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How Europeans view and evaluate democracy

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Overview

- Introduction
- The ESS
- Views: the meaning of democracy
- Evaluations
- Conclusion

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Introduction

- **Two stories about democracy** (Runciman 2013)
 - A success story
 - A story of pessimism and fear
- **A success story**
 - Democracy – a universal value
 - The third wave of democratization
- **A story of pessimism and fear**
 - Lack of consolidation in newly democratized countries
 - Even established democracies are challenged today
 - What has gone wrong with democracy? (The Economist, March 1st-7th, 2014)

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Introduction

- **Challenges in Europe**
 - Erosion of national democracy: shifting power to supranational agencies and other unaccountable actors
 - Eurocrisis: the 'Troika' as an example
- **The citizens' discontent**
 - Populist mobilizations
 - Withdrawal from politics
 - Rampant political cynicism

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Introduction

- **How about popular support for and satisfaction with democracy in Europe?**
 - **90%** of Europeans (strongly) agree that 'democracy may have problems but it's better than any other form of government' (EVS)
 - **only 48%** of Europeans are very/fairly satisfied with the way democracy works in their country (EB_May2012)
- **General measures: how about a more detailed account?**

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Introduction

Democracy as a multidimensional concept

- **Liberal democracy: the basic (procedural) model**
 - **Liberal dimension:** rule of law, civil rights, protection of minorities, and checks and balances
 - **Democratic dimension:** electoral process – competition, participation, transparency, justification, deliberation, evaluation, sanction, responsiveness
- **Visions of democracy beyond the basic model**
 - **Social democracy** (substantively): social justice
 - **Direct democracy** (procedurally): direct participation in referenda
 - **Inclusiveness** (procedural): immigrants' right to vote

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Introduction

Views and evaluations

- **Views:** the meaning attributed to democracy, the expectations with respect to democracy – the necessary requirements of democracy
- **Evaluations:** the assessment of democracy – satisfaction with the way democracy works in one's own country

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ESS: question format

Meaning of democracy:

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ESS – round 6, 2012

29 European (and neighboring) countries:

- **North-Western Europe** (12): Belgium, the Netherlands, France, Germany, Switzerland, the Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Finland), Ireland and the UK.
- **Southern Europe** (5): Italy, Portugal and Spain, Cyprus and neighbouring Israel
- **Central and Eastern Europe** (12): Albania, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia, and neighbouring Kosovo, Russia and Ukraine.

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Meaning of democracy

How Europeans view democracy.....

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Overall importance of elements of liberal democracy

Liberal elements	
rule of law	9.2
checks and balances	8.8
media reliability	8.7
minority rights	8.3
media freedom	8.2
average	8.6
democratic elements	
free and fair elections	8.9
explanations govt	8.8
opposition free	8.3
sanction govt	8.4
party offer alternatives	8.0
citizen deliberation	7.4
responsibility to EU govts	6.5
average	8.0

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Overall importance of elements of liberal democracy

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average	8.0

social justice	
poverty protection	8.7
income equality	8.2
direct democracy	8.3
inclusiveness (migrants)	7.9

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The most and least important elements

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The most and least important elements

item	country-specific ranking			
	1st	top 3	last 3	last
liberal dimension				
rule of law	24	27	0	0
checks and balances	0	9	0	0
media reliability	0	4	0	0
media freedom	0	0	2	0
minority protection	1	0	2	0
democratic dimension				
free and fair elections	3	18	0	0
explanations by government	0	13	0	0
retrospective accountability	0	1	1	0
freedom of opposition	0	0	0	0
offer parties	0	0	11	0
citizen deliberation	0	0	22	4
responsibility to EU govts	0	0	28	23
social justice				
poverty protection	1	11	0	0
income equality		1	5	0
direct democracy	0	0	2	0
inclusiveness (migrants)	0	0	11	1

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Constructing the basic scale of liberal democracy

- **Essentialist logic of the concept of democracy :**
 - Political theory stipulates a set of necessary conditions which jointly define democracy
 - The citizens do that, too, but their set of necessary conditions varies systematically from one citizen to the other
 - In such a way that citizens who require a lot from democracy stipulate the same conditions as citizens who require less, plus some additional conditions
- **A hierarchical scale:** in terms of measurement the necessary conditions for democracy form a 'Mokken scale'
- **Operationalization of necessary condition**= 'extremely important' (=10)

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Constructing the basic scale of liberal democracy

- **Three scales**
 - A liberal scale
 - An electoral process scale
 - A combined, liberal democracy scale
- **Quality of the scales**
 - Liberal scale: H=.66, Cronbach's α =.84
 - Electoral process scale: H=.60, Cronbach's α =.83
 - Liberal democracy scale: H=.62, Cronbach's α =.91

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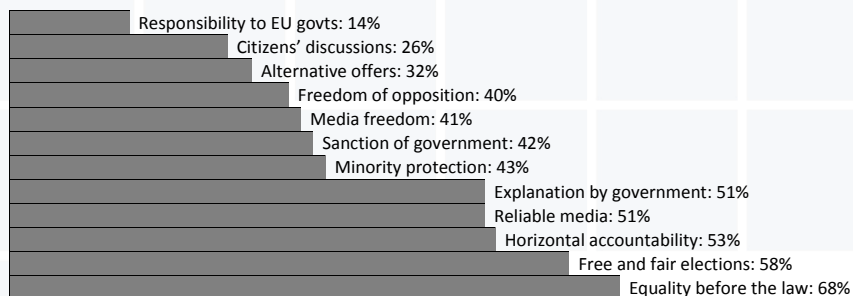


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Constructing the basic scale of liberal democracy

The liberal democracy scale: hierarchical levels of requirement



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Constructing the basic scale of liberal democracy

Similarities across Europe:

- The same strong scale in all the countries
- (almost) the same hierarchical ordering
- i.e. a common understanding of the basic liberal democracy model

Variation across Europe:

- Mean scale values vary across Europe (overall mean=5.2)
- i.e. country-specific levels of requirements with respect to the basic model (between 8.7 (AL) and 3.2 (NL))

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Two additional indices

- **Going beyond the basic model of liberal democracy**
 - Social justice index: 2 items
 - Direct-democracy index: 1 item
- **Again:**
 - Same strong scales in all the countries
 - But variation with respect to the means across countries
- **Complementary to liberal democracy model:** correlations of the liberal democracy scale with
 - Social justice index: $r=.64$
 - Direct-democracy index: $r=.61$

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Cross-country variation

What to expect in terms of means?

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Cross-country variation

What to expect in terms of means?

- **A function of the quality of democracy**
 - 'much of what a citizens believes about the political process is learnt from observations of that process' (Verba 1965)

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Theoretical expectations: two contrasting hypotheses

- A **positive** relationship between the quality of democracy and democratic expectations:
 - **Participatory theory of democracy**: educational effect of democracy – higher demands in HQD
 - **Cultural change**: modernization leads to rising aspirations in terms of democracy – higher demands in HQD, which are culturally most advanced
- A **negative** relationship between the quality of democracy and democratic expectations:
 - **Dissatisfied democrats/critical citizens**: make higher demands on democracy, and are particularly numerous in LQD,
 - **Cognitive accessibility**: while democracy is taken for granted in HQD, it is on the public agenda in LQD

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Theoretical expectation two contrasting hypotheses

- **The three regions of Europe**
 - North-Western Europe: high quality democracies
 - Southern and Central- and Eastern Europe: low quality democracies

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The means of the three indices in the three regions

Three regions	Liberal democracy	social justice	direct democracy
North-western	0.38	0.35	0.31
Central-eastern	0.46	0.54	0.46
Southern	0.48	0.60	0.40
Total	0.43	0.45	0.39

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**Liberal democracy/social justice/
direct democracy by quality of
democracy**

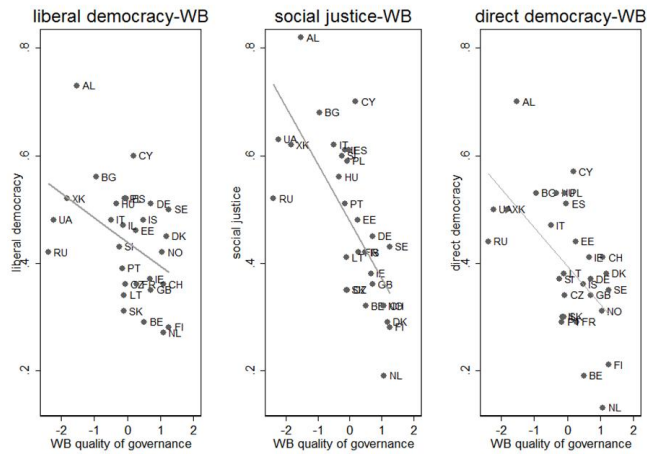
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Liberal democracy/social justice/ direct democracy by quality of democracy



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Expectations by generations

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Expectations by generations

- **Five generations, according to political socialization (12 years or older)**
 - Post1999: the new millennium generation
 - Post1989: the post-CEE transition generation
 - Post1974: the post-Southern transition generation
 - Post1961: the 'new politics' generation
 - Pre1961: the traditional politics generations
- **Rising aspirations vs. rising indifference?**

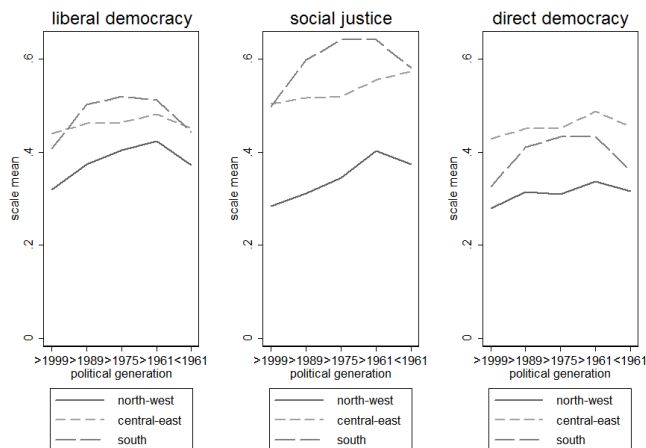
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Means of the three dimensions across Europe, controlling for generations



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Typology of democrats

Four types of democrats

- **Uncommitted** (no necessary conditions specified): 22.2%
- **Liberal democrats** (at least two liberal democracy items) : 17.7%
- **Social democrats** (liberal democrats+social justice): 26.5%
- **Complete democrats** (social democrats+direct democracy): 33.6%

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Types and quality of democracy

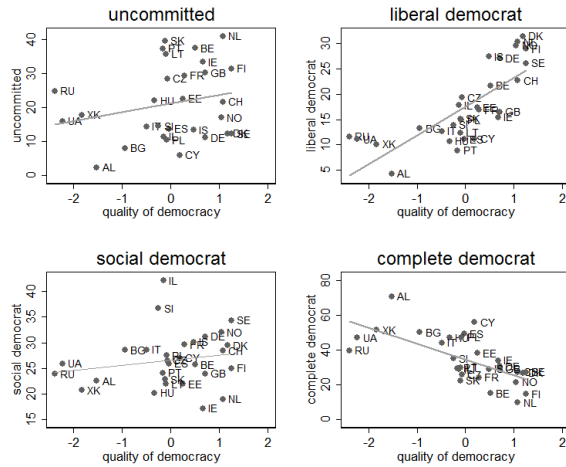
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Shares of types and quality of democracy



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The best and the worst evaluated components

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The best and the worst evaluated components

item	country-specific ranking			
	1st	top 3	last 3	last
liberal dimension				
media freedom	3	22	0	0
minority protection	2	2	0	0
media reliability	0	4	0	0
rule of law	0	0	9	2
democratic dimension				
free and fair elections	10	7	0	0
freedom of opposition	10	19	0	0
citizen deliberation	3	5	0	0
responsibility to EU govts	1	1	0	1
retrospective accountability	0	0	1	0
offer parties	0	0	0	1
explanations by government	0	0	9	0
social justice				
poverty protection	0	0	18	13
income equality	0	0	19	10
direct democracy	0	1	0	3

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Evaluations

- **Evaluation indices**
 - Building on the components of the meaning scales
 - Calculating averages across all components
 - Transforming the items to the range -5 to + 5 (with 0 as the mid-point)

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Explanation of evaluations

- **Key factor: quality of democracy**
 - Expectations for the three regions

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The means of the indices in the three regions

Three regions	liberal democracy	social justice	direct democracy
North-western	1.9	0.3	0.7
Central-eastern	0.2	-2.3	-0.7
Southern	0.7	-1.7	-1.0
Total	1.0	-1.1	-0.1

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Evaluation: ranking of the countries

Country	liberal democracy	social justice	direct democracy
SE	2.6	1.1	1.7
NO	2.5	1.3	1.8
DK	2.4	1.1	1.7
FI	2.3	1.0	1.4
CH	2.1	0.9	2.9
NL	1.9	0.5	-0.2
DE	1.8	-0.6	-1.3
IE	1.7	0.2	2.1
GB	1.5	0.1	0.5
IS	1.4	-0.6	1.1
BE	1.3	0.0	-0.9
CY	1.3	-1.2	0.2
IL	1.3	-1.3	-1.4

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Evaluation: ranking of the countries

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Country	liberal democracy	social justice	direct democracy
FR	1.0	-0.6	-0.5
SK	1.0	-1.6	0.0
PL	1.0	-2.0	-0.1
SI	0.8	-1.9	1.4
HU	0.7	-1.6	0.3
EE	0.6	-2.2	-0.5
CZ	0.6	-2.2	-0.6
ES	0.5	-1.9	-1.0
PT	0.2	-2.2	-1.3
AL	0.2	-2.1	-0.8
BG	0.1	-3.2	-1.5
LT	-0.1	-2.3	-0.7
IT	-0.2	-2.3	-1.0
RU	-0.6	-2.1	-1.3
XK	-0.7	-2.7	-1.7
UA	-0.7	-3.1	-2.0
average	1.0	-1.1	-0.1

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Evaluation: ranking of the countries

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FI	2.3	1.0	1.4
CH	2.1	0.9	2.9
NL	1.9	0.5	-0.2
DE	1.8	-0.6	-1.3
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EE	0.6	-2.2	-0.5
CZ	0.6	-2.2	-0.6
ES	0.5	-1.9	-1.0
PT	0.2	-2.2	-1.3
AL	0.2	-2.1	-0.8
BG	0.1	-3.2	-1.5
LT	-0.1	-2.3	-0.7
IT	-0.2	-2.3	-1.0
RU	-0.6	-2.1	-1.3
XK	-0.7	-2.7	-1.7
UA	-0.7	-3.1	-2.0
average	1.0	-1.1	-0.1

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Relationship with established measures of democratic quality

- **Established measures of democratic quality**
 - World Bank governance indicators
 - Democracy Barometer

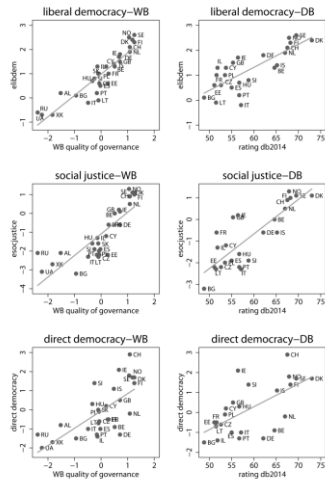
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Relationship with established measures of democratic quality



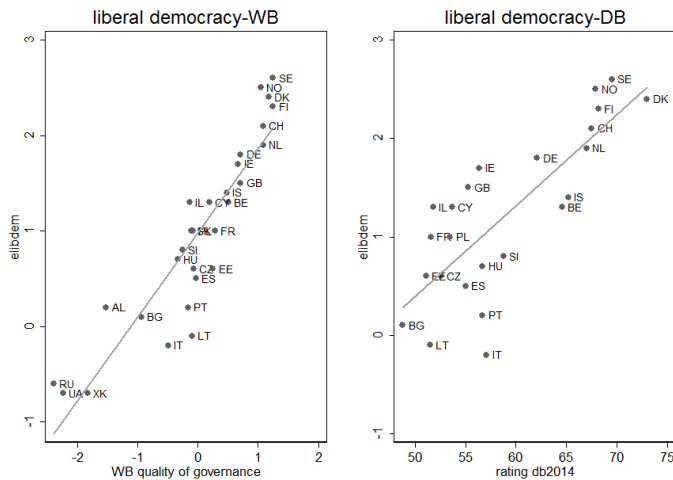
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Relationship with established measures of democratic quality



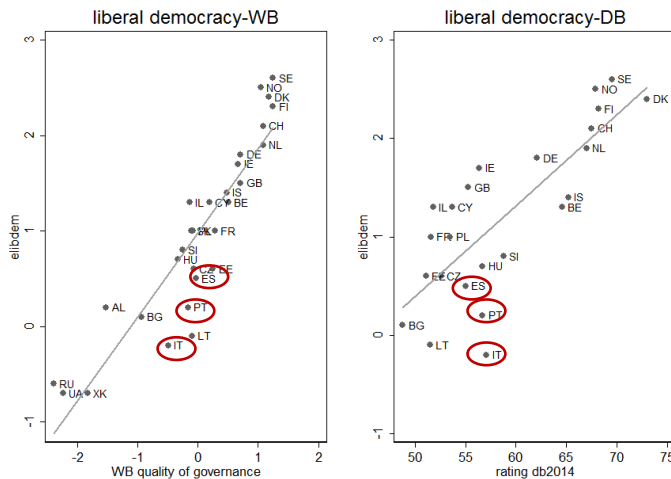
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Relationship with established measures of democratic quality



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Evaluation conditioned by democratic expectations

How do the citizens' expectations influence their evaluations?

- **Basic expectation:** demanding citizens are more sensitive to the quality of democracy in their country than uncommitted citizens
- **Greater sensitivity is expressed in two opposing ways**
 - **Demanding citizens: 'critical citizens'**
 - Value democracy as an ideal
 - Yet remain dissatisfied with the performance of their country's democracy
 - **Demanding citizens: 'civic citizens'**
 - Value democracy as an ideal
 - And are more involved in/attached to/knowledgeable about the democratic process, i.e. appreciate the merits of their country's democracy

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Evaluations conditioned by quality of democracy and trust

- In countries with **well performing democracies**, we expect that
 - the citizens' evaluations are generally positive (intercept), and that
 - demanding citizens are generally more positive (civic) than uncommitted (slope)
 - and *trusting* demanding citizens are particularly positive
- In countries with **poorly performing democracies**, we expect that
 - the citizens' evaluations are generally more negative (intercept), and that
 - demanding citizens are generally even more negative (critical) than uncommitted citizens (slope)
 - and *distrusting* demanding citizens are particularly negative

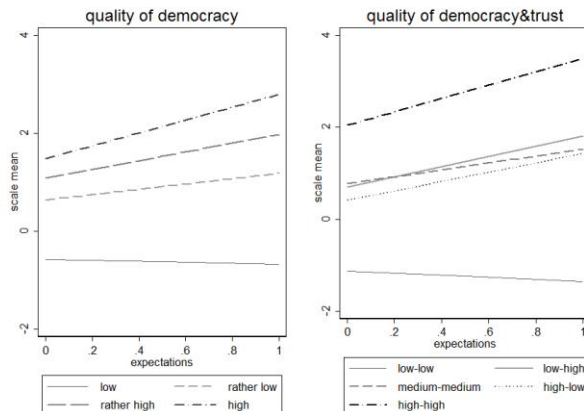
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Liberal democracy: relationship between expecta- tions, trust and evaluation



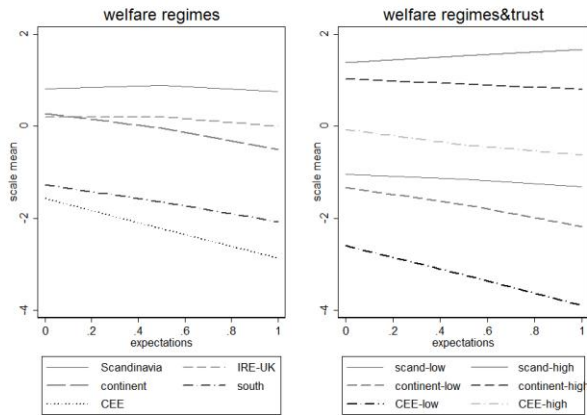
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Social justice: relationship between expectations, trust and evaluation



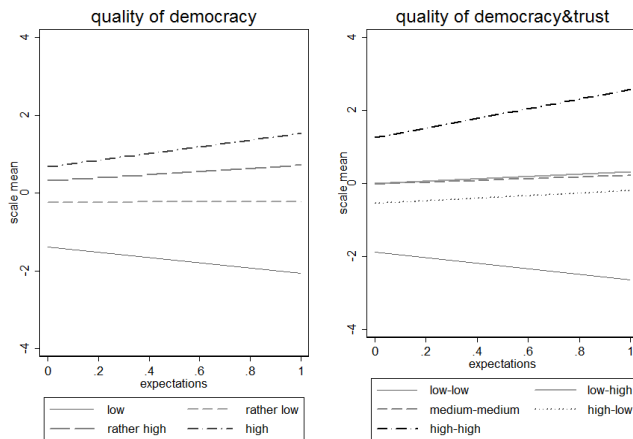
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Direct democracy: relationship between expecta- tions, trust and evaluation



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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An exploratory analysis: a first stab at the data • Tentative conclusions, based on simple analyses 					

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	European University Institute	DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES	Conclusion		
Europeans' views of democracy:					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared basic model of liberal democracy • Social justice, direct democracy: substantial demands going beyond the basic model • Varying demands <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • by country • by generation • More far-reaching demands in Southern and Central- and Eastern Europe (low quality democracies) than in North-Western Europe (high quality democracies) • Youngest generation is most indifferent, oldest generation also relatively indifferent, but to varying degrees in the three regions 					

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Conclusion

Europeans' views of democracy:

- Four types of democrats – uncommitted, liberal, social, and complete democrats: the more demanding types form a majority
- Variation by country:
 - more liberal democrats in high quality democracies,
 - more complete democrats in low quality democracies

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Conclusion

Europeans' evaluations of democracy:

- Critical of the way democracy works in their countries: even in the best of the European democracies they see room for improvement
- Liberal democracy much more positively evaluated than the dimensions going beyond the basic model,
 - exceptions: rule of law and government explanations
- Evaluations confirm established indicators of the quality of democracy

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Conclusion

Europeans' evaluations of democracy:

- evaluations are conditioned by
 - Democratic expectations
 - quality of democracy/of the welfare state,
 - Institutional trust
- more demanding citizens are
 - more positive with regard to liberal and direct democracy in high quality democracies
 - more negative with regard to social justice in low quality democracies/welfare states
- Institutional trust accentuates these relationships

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Thank you for your attention!

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