose scores on all other variables are at their means. This is not an unusual case.

other reasons to be 'very satisfied' are not much troubled by distances. However, the left-right effects on the intermediate categories are clearer such that, if we divide the scale into 'satisfied' and 'dissatisfied', there is an appreciable effect. Among those who are within one point of their closest party on the left-right scale, a majority (55%) is on the satisfied side of the fence. Among those two or more points away, a slight majority is dissatisfied.

5. Conclusion

Empirical studies in this field have been preoccupied with the median voter. How well are his or her views reflected by the median legislator or by the elected government and its policies? These are reasonable questions but they reflect too narrow a conception of representation – especially if we expect that the quality of representation will influence levels of system support. Maintaining high rates of satisfaction with democracy involves more than keeping the median voter happy. In this article, we show that satisfaction also depends on whether citizens across the ideological spectrum perceive a party as representing them on the dimensions and issues that matter to them. 'Valence' models of democratic satisfaction, focused on government performance and delivery (e.g. Clarke et al., 2004, 301–10), are therefore useful but incomplete. The public relates to politics via parties since it is parties – small or large, in or out of government – who give a public voice to opinions on salient issues. Our analysis shows that voters derive satisfaction from feeling their views represented, even by parties unlikely to be able to translate those views into policy.

The effect size of representational distance, while not large, is comparable with those of some other established predictors of satisfaction with democracy such as party identification. Part of the reason for the restrained overall effect sizes is that, unsurprisingly given the multi-party systems in Europe and a scale of just ten points (and the likelihood that the politically disengaged were less likely to respond to the surveys in the first place), few respondents were far away from their nearest party. Moreover, some distance is tolerated: parties one point away on left-right and even two points away on the European integration scale look to be deemed 'close enough'. However, among that minority facing a long-distance relationship with the party system, this distance does have the capacity to generate – and to exacerbate – dissatisfaction. The substantive relevance of these effects therefore depends in part on why we care about satisfaction with democracy. If maintaining a reasonable average is what matters, then the effects we identify here are not very troublesome. If minimising severe dissatisfaction is important, however, then the unrepresentativeness of party systems is a more significant problem. A useful next step would be to identify whether satisfaction with democracy mediates the negative relationship between representational distance and likelihood to vote identified by Lefkofridi et al. (2014). Do those without a proximate party tend to abstain for cognitive reasons to do with lower expected benefits, or out of a more affect-driven sense of being neglected by the (party) system?

Our individual-level findings raise the question of what makes for a more representative party system – or, in the terms used here, what minimises the distance between voters' and their nearest parties? This calls for more research along the lines of Ana Maria Belchior's (2013) work, scrutinising the institutional and other factors which shape party systems. The related factors of electoral system proportionality and number of parties look likely to be prominent players. Certainly the trend towards ideological convergence and catch-all parties had the

Table 3

Left-right and EU distance coefficients from mixed-effects ordered logistic regressions of satisfaction with democracy (EES 1999–2009).

	Model 4		Model 5	
	B	s.e.	b	s.e.
Left-Right self-placement			0.040**	0.004
Left-Right self-placement^2			−0.009**	0.001
LR distance to nearest party (base = 0)				
Distance = 1			−0.084**	0.023
Distance = 2			−0.174**	0.043
Distance = 3+			−0.205**	0.060
Size of nearest party on LR (log)			0.043**	0.013
Nearest LR party incumbent			0.367**	0.022
EU self-placement	0.093**	0.004	0.096**	0.004
EU self-placement^2	−0.015**	0.001	−0.015**	0.001
EU distance to nearest party (base = 0)				
Distance = 1	−0.030	0.024	−0.025	0.024
Distance = 2	−0.005	0.034	0.002	0.035
Distance = 3+	−0.210**	0.038	−0.194**	0.038
Size of nearest party on EU (log)	0.005	0.014	−0.019	0.014
Nearest EU party incumbent	0.239**	0.023	0.176**	0.024
Same party nearest on LR and EU			−0.063**	0.021
Cut points				
Not at all | Not very satisfied	−2.0976	0.196	−1.536	0.217
Not very | Fairly satisfied	−0.1119	0.196	0.474	0.217
Fairly satisfied | Very satisfied	2.781	0.197	3.399	0.218
N (respondents)	38,880		38,880	
N (systems)	27		27	
Var. (countries)	0.447		0.492	
Log-Likelihood	−42,260		−41,961	
AIC	84,570		83,994	

Summarized table: control variables included, reported in Table A2-II (appendix).

*p < .05, **p < .01.

potential to leave voters at the margins feeling very remote from the 'representative action'. Aggregate-level modelling of mean distance could be extended to include mean satisfaction with democracy as an ultimate dependent variable, thus providing an aggregate-level parallel of the analysis presented here.

In this analysis we used time principally as a source of additional data. Trends were not our main focus. That said, there is something striking in the marked upturn in mean distance – and thus the decline in party system representativeness – between 2004 and 2009. While careful analysis has now established quite convincingly that there is no long-term steady decline in variables like satisfaction, engagement and trust, this does not rule out step changes (of the sort often held to have happened in the late 1960s and early 1970s, but largely missed through lack of survey data). The fact that this is a recent development makes it no less significant. Of course, 2009 might simply be a blip. However, the events since and especially the results of the European elections in 2014 tend to suggest otherwise. They are all eerily consistent with the notion of a growing failure of Europe's party systems to cater for the ideological diversity of their citizens. Of course, we should not overstate the case and lapse into 'crisis hyperbole'. Large proportions of citizens nestle comfortably alongside their nearest party, and the effects on satisfaction were not dramatic even among those who do not. Still, as with any ailment, there is no sense in ignoring it until it becomes serious. Those with an interest in maintaining citizens' satisfaction with democracy need also take an interest in the representativeness of their country's party system.

APPENDIX

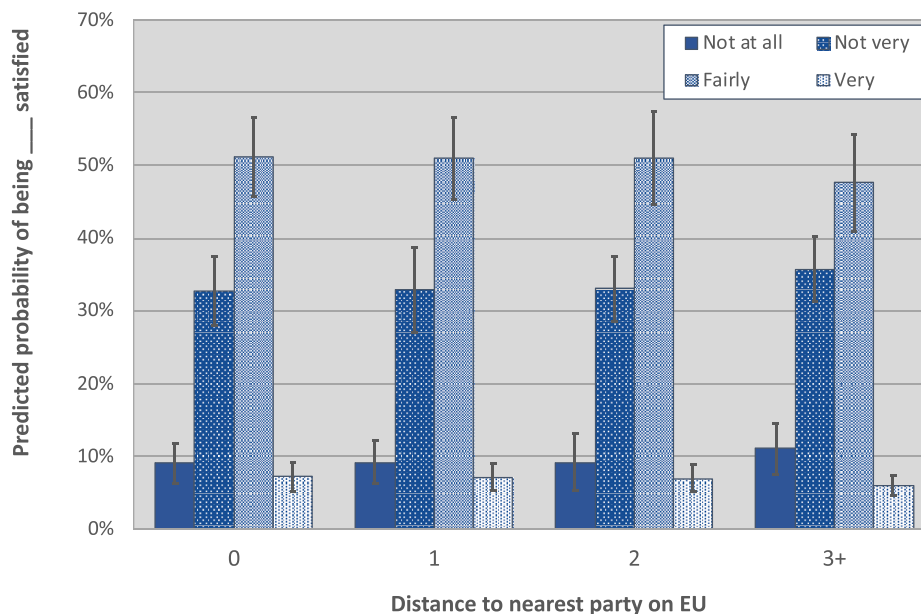## a) Left-right (1989-2009)
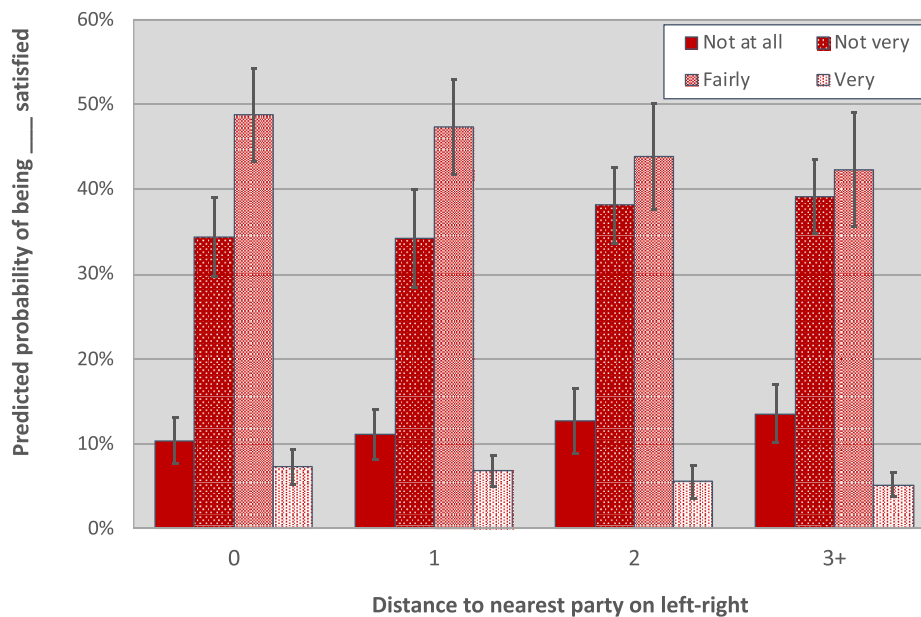
b) EU (1999-2009)

Fig. 1. Predicted probabilities of being in each category of satisfaction with democracy given distance to nearest party on a) left-right, b) EU dimensions.

Table A1

Correlations between nearest-party distances on left-right and EU scales, by country and year

Country	Year		
	1999	2004	2009
Austria	.018	.031	.047
Belgium – Flanders	.144*	–	.300**
Belgium – Wallonia	.132	–	-.055
Bulgaria	–	–	.060
Cyprus	–	.185**	.123**
Czech Republic	–	-.004	.007

(continued on next page)

Table A1 (*continued*)

Country	Year		
	1999	2004	2009
Denmark	.095**	-.026	.101**
Estonia	–	.152**	.166**
Finland	.046	-.014	.048
France	.071	.043	.060
Germany	.002	-.094*	.086*
Greece	.097	.021	.062
Hungary	–	.053	-.016
Ireland	.118*	.081**	.154**
Italy	.164**	.095**	.045
Latvia	–	.151**	.014
Lithuania	–	–	-.005
Luxembourg	-.097	.018	.057
Netherlands	-.015	.036	.067
Poland	–	.161**	.028
Portugal	.063	.088*	.011
Romania	–	–	.006
Slovakia	–	.027	.132**
Slovenia	–	.118**	–
Spain	.025	.151**	.073*
Sweden	.068	–	.022
United Kingdom	.069	-.017	.101**

Note: *p < .05, **p < .01. Where data are missing, this indicates that either the relevant question or the entire survey was not fielded in that year.

Table A2
a. Full results from Models 1–3 (Table 2). b. Full results from Models 4–5 (Table 3)

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	B	s.e.	B	s.e.	b	s.e.
Left-Right self-placement	0.047**	0.003	0.038**	0.003	0.039**	0.003
Left-Right self-placement^2	−0.014**	0.001	−0.012**	0.001	−0.012**	0.001
LR distance to nearest party (base = 0)						
Distance = 1	−0.072**	0.018	−0.112**	0.018	−0.091**	0.028
Distance = 2	−0.188**	0.034	−0.203**	0.034	−0.236**	0.053
Distance = 3+	−0.216**	0.047	−0.282**	0.047	−0.241**	0.075
Size of nearest party on LR (log)			0.048**	0.010	0.049**	0.012
*LR distance * party size interactions:*						
Distance = 1 * size					0.009	0.024
Distance = 2 * size					0.009	0.046
Distance = 3+ * size					0.052	0.061
Nearest LR party incumbent			0.383**	0.018	0.385**	0.021
*LR distance * incumbency interaction:*						
Distance = 1 * incumbency					−0.062	0.039
Distance = 2 * incumbency					0.054	0.076
Distance = 3+ * incumbency					−0.085	0.108
Year (base = 2009)						
1989	0.282**	0.101	−0.307**	0.100	−0.071	0.102
1994	−0.114	0.079	−0.554**	0.078	−0.352**	0.080
1999	0.201**	0.061	−0.164**	0.061	−0.042	0.062
2004	0.024	0.049	−0.234**	0.048	−0.151**	0.049
GDP per capita (log)	0.146*	0.074	−0.307**	0.073	−0.112	0.075
Gallagher disproportionality	0.002	0.005	0.006	0.005	0.008	0.005
Days since last election (log)	0.072**	0.010	0.087**	0.010	0.084**	0.010
Age	−0.000	0.000	−0.001**	0.000	−0.001**	0.000
Male	0.108**	0.015	0.113**	0.016	0.129**	0.016
Age left school	0.006**	0.002	0.007**	0.002	0.007**	0.002
Subjective social status	0.161**	0.008	0.163**	0.008	0.158**	0.008
Party identification	0.209**	0.017	0.198**	0.017	0.209**	0.017
Unemployed	0.346**	0.033	−0.313**	0.033	−0.324**	0.033
Eastern EU	0.174	0.633	−1.281**	0.304	−0.500	0.517
Seats/votes ratio (std)	0.087**	0.011	0.041**	0.011	0.043**	0.011
LR dispersion	0.035**	0.009	0.049**	0.009	0.046**	0.009
Cut points						
Not at all | Not very satisfied	−1.640	0.358	−2.138	0.195	−1.653	0.314
Not very | Fairly satisfied	0.297	0.358	−0.175	0.194	0.305	0.314
Fairly satisfied | Very satisfied	3.107	0.358	2.681	0.195	3.164	0.314
N (respondents)	61,074		61,074		61,074	
N (systems)	29		29		29	
Var. (countries)	0.715		0.534		1.024	
Log-Likelihood	−67,717		−67,318		−67,333	
AIC	135,484		134,691			

Table A2 (*continued*)

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	B	s.e.	B	s.e.	b	s.e.
					134,732	

	Model 4		Model 5	
	B	s.e.	b	s.e.
Left-Right self-placement			0.040**	0.004
Left-Right self-placement^2			−0.009**	0.001
LR distance to nearest party (base = 0)				
Distance = 1			−0.084**	0.023
Distance = 2			−0.174**	0.043
Distance = 3+			−0.205**	0.060
Size of nearest party on LR (log)			0.043**	0.013
Nearest LR party incumbent			0.367**	0.022
EU self-placement	0.093**	0.004	0.096**	0.004
EU self-placement^2	−0.015**	0.001	−0.015**	0.001
EU distance to nearest party (base = 0)				
Distance = 1	−0.030	0.024	−0.025	0.024
Distance = 2	−0.005	0.034	0.002	0.035
Distance = 3+	−0.210**	0.038	−0.194**	0.038
Size of nearest party on EU (log)	0.005	0.014	−0.019	0.014
Nearest EU party incumbent	0.239**	0.023	0.176**	0.024
Same party nearest on LR and EU			−0.063**	0.021
Year (*base = 2009*)				
1999	0.133	0.084	0.172*	0.084
2004	−0.012	0.066	0.057	0.066
GDP per capita (log)	0.173	0.105	0.268*	0.106
Gallagher disproportionality	0.011	0.009	0.014	0.009
Days since last election (log)	0.085**	0.016	0.092**	0.017
Age	0.000	0.001	−0.001	0.001
Male	0.123**	0.020	0.119**	0.020
Age left school	−0.001	0.002	0.001	0.002
Subjective social status	0.184**	0.010	0.161**	0.010
Party identification	0.185**	0.021	0.188**	0.021
Unemployed	−0.276**	0.042	−0.272**	0.042
Eastern EU	−1.052**	0.298	−0.666*	0.324
LR Seats/votes ratio (std)			0.039**	0.015
EU Seats/votes ratio (std)	0.020	0.012	0.002	0.012
LR dispersion			0.067**	0.011
EU dispersion	−0.020*	0.009	−0.024*	0.009
Cut points				
Not at all | Not very satisfied	−2.0976	0.196	−1.536	0.217
Not very | Fairly satisfied	−0.1119	0.196	0.474	0.217
Fairly satisfied | Very satisfied	2.781	0.197	3.399	0.218
N (respondents)	38,880		38,880	
N (systems)	27		27	
Var. (countries)	0.447		0.492	
Log-Likelihood	−42,260		−41,961	
AIC	84,570		83,994	

Table A3
Left-right distance effects from models of satisfaction with democracy (separate EES)

	1989		1994		1999		2004		2009	
	B	s.e.	B	s.e.	b	s.e.	b	s.e.	B	s.e.
LR self-placement	0.093**	0.015	0.062**	0.010	−0.012	0.009	0.092**	0.007	0.039**	0.005
LR self-placement2	−0.044**	0.005	−0.028**	0.004	−0.024**	0.003	−0.016**	0.002	−0.008**	0.002
LR distance to nearest party (base = 0)										
Distance = 1	−0.176*	0.070	−0.126**	0.044	−0.099*	0.050	−0.082*	0.034	0.000	0.031
Distance = 2	−0.139	0.148	−0.309**	0.088	−0.329**	0.099	−0.121	0.065	−0.176**	0.055
Distance = 3+	0.286	0.262	−0.220	0.141	−0.362**	0.135	−0.285**	0.088	−0.256**	0.072
GDP per capita (log)	0.470	0.362	1.199**	0.386	2.121**	0.496	0.595	0.392	1.765**	0.306
Gallagher disproportionality	−0.014	0.036	−0.032	0.023	−0.016	0.029	−0.046	0.025	−0.055*	0.025
Days since last election (log)	−0.030	0.070	0.013	0.080	0.252**	0.064	−0.061	0.095	0.057	0.072
Age	−0.002	0.002	0.002	0.001	−0.002	0.001	−0.002*	0.001	−0.001	0.001
Male	0.078	0.061	0.146**	0.039	0.156**	0.041	0.149**	0.029	0.091**	0.027
Age left school	−0.033**	0.010	0.026**	0.007	0.004	0.005	0.013**	0.005	0.001	0.002
Subjective social status	0.134**	0.032	0.133**	0.020	0.128**	0.021	0.182**	0.016	0.186**	0.014
Party identification	0.033	0.067	0.304**	0.045	0.291**	0.046	0.212**	0.032	0.247**	0.029
Unemployed	−0.614**	0.151	−0.321**	0.078	−0.443**	0.093	−0.266**	0.064	−0.155**	0.056
Eastern EU	–	–	−0.053	0.559	–	–	−0.375	0.575	0.853*	0.396
LR Seats/votes ratio (std)	0.094**	0.028	0.111**	0.033	0.182**	0.036	0.052**	0.019	0.100**	0.020
LR dispersion	0.118**	0.040	0.016	0.024	0.065**	0.024	0.044**	0.017	0.013	0.013
Cut points										
Not at all | Not very satisfied	−2.170	0.291	−2.048	0.233	−2.001	0.261	−2.473	0.288	−0.998	0.326

Table A3 (*continued*)

	1989		1994		1999		2004		2009	
	B	s.e.	B	s.e.	b	s.e.	b	s.e.	B	s.e.
Not very | Fairly satisfied	−0.346	0.288	−0.199	0.232	0.016	0.259	−0.277	0.287	0.935	0.326
Fairly satisfied | Very satisfied	2.379	0.291	2.506	0.234	3.130	0.263	2.681	0.288	3.780	0.327
N (respondents)	4064		9678		9088		17,452		20,792	
N (systems)	13		14		16		21		26	
Var. (countries)	0.247		0.245		0.304		0.346		0.192	
Log-Likelihood	−4549		−11,033		−9494		−18,629		−22,878	
AIC	9139		22,108		19,029		37,300		45,798	

Table A4
Full results of mixed-effects ordered logit models of satisfaction with democracy including additional control variables for 2009

	Original model		With added controls	
	B	s.e.	b	s.e.
LR self-placement	0.033**	0.005	0.026**	0.005
LR self-placement^2	−0.008**	0.002	−0.011**	0.002
LR distance to nearest party (base = 0)				
Distance = 1	−0.037	0.033	−0.009	0.034
Distance = 2	−0.218**	0.058	−0.185**	0.059
Distance = 3+	−0.313**	0.077	−0.225**	0.078
Size of nearest party on LR (log)	0.012	0.019	0.042*	0.020
Nearest LR party incumbent	0.439**	0.034	0.153**	0.035
GDP per capita (log)	1.750**	0.297	1.724**	0.278
Gallagher disproportionality	−0.046	0.024	−0.034	0.022
Days since last election (log)	0.060	0.070	0.111	0.066
Age	−0.000	0.001	−0.002	0.001
Male	0.092**	0.028	0.042	0.029
Age left school	0.003	0.003	−0.003	0.003
Subjective social status	0.179**	0.015	0.079**	0.017
Party identification	0.268**	0.030	0.183**	0.031
Unemployed	−0.182**	0.059	−0.092	0.060
Eastern EU	0.770*	0.385	0.969**	0.360
LR Seats/votes ratio (std)	0.053*	0.022	0.006	0.023
LR dispersion	0.021	0.014	0.030*	0.015
Political Interest			0.041*	0.018
Government approval			1.168**	0.034
Subjective standard of living			0.120**	0.014
Retrospective economic evaluation			0.222**	0.016
Education (ISCED levels)			0.044**	0.014
N (respondents)		18,639		18,639
N (systems)		26		26
Var. (countries)		0.180		0.157
Log-Likelihood		−20,419		−19,537
AIC		40,884		39,129

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