

Finding out the hard way:
Uncovering the structural foundations of political dissatisfaction
in Italy, 1973-2013*

Sergio Martini

Department of Political and Social Sciences
Universitat Pompeu Fabra
Ramon Trias Fargas 25-27, Jaume I building
08005 Barcelona, Spain
Tel.: +34 93 542 2360
Fax: +34 93 542 2372
sergio.martini@upf.edu

Mario Quaranta

Department of Political Science
LUISS "Guido Carli"
Via di Villa Emiliani 14
00135 Rome, Italy
Tel: +39 (0)6 8522 5733
Fax: +39 (0)6 8522 5056
mquaranta@luiss.it

Abstract

This article analyses the long-term dissatisfaction of citizens with democracy in Italy in the light of the economic and institutional transformations that have occurred over the last four decades. Using multilevel analysis, our results challenge previous research showing how bad economic performance in the form of unemployment and inflation has increased dissatisfaction. Most importantly, we demonstrate that the widespread political dissatisfaction can be connected to fragmentation of the party system. In this regard, we assess the impact of the electoral reforms that have been introduced. These favoured a recovery of satisfaction between the "First" and the "Second" Republic due to the emergence of bi-polar political competition. However, the effect has been contained by an inability to substantially reduce the number of parties. By drawing on compelling data, this study provides systematic evidence of the macro-foundations of Italian political discontent.

Forthcoming in *West European Politics*

*A previous version of this article was presented at the panel "The agenda of the Second Republic. A first look at the priorities of public opinion, media and institutions in the political cycle of alternation" of the XXVII conference of the Italian Political Science Association. We would like to thank all the panel participants for their useful comments. We also want to express our gratitude to the anonymous reviewers and the Editor, Anand Menon, for their suggestions which have contributed to the improvement of the article. The authors are equally responsible for the content of this work.

1 Introduction

Italian democracy has been described as “anomalous” in that it has featured widespread political dissatisfaction in civil society since its outset (Morlino and Tarchi 1996). This is also cited as the prime factor that has fuelled political change in the country and popular support for system reform (Shugart and Wattenberg 2001). However, a closer look at the available survey data reveals that the levels of dissatisfaction have experienced variation over time, featuring peaks and nadirs which mirror the fundamental stages in the country’s democratic development and the passage from the “First” to the “Second” Republic. Recently, the topic has attracted more interest since popular disenchantment seems to have risen again, acting as a driving force behind the earthquake produced by the general elections held in February 2013, in which electoral volatility rose and no clear winner emerged. For these reasons, observers consider Italy to have reached a breaking point and the dawn of a new political cycle (D’Alimonte 2013).

Although attention to dissatisfaction with democracy in Italy is common, it seems that a comprehensive explanation of the factors which may account for its development has yet to be proposed. In this article, we argue that political dissatisfaction with Italian democracy should be studied more by considering the role of structural factors, such as the macro-economic and institutional conditions, over time. Indeed, in the period of the two “Republics” Italy has faced massive transformations in its political system, with the approval of two electoral laws in 1993 and 2005, a profound restructuring of the parties and the party system, and a change in the mechanism for political competition (Bardi 2006). Moreover, the economy has experienced relevant fluctuations, also with long periods of stagnation (Toniolo 2013).

This article, therefore, tries to answer the following questions. How has satisfaction with democracy varied in Italy? How have Italian citizens reacted to the changes in the economy and institutions? It does this by presenting the results of a multilevel analysis of survey data from the Eurobarometer series between 1973 and 2013 and macro data from different sources. In doing so, the article makes two important contributions. First, it provides an explanation of the trends in dissatisfaction with democracy in Italy, accounting for the effect of alternative macro-factors. It will be demonstrated that dissatisfaction has been affected by economic performance. Moreover, it shows how widespread political dissatisfaction in Italy can be attributed to changes in its party system. Specifically, we assess the impact of the electoral reforms introduced. These seem to have favoured a recovery of satisfaction during the “Second Republic” due to the introduction of bi-polar competition through coalitions. However, this effect may have been contained by the inability of the reforms to reduce the number of parties.

This leads on to the additional value of this research. In the context of its wide-ranging debate concerning constitutional engineering, Italy offers one of few opportunities to test how switches from a pure proportional electoral rule to a more mixed majoritarian system may affect satisfaction with democracy. To this end, we employ a longitudinal analysis to monitor satisfaction with democracy “before” and “after” major institutional reforms were introduced. In brief, the Italian context turns out to be a very telling case study for the more general analysis of the macro-foundations of satisfaction with democracy. This is the first time such an extensive multilevel analysis of the longitudinal impact of economic and institutional factors has been carried out. Other specific cases of profound reform of the electoral rule have been France, with the shift between the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s from a more proportional model to a majoritarian one due to the introduction of a two-round system (Blais and Loewen

2009), and Japan, where a change in the electoral law transformed it into a mixed case (Christensen and Johnson 1995). To our knowledge, a similar type of investigation has been undertaken only for New Zealand (Banducci et al. 1999; Karp and Bowler 2001), in which – contrary to the Italian experience – a previous plurality rule was changed to a more proportional one. However, unlike previous research, in this article the effect of institutional variation is controlled for the influence of other intervening factors over a longer time span.

In the remainder of this article, we start by presenting the notion of satisfaction with democracy and narrating how the level of it has changed in Italy over the last forty years. Next, we analyse the role of economics and institutions and derive our hypotheses. Then, we outline our research strategy and the data employed. Finally, our findings are discussed, bringing the article to its conclusions.

2 Forty years of political discontent in Italy

Research on public attitudes towards politics very often involves the notion of political support, understood as people having a favourable orientation towards different objects of the political system (Easton 1975). This idea, originally conceptualized in terms of three objects, has recently been expanded to five: the political community; the principles of the regime; the norms and procedures of the regime; its institutions; and the political authorities. Moreover, each of these objects may be subject to affective beliefs, such as when support captures the meaning given to the object and identification with it. They can also be exposed to evaluative orientations, for example when citizens express a judgment of the political outputs of the system or of the political actors involved (Dalton 2004). In this framework, satisfaction with democracy can be considered one of the basic components of support, tapping public evaluations of the functioning of regime procedures in practice and the extent to which institutional outputs fit people's expectations. Briefly, the satisfaction of citizens implies a continuous revision of what the system is delivering in terms of policies and what it fails to deliver. However, satisfaction with democracy should be understood as different to democratic legitimacy, which pertains to citizen's beliefs that democratic politics is the most appropriate (Linde and Eckman 2003). It should also be distinguished from disaffection, which implies a disengagement from politics and a lack of confidence, but with no questioning of the regime (Montero et al. 1997; Torcal and Montero 2006).

At this point, investigations into the distance between Italian citizens and their state institutions have a prominent position in the international literature. In the last five decades, the political attitudes of Italians have often been described in terms of broad distrust in political institutions, particularly in political parties, and high levels of alienation in the form of a lack of political interest and disaffection (Almond and Verba 1963; Sani 1980; Bardi and Pasquino 1995; Segatti 2006). Although this feeling of disillusionment and powerlessness has not gradually translated into a rejection of democracy as an ideal system – it remains widely accepted among the Italian public (Morlino 1998; Torcal and Magalhães 2010) – dissatisfaction and criticism towards how the system works in practice has been a peculiarity of the post-war period, running at very high levels over the years. This is clearly shown in Figure 1, which displays time-series information on the levels of dissatisfaction with democracy in Italy between 1973 and 2013, using Eurobarometer data.

[Figure 1 about here]

As can be seen, dissatisfied citizens have been far more prevalent throughout the period, and dissatisfaction has recently returned to the same levels as in the 1970s. Moreover, Italy represents an anomalous case when compared to the western countries of the European Union, presenting levels of dissatisfaction somewhat higher during the whole period. Dissatisfaction with democracy in Italy also differs relevantly from other southern European countries at least until the beginning of 2008, when the whole area experienced the beginning of one of the deepest economic crises in its recent history. Overall, the Italian pattern seems to resemble those of the new eastern democracies, indicating the low quality of outcome and performance achieved by the political system in Italy and the failure of decisions taken by political elites during the period (Morlino and Tarchi 1996; Memoli 2009). Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that dissatisfaction has fluctuated over time and that it is possible to identify cycles that correspond to specific phases of democratization of the Italian political system.

The first phase goes from the early 1970s to the beginning of the 1990s. During this period, dissatisfaction among Italian citizens was at extremely high levels, reaching its peak around 1976 and 1978, when political terrorism seriously challenged the stability of the democratic regime. Another critical point occurred around 1992 and 1993, when the “Clean Hands” investigation, led by Milanese prosecutors, revealed a widespread system of corruption involving national party leaders (Newell 2000). In those years, the combination of judicial inquiries together with the end of the two-bloc system of international relations and a strong economic downward trend accelerated the pace of a crisis fed by poor performance of the political system, bringing the so-called “First Republic” to a dramatic epilogue. In a few months, the main parties that had governed the country throughout the post-war period collapsed, with a resulting process of partisan de-alignment (Bardi 2006; Morlino 2013).

The crisis started at the beginning of the 1990s and brought the country to a new stage of transition in its democratic history, which for many influential scholars still has to come to a conclusion (Pasquino and Valbruzzi 2010; Morlino 2013). Indeed, during the “Second Republic”, which is from 1994 to the present, two electoral laws have been approved (1993 and 2005), new political formations have arisen, and a new pattern of political competition has been established (Bardi 2006; Morlino 2013). Moreover, during the same period citizens’ judgments in terms of dissatisfaction with democracy have also seemed to experience a different trend. If we look at Figure 1, it can be noticed that despite the share of negative judgments remaining substantial during the period, dissatisfaction gradually declined up to 2006, when it reached its lowest point, before rising again with some fluctuations until 2013. In this latter period, indeed, the international financial crisis also affected the Italian economy and new political scandals and cases of corruption undermined the reputation of the new political elites (Della Porta and Vannucci 2007; Schmidt 2012). At this point, can we hypothesize a connection between structural transformations of the Italian political system and the dissatisfaction levels of Italian citizens?

3 Explaining the Italian syndrome: the role of structural factors

According to a well-consolidated argument, negative Italian attitudes towards politics are formed through socialization and they tend to reproduce themselves exogenously to the political system (Almond and Verba 1963; Sani 1980). Thus, political dissatisfaction should not reflect a failure of democratic governance and of the political elites or daily political experiences, but it is to be related to deeply-rooted histor-

ical traditions and cultural predispositions. However, this approach is more able to explain long-term processes and affective orientations, such as people's attachment to the regime, than to account for evaluative elements of political support, which instead adapt contingently to characteristics of the context, following time-period effects (Norris 1999; Dalton 2004). As we have seen, political dissatisfaction has greatly fluctuated over time and may be better explained by assuming people are able to express a rational assessment of the cumulative records of successive outputs of the system. Variation in political dissatisfaction is therefore likely to happen according to contextual conditions (e.g. Norris 1999; Torcal and Montero 2006; Gunther et al. 2007).

In the first place, a relevant body of the literature on political support has focused on the role of economic performance. Some well-known research has linked, for instance, government popularity and electoral results with macroeconomic variables such as growth, unemployment and inflation, producing case studies and cross-national evidence for OECD countries and the US in particular (e.g. Powell and Whitten 1993; Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2000; Alesina and Wacziarg 2000). Along the same lines, others have highlighted the finding that fluctuation in satisfaction with the functioning of democratic systems mirrors short-term shocks in the economy (Weil 1989; Clarke et al 1993; McAllister 1999; Wagner et al. 2009). Here, public debt should also be considered a limitation to governmental responsiveness, affecting citizens' perceptions of efficacy (Morlino 2011).

In this respect, Italy's economic performance varied much during the period studied. Despite the "oil crisis" of the mid- and late 1970s, which led to the first post-war recession in Italy in 1975, real GDP grew at a sustained pace of around 3% per year between 1980 and 1990. However, from the beginning of the 1990s the country gradually lost its growth capacity, which slumped to around 1.7% between 1990 and 2000, slower than most western European countries. This was even worse in the subsequent ten years (in 2011 total GDP was just 1.1% higher than it had been 10 years earlier), bringing some authors to consider the 2000s a "lost decade" (Toniolo 2013: 27). Moreover, public debt, which remained stable during the 1970s at around 60% of GDP, rocketed up in the following years, reaching around 120% in the early 1990s. It then decreased between 1995 and 2005, but went back to increasing again until 2012 (Schmidt 2012; Toniolo 2013). As a result, in the light of previous research, we hypothesize that negative economic performance favours dissatisfaction (Hp1).

Another strand of research has instead concentrated on the impact of elections and their outcomes in channelling popular demands into government outputs (Norris 1999). On the one hand, some scholars have emphasized the virtues of "consensual" democracies, characterized mostly by proportional representation, multi-party systems and coalition governments. Since election outcomes are fairer and more inclusive, political minorities are represented in parliament and can influence the decision-making process. In other words, power-sharing institutions act as safety valves for discontent, offering a chance of higher perceived efficacy and support (Lijphart 1999). Conversely, others have emphasized that "majoritarian" systems, characterized ideally by simple plurality election rules, a two-party system, and a single-party government, are better suited to promoting accountability, by reducing fragmentation while increasing the effectiveness of governments (Powell 2000). As a result, in these systems political discontent would be lower (Aarts and Thomassen 2008). However, the evidence is mixed and neither of the views seem better suited to promoting democratic satisfaction. While proportional rules and multi-party systems are generally associated with higher levels of satisfaction with democracy (Anderson and Guillory 1997; Torcal and Magalhães 2010), when fragmenta-

tion is too high satisfaction is lowered (Weil 1989, Berggren et al. 2004). In other words, when there are too many parties gaining representation in parliament, it is difficult to aggregate their interests into stable majority coalitions able to take decisions. Briefly, representation and accountability are two principles that ideally should be maximized at the same time (Listhaug et al. 2009). In this respect, in recent decades there has been a marked tendency across countries to mix these two principles in a single electoral system design (Shugart and Wattenberg 2001) and Italy has been one illustration of this.

The party system of the “First Republic” in Italy has often been defined as “polarized pluralism”, characterized by an extremely high level of party fragmentation and ideological polarization, centre-based coalitions with peripheral turnover, and anti-system parties represented by the right-wing party, the Italian Social Movement (MSI) and the left-wing one, namely the Italian Communist Party (PCI) (Sartori 1976; Sani and Sartori 1983). The centre was occupied by the Christian Democrats (DC), who governed substantially for the whole period, constituting the pivot and the essential component of governments formed with smaller political formations within their orbit. Hence, for more than forty years Italy went through many coalition governments with approximately the same composition and basically no alternation (Pasquino and Valbruzzi 2010). This “blocked” and unstable political system favoured a strategy of penetration by the parties into all spheres of society with a resulting diffusion of corruption. The main effects consisted in an overgrowth of the public sector, a low quality of bureaucracy, and the relevance of party patronage (Morlino 1998). Amid this gloomy scenario, the referendum campaign of 1993 forced a reluctant political class to approve a new electoral rule which changed the former proportional representation system into a mixed electoral system, combining single-member districts with a proportional correction. This change in the structure of democratic government had the aim of rekindling people’s support for regime procedures by securing the stability of majorities, simplifying the party system, creating alternation and increasing the accountability of individual members of Parliament (Katz 2001).

The “Second Republic”, which resulted from the collapse of the old party system and the establishment of new patterns of political competition, had important innovative aspects (D’Alimonte 2005; Chiaramonte 2007). First, most of the parties taking part in the elections held in 1994 were completely new, and the anti-system parties disappeared. This favoured the replacement of a vast majority of the political class and a more direct relationship between parliamentarians and electors, which was especially favoured by the majoritarian component of the electoral reform. Another aspect consisted in an increasing role for pre-electoral coalitions, which became the main actors in a bi-polar political competition. This produced an unfreezing of the political system making democratic alternation possible, an increase in the duration of governments and a greater identifiability of political offer (Bartolini et al. 2004; Chiaramonte 2007; Pasquino and Valbruzzi 2010). In this context, a further element of change came with the approval of a second electoral rule in 2005, which still consisted in a mixed system, this time based on a partially proportional rule with a low electoral threshold and a majority bonus, which brought a growth in coalitional bi-polarism (Morlino 2013).

Nevertheless, the new political phase was also characterized by some elements of continuity. Overall, despite the new electoral rules having introduced a higher level of disproportionality, this did not produce a substantial reduction in the fragmentation of the party system (e.g. Sartori 1994; Chiaramonte 2007). Indeed, the number of parties and their ideological distance remained relatively intense. Briefly, the role of the parties was not reduced; on the contrary, small parties were still important for coalition

formation and winning the electoral competition. For this reason, some authors have defined the new party system in the “Second Republic” as a case of “fragmented bipolarism” (D’Alimonte 2005). The enduring role of parties has also been testified by a recent analysis of patronage, which shows its persistence up to the present (Di Mascio 2012).

By considering the purposes of the electoral reforms in the context of the comparative research on the role of institutions, we assume greater fragmentation (Hp2) and polarization (Hp3) of the party system to increase political dissatisfaction. Moreover, we anticipate that a higher level of disproportionality in the electoral rule (Hp4) should have a negative role vis-à-vis dissatisfaction. Finally, we assume the bi-polar dynamics to reduce political dissatisfaction (Hp5).

4 Research strategy: data and method

The purpose of this study is to explain the temporal evolution of the dissatisfaction of Italian citizens with the functioning of their democratic system and to examine whether economic and institutional factors may help us in finding an answer. In the literature, the common approach is to carry out cross-national comparative research, assuming no relevant time variation and the stability of constitutional arrangements (Anderson 2008). However, when some variation is observable due to institutional reforms, longitudinal case studies may be more appropriate to evaluate the impact of both the rules and the actual configurations of governments and party systems on citizen dissatisfaction (Norris 1999). In this article, we stress the importance of studying the role of structural factors in Italy by considering the time dimension, as it provides a unique opportunity to test any connection between changes in economic conditions and the political setting on the one hand, and changes in dissatisfaction with democracy on the other.

4.1 Dependent variable

Our dependent variable is a measure of the extent to which a respondent is dissatisfied with the way democracy works in his or her country. The indicator is an ordinal scale with four categories (“very satisfied”, “fairly satisfied”, “not very satisfied”, “not at all satisfied”). It is one of the few indicators for which extensive information exists for Italy over the years. We use the Eurobarometer surveys in which our dependent variable is elicited and select respondents who are between 18 and 85 years old. This yields a dataset going from 1973 to 2013.¹

Clearly, this indicator of democratic dissatisfaction is not a perfect measure as, under certain circumstances, it has been considered to tap affective orientations towards democracy as an ideal form of government (Canache et al. 2001). For the present research, however, we consider it appropriate to use this indicator as a measure of support for regime performance (Norris 1999; Linde and Ekman 2003; Dalton 2004), and that it is able to test Italians’ evaluations of the actual working of their democratic regime. Indeed, it is important to notice that, particularly for people in countries that have experienced an authoritarian regime, it might be easier to distinguish questions related to regime legitimacy from those concerning the efficacy of the working of the democratic system (Montero et al. 1997). Indeed, various analyses have confirmed the conceptual

¹We used the Eurobarometer Trend File; EB 58.1; EB 60.1; EB 61.0; EB 63.4; EB 65.2; EB 68.1; EB 71.3; 73.4; EB 76.3; EB 77.3; 79.3.

and empirical autonomy of these two dimensions of political support in Italy, showing that the indicator of satisfaction with democracy elicits evaluations of the outputs of democratic governance and the extent to which political institutions respond to people's preferences (Morlino 1998; Memoli 2009).

4.2 Explanatory variables

The independent variables can be divided into individual-level variables and year-level variables capturing contextual characteristics. The variables at the individual level are selected to control for the classic predictors of democratic dissatisfaction (see Norris 1999; Dalton 2004). These are the respondent's gender (reference category is: "man"); age when education was completed in categories ("less than 15", which is the reference category, "15 – 19", "over 19", and "still studying"); age in years and age squared in years; employment status (reference category "not employed"); satisfaction with life (the reference category is "not satisfied"); political discussion ("never", as reference category, "occasionally" and "frequently"); and a left-right scale ranging from 1 ("left") to 10 ("right"). We also include the respondents' geographical area of residence in the models ("north-west" as reference category, "north-east", "centre", "south" and "islands").² All the explanatory variables at the individual level are drawn from the Eurobarometer surveys. The descriptive statistics for the individual-level variables are shown in Table A1 in the on-line supplementary material.

The second set of macro-variables captures the characteristics of the Italian parliament. Here, in order to fully assess the effect of institutional reforms on political dissatisfaction we follow influential contributions in the literature by including an operationalization based on both rules and actual configurations (Listhaug et al. 2009). First, we use the effective number of electoral parties (ENEP) (Laakso and Taagepera 1979).³ This is followed by an index of party system polarization as proposed by Dalton (2008), who argues that this is also important to gauge the quality of political competition. Then, we measure the disproportionality of the electoral law using the Gallagher Index (Gallagher 1991), which looks at the degree to which the allocation of seats matches the distribution of the national vote in parliamentary elections. In this way, it is possible to capture the variation among the three rules adopted during the period. Eventually, to tap the changes which occurred in the Italian party system, which moved from polarized pluralism to fragmented bi-polarism, we measure bi-polarism by using an index which sums the proportion of seats the two largest parties or coalitions gained in an election (Chiaromonte 2007).⁴ All the variables, with the exception of polarization, which is computed using the Comparative Manifesto Project (Volkens et al., 2013), are calculated using original data provided by the Italian Ministry of the Interior.⁵ Descriptive statistics of the year-level variables are reported in Table A2 in the on-line supplementary

²This choice is due to the well-known geographical differences in the Italian context (Diamanti 2003). North-west includes: *Piemonte, Valle d'Aosta, Liguria, Lombardia*; north-east includes: *Trentino-Alto Adige, Veneto, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Emilia Romagna*; centre includes: *Toscana, Umbria, Marche, Lazio*; south includes: *Abruzzo, Molise, Campania, Puglia, Basilicata, Calabria*; islands includes: *Sicilia and Sardegna*. We follow the NUTS1 classification.

³The measure is computed using seat shares.

⁴To create the index, we used parties before 1994 and coalitions after 1994. See Chiaromonte (2007).

⁵We used the election results for the Camera dei deputati (the Lower chamber). For the period between 1994 and 2001, we included in the models the scores computed using the proportional part of the electoral rule. However, we also ran the models using the majoritarian part of the electoral rule and the average scores using both parts of the electoral rule. No substantial differences between the models were found. See Bardi (2006) on the topic.

material.

4.3 Missing values

Our data present two types of missing data problems. The first is the classic problem of missing values due to a respondent's refusal to answer a question or skipping a question. As is known, this is a common issue in survey research and ignoring it could lead to serious result bias (King et al. 2001). The second type of missing values originates because in some surveys the questions are not asked (Gelman et al. 1999), as happens for some individual-level variables in the Eurobarometer series which were not collected in some years.⁶ A way to overcome this problem and avoid needing to exclude both important predictors of political dissatisfaction and available survey years is multiple imputation (Rubin 1987). Multiple imputation consists of creating, through a probabilistic mechanism, several datasets in which the missing cells are filled with credible values. In particular, we use a multiple imputation approach based on chained regression equations (Raghunathan et al. 2001). Imputing missing values when the question is not asked has the advantage that the fact that the value is missing is not caused by unobserved characteristics of the respondent, but by the fact that he/she could not answer the question. Therefore, the imputation is carried out using the relationship between questions asked and not asked (Gelman et al. 1999). We apply multiple imputation to the pooled dataset to solve both the missing data problems, stratified by year, and we produce three imputed datasets which we rely on to carry out the analysis (Rubin 1987). The descriptive statistics of the variables pre- and post-imputation are shown in Table A1 in the on-line supplementary material.

4.4 Model

Our research design consists of repeated cross-sectional surveys held in a single country. Therefore, we deal with individuals (level-1) nested in years (level-2). This design is argued to be very well suited to a study of change at the macro level (Firebaugh 1997) using time-varying predictors. It is important to underline that repeated cross sections do not follow the same individuals over time, as so-called "panels" do, but follow cohorts over time. Therefore, our strategy is to estimate a model in which both the year-level and the cohort-level are taken into account simultaneously (Yang and Land 2006), which ensures that different clustering effects are accounted for (Rasbash and Brown 2008). For this reason, we use a cross-classified random-effects two-level model in which individuals are nested both in years and in cohorts, two levels that are not hierarchically nested.⁷ As we are mainly interested in the period effects, this strategy allows us to control for potential effects of population change driving the levels of dissatisfaction with democ-

⁶Employment status is missing in 1973, education in 1995, satisfaction with life in 1980, 1981 and 2004, political discussion in 2009 and the left-right scale is missing in 2011, 2012, 2013.

⁷This model is also known as the hierarchical age-period-cohort model (HAPC) (Yang and Land 2006), and is specifically suited to modelling outcomes using repeated surveys in one country. Published works using the HAPC model do not discuss the issue of potential autocorrelation among the random effects. However, in order to exclude potential bias, we run time series diagnostics tests on the models. The tests for autocorrelation and partial autocorrelation show that the assumption of independence of random effects is not violated. Other diagnostic tests show that the normality assumption is not violated either. All the models are checked for multicollinearity. The correlation matrix of the aggregate variables and the variance inflation factors of the models can be found in the on-line supplementary material.

racy in Italy, disentangling the effects of both period and cohort.⁸ In order to follow this strategy, we create birth cohorts each of ten years age range, from 1890 to 2000.

As our dependent variable is an ordinal one with four categories, we employ an ordinal random-effects model (Agresti 2002) in which we include covariates at the individual level and at the year level. To simplify the representation of our results we compute the predicted change in the probability⁹ of being “not very satisfied” or “not at all satisfied” over the range of the year-level variables, as this choice lets us focus on general dissatisfaction.

We run a number of models. First, we estimate a null model, which serves as a reference, and then we include only the individual-level variables. At this point we add the macro-economic and the parliamentary variables, which enter at the year level. To avoid model misspecification, we do not include all the year-level variables simultaneously, as they may be correlated. Therefore, after carefully detecting the correlation patterns among the year-level variables, we include the macro-economic variables in the models and, afterwards, the parliamentary variables.

5 Findings

Table 1 reports the estimates for the null model, model 1. The ICC shows that 6% of the variance is due to year-level characteristics.¹⁰ Therefore, it needs to be accounted for by using year-varying variables. Model 2 includes the individual-level variables only. We can see that the estimates are in line with the comparative literature on satisfaction (Norris 1999; Dalton 2004). Women are not significantly different from men. Those who have higher levels of education or are still in the education system are less dissatisfied compared to those who have the lowest level of education. Respondents who are employed tend to be less dissatisfied. Age shows a quadratic association with dissatisfaction. Satisfaction with life has a negative association with dissatisfaction and the frequency of political discussion has a positive association with it. Left-wing respondents are more critical towards the way democracy works. To some extent, respondents living in the north-eastern regions are less dissatisfied than those living in the north-west, while those from the other areas appear to be more dissatisfied. Observers have often interpreted the success of autonomist leagues in the north as a manifestation of discontent (Diamanti 1993). However, our results show that higher levels of dissatisfaction are found in most other areas of Italy, with the exception of the north.

Overall, although the individual-level variables are useful to understand the micro-level patterns of dissatisfaction, they tell little about differences in dissatisfaction across the years. In fact, we can see that the ICC does not get much lower and that the amount of variance explained at the year level by model 2 is small. As has already been noted, the individual component of dissatisfaction in Italy seems to be marginal (Morlino and Tarchi 1996).

⁸We also run the same models without including the cohort level. These models show worse goodness-of-fit statistics compared to those including the cohort effect.

⁹The predicted change in probability is the difference between the probability of being “not very satisfied” or “not at all satisfied” computed at the maximum of the covariate of interest and the probability of being “not very satisfied” or “not at all satisfied” computed at the minimum of the covariate of interest. All the other covariates are held at their means. The confidence intervals are estimated using a simulation method based on Bayesian inference (see Gelman and Hill 2006).

¹⁰The Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC) is “the fraction of total variation in the data that is accounted for by between-group variation” (Gelman and Hill, 2006: 448).

[Table 1 about here]

As a result, a better assessment calls for a model in which year-level variables are included. Models 3 and 4 in Table 1 add the macro-economic indicators. In model 3 we add growth and public debt. Public debt has a negative and significant association with dissatisfaction, while growth has not. Model 4, instead, includes growth, unemployment and inflation. Growth is still not significant. However, the other two coefficients are positive and significant at the 99% level. This means that a worsening of economic conditions, i.e. rises in inflation and unemployment, are associated with higher levels of dissatisfaction.

Figure 2 shows the predicted change in the probability of being “not very” or “not at all” satisfied with democracy, with 95% confidence intervals, over the range of the year-level predictors. We can see that dissatisfaction does not vary with growth, as its predicted change overlaps zero. Conversely, the predicted change in probability of debt is about 0.1. In fact, when debt is around 50% of GDP at the beginning of the 1970s, a respondent has a probability of being dissatisfied with democracy of about 0.78, while when the public debt tops 130% of GDP the probability decreases to 0.68. At low levels of unemployment and inflation the probabilities of being dissatisfied are about 0.64 and 0.65 respectively, while at high levels of the independent variables these probabilities are around 0.82 and 0.87 respectively. This means that the predicted changes in probability over the range of these variables are 0.19 and 0.22 respectively. The models including the state of the economy appear much more informative than model 2. In fact, the ICC decreases relevantly and the proportion of variance explained reaches about 0.64 in model 4. Thus, it seems that unemployment and inflation (together with the other factors) explain a part of the variance in dissatisfaction at the year level.

[Figure 2 about here]

In this respect, it is important to notice that these results seem to at least partially challenge previous research (Morlino and Tarchi 1996; Morlino 1998), shedding new light on the role of the economy in explaining the dissatisfaction levels of Italians with their democratic system. Indeed, while the irrelevance of economic growth is confirmed, unlike former investigations our findings show the role of public debt in affecting dissatisfaction, as well as the substantial impact of other indicators of bad economic performance, such as unemployment and inflation. Our evidence on public debt calls for further debate on its role, and it contradicts our general expectations derived from theory (Morlino 2011). At this point, it is important to recall that in Italy public spending has been widely used as an instrument for clientelism and consensus formation, both in the “First” and in the “Second” Republic. Many jobs in public administration have been filled according to partisan rather than meritocratic criteria, with consequential increases in the number of public employees and debt (Golden 2003; Di Mascio 2012).

Economic conditions, however, are not the only factors that influence Italians’ judgments in relation to the functioning of their democratic system. Table 2 reports the models including the year-level variables measuring the characteristics of the parliamentary arena. Models 5 and 6 add the effective number of parties, disproportionality and bi-polarism. The effective number of electoral parties has a strong and positive association with dissatisfaction. This means that even taking into account birth cohorts and controlling for the economy, the number of parties plays a substantial role in explaining the variation in dissatisfaction across the years.

Looking at Figure 2, we see that the predicted change over the range of the number of parties is 0.08. This means that when this variable is around three the probability of

being dissatisfied is about 0.70. Nevertheless, as the number of parties increases we see that the probability of being dissatisfied rises to almost 0.80. Additionally, we do not find that the level of disproportionality has a significant association with dissatisfaction.

[Table 2 about here]

The last variable we include, bi-polarism, has a negative and significant association with dissatisfaction in both models 5 and 6. Figure 3 illustrates the very strong negative impact of bi-polarism on dissatisfaction. In fact, the predicted change in probability over its range is about -0.13. This means that when the two largest parties or coalitions get 50% of the seats in the parliament the probability of being dissatisfied is about 0.80, while it becomes about 0.67 when full bi-polarism is achieved. Finally, models 5 and 6 explain the variance in dissatisfaction in Italy well. In fact, the ICC in model 6 is 0.013, meaning that only a small part of the variance in dissatisfaction is due to year-level characteristics. Furthermore, the proportion of variance explained by the two models is about 0.64 and 0.79 respectively.

Instead of the effective number of parties, models 7 and 8 add polarization to the “economy” models. Polarization is negatively associated with dissatisfaction, which is unexpected. Polarization indicates how distributed parties are on the ideological continuum and the different ideological choices available to citizens, enhancing the distinctiveness of the parties while strengthening the process of representation (Dalton 2008). Nevertheless, the coefficient is significant only in model 7, not in model 8, and does not allow us to provide conclusive results. The other variables included in models 7 and 8 have the same effects as in models 5 and 6. However, public debt loses its statistical significance, making the role of this variable not completely clear. These models explain the variance in dissatisfaction across the years in Italy well, although slightly less than models 5 and 6.

These findings suggest some important conclusions. First of all, institutions have an additive and more important role in explaining dissatisfaction levels than economic conditions (Torcal and Magalhães 2010), confirming that politics matters the most, at least for Italy (Morlino 1998). Then, there is confirmation that fragmentation has had a very important role in increasing citizens’ dissatisfaction with democracy. By hindering efficient policies, it has substantially impacted on the quality of Italian democracy and its effect may have persisted through the “Second Republic” (Piana and Raniolo 2013; Morlino 2013). Thus, it is not surprising that the higher levels of disproportionality introduced by the two electoral reforms have not had a direct effect per se in decreasing dissatisfaction, as they have largely failed to reduce the number of parties and simplify the party system (Sartori 1994; D’Alimonte 2005; Chiaramonte 2007). However, the level of dissatisfaction has on average decreased during the “Second Republic”. As shown by our findings, bi-polarism is the factor that contributes to explaining this dynamic over time. In fact, what actually changed as a result of the electoral reforms is the structure of political competition, with the introduction of bi-polar electoral coalitions, higher identifiability and democratic alternation (Bartolini et al. 2004; Pasquino and Valbruzzi 2010).

6 Concluding remarks: Italy lost in transition

Italy has often been described as a highly dissatisfied society, stuck in a never-ending process of transition towards a suitable new model of democracy which started at the

beginning of the 1990s (Morlino and Tarchi 1996, Morlino 2013). Since that time, Italian democracy has experienced two electoral laws, a complete restructuring of the party system, an increase in alternation and competition, and difficulties in the economy and state finances (Piana and Raniolo 2013). For this reason, this article has argued that a promising strategy to account for the dynamics of dissatisfaction in the country is to look at structural factors that change contingently with it, rather than at cultural factors that are supposedly static and are rooted in a historical lack of civic traditions (Almond and Verba 1963; Sani 1980). Previous research has indicated that individual components of dissatisfaction are only marginal (Morlino and Tarchi 1996). Therefore, we have looked at alternative, yet additive, structural macro-variables, which are able to explain a large part of the variation in dissatisfaction over time. Some economic factors, such as unemployment and inflation, seem to be strongly associated with dissatisfaction. Variables measuring changes in the political system also provide useful information concerning the dynamics of dissatisfaction. We have found that party system fragmentation is positively associated with dissatisfaction, while the two electoral reforms have contributed to a recovery of satisfaction in the “Second Republic”, more because of the emergence of bi-polar competition than the introduction of a higher level of disproportionality.

Therefore, this article contributes to the literature at different levels. The first contribution is that we have proposed a systematic framework for explaining the cycle of political dissatisfaction in Italy using quantitative data spanning over a period of almost forty years. We have used political and economic macro-level factors that have never been considered simultaneously, and they have proven to provide a deep, yet not complete, account of dissatisfaction in this country. Another contribution of this article concerns the debate on institutional reforms in the country; a leitmotiv in the Italian political arena (Bull and Pasquino 2007). In fact, our findings may indicate possible “solutions” to the high levels of dissatisfaction in Italy. An electoral law which produces a simplified bi-polar parliamentary arena accompanied by good economic performance may seem a simple “cocktail” to cure or limit dissatisfaction.

Nevertheless, the outcomes of electoral reforms are not always predictable (Scheiner 2008). This is because another factor to be taken into account, and a potential limitation of the article due to the impossibility of controlling for it in the statistical model, is how political actors react to institutional changes. The Italian case largely demonstrates it. Despite the more majoritarian features of the new electoral rules, small parties maintained their importance (Sartori 1994; D’Alimonte 2005; Chiaramonte 2007). This might have had an effect on popular dissatisfaction in the long run. In other words, it can be argued that the “Second Republic” enjoyed a “capital” of great expectations of change among the Italian public favoured by the context of reform, which contributed to a decrease in dissatisfaction until 2006. Nonetheless, this decrease did not last, probably because of the lack of consolidation of the “new” political system, during the emergence of the economic crisis (Piana and Raniolo 2013). Another element to be considered and which might complicate the picture is the behaviour of voters, who might need time to learn and understand the new rules (Bordignon and Monticini 2012). Furthermore, we should note that reforms are not sufficient for a complete recovery of popular dissatisfaction with the regime (see also Dalton 2004: 187) – as economic factors are also quite important – confirming other similar investigations for the case of New Zealand, in which, after a temporary bounce of support after reform was approved, it began to go down again (Banducci et al. 1999; Karp and Bowler 2001).

To conclude, we might argue that a “cycle” of dissatisfaction with democracy in Italy might come to an end, but it is still difficult to say that the country is entering, as several

political commentators hold, a “Third Republic” (Masseti 2009). To do so, an agreement between the major political actors on the fundamental rules of the new political system is again needed. One possible path to end the transition would be to learn from previous experience and to conclude the process of reforms that started almost twenty years ago, aiming at improving efficiency and effectiveness (Morlino 2013). However, at the moment Italian democracy appears to be lost in a transition, far from finding a way to end it. The uncertainty resulting from the 2013 general elections seems to have accelerated the search for a solution to the puzzle, which would be important not only for the country itself, but for the political and financial stability of the European Union as a whole.

7 References

Aarts, Kees, and Jacques Thomassen (2008). “Satisfaction with Democracy: Do Institutions Matter?”, *Electoral Studies*, 27:1, 5-18.

Agresti, Alan (2002). *Categorical Data Analysis*. New York: Wiley.

Alesina, Alberto, and Romain Wacziarg (2000). “The Economics of Civic Trust”, in Susan Pharr and Robert Putnam (eds.), *Disaffected Democracies*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 149-170.

Almond, Gabriel A., and Sidney Verba (1963). *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Anderson, Christopher J. (2008). “Structures and Voter Behavior”, in Russell J. Dalton and Hans-Dieter Klingemann (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Behavior*. Oxford University Press, 589-609.

Anderson, Christopher J., and Christine A. Guillory (1997). “Political Institutions and Satisfaction with Democracy: A Cross-National Analysis of Consensus and Majoritarian Systems”, *American Political Science Review*, 91:1, 66-82.

Banducci, Susan A., Donovan, Todd M., and Jeffrey A. Karp (1999). “Proportional Representation and Attitudes about Politics: Results from New Zealand”, *Electoral Studies*, 18:4, 533-555.

Bardi, Luciano (2006). “Arena Elettorale e Dinamiche Parlamentari nel Cambiamento del Sistema Partitico Italiano”, in Luciano Bardi (ed.), *Partiti e Sistemi di Partito*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 265-286.

Bardi, Luciano, and Gianfranco Pasquino (1995). “Politicizzati ed Alienati”, in Arturo Parisi and Hans Schadee (eds.), *Sulla Soglia del Cambiamento*. Bologna: il Mulino, 17-42.

Bartolini, Stefano, Chiaramonte, Alessandro, and Roberto D’Alimonte (2004). “The Italian Party System between Parties and Coalitions”, *West European Politics*, 27:1, 1-19.

Berggren, Heidi M., Fugate, Gregory A., Preuhs, Robert R., and Dennis R. Still (2004). “Satisfied? Institutional Determinants of Citizen Evaluations of Democracy”, *Politics & Policy*, 32:1, 72-96.

Blais, André, and Peter John Loewen (2009). “The French Electoral System and its Effects”, *West European Politics*, 32:2, 345-359.

Bordignon, Massimo and Andrea Monticini (2012). The Importance of the Electoral Rule: Evidence from Italy. *Economic Letters*, 117, 322-325.

Bull, Martin, and Gianfranco Pasquino (2007). “A Long Quest in Vain: Institutional Reforms in Italy”, *West European Politics*, 30:4, 670-691.

Canache, Damarys, Mondak, Jeffrey, and Mitchell Seligson (2001). “Meaning and Measurement in Cross-National Research on Satisfaction with Democracy”, *Public*

Opinion Quarterly, 65:4, 506-528.

Chiaramonte, Alessandro (2007). "Il Nuovo Sistema Partitico Italiano tra Bipolarismo e Frammentazione", in Roberto D'Alimonte and Alessandro

Chiaramonte (eds.), *Proporzionale ma non Solo. Le Elezioni Politiche del 2006*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 369-406.

Christensen, Raymond V. and Paul E. Johnson (1995). "Towards a Context-Rich Analysis of Electoral Systems: the Japanese Example", *American Journal of Political Science*, 39, 575-598.

Clarke, Harold, Dutt, Nitish, and Allan Kornberg (1993). "The Political Economy of Attitudes Toward Polity and Society in Western European Democracies", *Journal of Politics*, 55:4, 998-1021.

Dalton, Russell J. (2004). *Democratic Challenges, Democratic Choices: The Erosion of Political Support in Advanced Industrial Societies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dalton, Russell J. (2008). "The Quantity and the Quality of the Party Systems. Party System Polarization, Its Measurement and Its Consequences", *Comparative Political Studies*, 41:7, 899-920.

D'Alimonte, Roberto (2005). "Italy. A Case of Fragmented Bipolarism", in Michael Gallagher and Paul Mitchell (eds.), *The Politics of Electoral Systems*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 253-276.

D'Alimonte, Roberto (2013). "The Italian Elections of February 2013: the End of the Second Republic?", *Contemporary Italian Politics*, 5:2, 113-129.

Della Porta, Donatella, and Alberto Vannucci (2007). "Corruption and Anti-Corruption: The Political Defeat of 'Clean Hands' in Italy", *West European Politics*, 30:4, 830-853.

Diamanti, Ilvo (1993). *La Lega: Geografia, Storia Sociologia di un Nuovo Soggetto Politico*. Rome: Donzelli.

Diamanti, Ilvo (2003). *Bianco, Rosso, Verde... e Azzurro. Mappe e Colori dell'Italia Politica*. Bologna: Il Mulino.

Di Mascio, Fabrizio (2012). "Party Patronage in Italy: A Matter for Solitary Leaders", in Petr Kopecký, Peter Mair and Maria Spirova (eds.), *Party Patronage and Party Government in European Democracies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 229-249.

Easton, David (1975). "A Re-Assessment of the Concept of Political Support", *British Journal of Political Science*, 5:4, 435-457.

European Commission (2013). *Annual Macro-Economic Database (AMECO)*. Brussels: European Commission.

Firebaugh, Glenn (1997). *Analyzing Repeated Surveys*. Beverly Hills: Sage.

Gallagher, Michael (1991). "Proportionality, Disproportionality and Electoral Systems", *Electoral Studies*, 10:1, 33-51.

Gelman, Andrew, King, Gary and Chuanhai Liu (1999). "Not Asked and Not Answered: Multiple Imputation for Multiple Surveys", *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 93:443, 846-857.

Gelman, Andrew, and Jennifer Hill (2006). *Data Analysis Using Regression and Multilevel/Hierarchical Models*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Golden, Miriam A. (2003). "Electoral Connections: The Effects of the Personal Vote on Political Patronage, Bureaucracy and Legislation in Postwar Italy", *British Journal of Political Science*, 33:2, 189-212.

Gunther, Richard, Montero, José R., and Mariano Torcal (2007). "Democracy and Intermediation: Some Attitudinal and Behavioral Dimensions", in Richard Gunther, José R. Montero, Hans J. Puhle (eds.), *Democracy, Intermediation, and Voting on Four*

Continents. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 269-274.

Karp, Jeffrey A., and Shawn Bowler (2001). "Coalition Government and Satisfaction with Democracy: An Analysis of New Zealand's Reaction to Proportional Representation", *European Journal of Political Research*, 40:1, 57-79.

Katz, Richard S. (2001). "Reforming the Italian Electoral Law, 1993", in Matthew Shugart, and Martin P. Wattenberg, (eds.) *Mixed-Member Electoral Systems: The Best of Both Worlds?* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 96-122.

King, Gary, Honacker, James, Joseph, Anne, and Kenneth Scheve (2001). "Analyzing Incomplete Political Science Data: An Alternative Algorithm for Multiple Imputation", *American Political Science Review*, 95:1, 49-69.

Laakso, Markus, and Rein Taagepera (1979). "Effective Number of Parties: A Measure with Application to Western Europe", *Comparative Political Studies*, 12:1, 3-27.

Lewis-Beck, Michael, and Mary Stegmaier (2000). "Economic Determinants of Electoral Outcomes", *Annual Review of Political Science*, 3, 183-219.

Lijphart, Arendt (1999). *Patterns of Democracy. Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Linde, Jonas, and Joakim Ekman (2003). "Satisfaction with Democracy: A Note on a Frequently Used Indicator in Comparative Politics", *European Journal of Political Research*, 42:3, 391-408.

Listhaug, Ola, Aardal, Bernt, and Ingunn O. Ellis (2009). "Institutional Variation and Political Support. An Analysis of CSES Data from 29 Countries", in Hans-

Dieter Klingemann (ed.), *The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 311-332.

Masseti, Emanuele (2009). "The Sunrise of the Third Republic? The Evolution of the Italian Party-System After the 2008 General Election and the Prospects for Constitutional Reform", *Modern Italy*, 14:4, 485-498.

McAllister, Ian (1999). "The Economic Performance of Governments", in Pippa Norris (ed.), *Critical Citizens: Global Support for Democratic Governance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 188-203.

Memoli, Vincenzo (2009). "Il Sostegno Democratico in Italia", *Rivista Italiana di Scienza Politica*, 39:1, 21-51.

Montero, José R., Gunther, Richard, and Mariano Torcal (1997). "Democracy in Spain: Legitimacy, Discontent and Disaffection", *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 32:3, 124-160.

Morlino, Leonardo (2011). *Changes for Democracy: Actors, Structures, Processes*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Morlino, Leonardo (2013). "The Impossible Transition and the Unstable New Mix: Italy 1992-2012", *Comparative European Politics*, 11:3, 337-359.

Morlino, Leonardo, and Marco Tarchi (1996). "The Dissatisfied Society: The Roots of Political Change in Italy", *European Journal of Political Research*, 30:1, 41-63.

Newell, James L. (2000). *Parties and Democracy in Italy*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Norris, Pippa, ed. (1999). *Critical Citizens: Global Support for Democratic Governance*. New York: Oxford University Press.

OECD (2013). *OECD. Stat Extracts*. Paris: OECD.

Pasquino, Gianfranco, and Marco Valbruzzi (2010). "Still an Outlier: Italy in a Southern European Comparative Perspective", *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 15:2, 183-199.

Piana, Daniela, and Francesco Raniolo (2013). "Quale Democrazia in Italia", in Leonardo Morlino, Daniela Piana and Francesco Raniolo (eds.), *La Qualità della*

Democrazia in Italia 1992-2012. Bologna: il Mulino, 293-316.

Powell, Bigham G. Jr. (2000). *Elections as Instruments of Democracy: Majoritarian and Proportional Visions*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Powell, Bigham G. Jr., and Guy D. Whitten (1993). "A Cross-National Analysis of Economic Voting: Taking Account of the Political Context", *American Journal of Political Science*, 37:2, 391-414.

Rasbash, Jon, and William J. Browne (2008). "Non-Hierarchical Multilevel Models", in Jan De Leeuw, J. and Erik Meijer (eds.), *Handbook of Quantitative Multilevel Analysis*. Berlin: Springer, 301-334.

Raghunathan, Trivellore E., Lepkowski, James, Van Hoewyk, John, and Peter Solenberger (2001). "A Multivariate Technique for Multiply Imputing Missing Values Using a Sequence of Regression Models", *Survey Methodology*, 27:1, 85-95.

Rubin, Donald B. (1987). *Multiple Imputation for Nonresponse in Surveys*. New York: Wiley.

Sani, Giacomo (1980). "The Political Culture of Italy: Continuity and Change", in Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba (eds.), *The Civic Culture Revisited*. Boston: Little, Brown & Co, 273-324.

Sani, Giacomo, and Giovanni Sartori (1983). "Polarization, Fragmentation, Competition in Western Democracies", in Hans Daalder and Peter Mair (eds.), *Western European Party System*. Beverly Hills: Sage, 307-340. Sartori, Giovanni (1976). *Parties and Party Systems*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Sartori, Giovanni (1994). *Comparative Constitutional Engineering. An Inquiry into Structures, Incentives and Outcomes*. MacMillan, London.

Scheiner, Ethan (2008). Does Electoral Reform Work? Electoral System Lessons from Reforms of the 1990s. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 11, 161-181.

Schmidt, Vivian A. (2012) "What Happened to the State-Influenced Market Economies? France, Italy, and Spain Confront the Crisis as the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly", in Wyn Grant and Graham Wilson (eds.), *The Consequences of the Global Financial Crisis: The Rhetoric of Reform and Regulation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 156-186.

Segatti, Paolo (2006). "Italy, Forty Years of Political Disaffection. A Longitudinal Exploration", in Mariano Torcal and Josè R. Montero (eds.), *Political Disaffection in Contemporary Democracies*. New York: Routledge, 244-270.

Shugart, Matthew, and Martin P. Wattenberg, eds. (2001). *Mixed-Member Electoral Systems: The Best of Both Worlds?* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Toniolo, Gianni (2013). "An Overview of Italy's Economic Growth", in Gianni Toniolo (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Italian Economy Since Unification*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 3-36.

Torcal, Mariano, and Josè R. Montero (2006). "Political Disaffection in Comparative Perspective", in Mariano Torcal and Josè R. Montero (eds.), *Political Disaffection in Contemporary Democracies: Social Capital, Institutions and Politics*. New York: Routledge, 3-19.

Torcal, Mariano, and Pedro C. Magalhães (2010). "Cultura Política en el Sur de Europa: un Estudio Comparado en Busca de su Excepcionalismo", in Mariano Torcal (ed.), *La Ciudadania Europea en el Siglo XXI*. Madrid: Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, 45-84.

Volkens, Andrea, Lehmann, Pola, Merz, Nicolas, Regel, Sven, Werner, Annika with Lacewell, Onawa Promise, and Henrike Schultze (2013). *The Manifesto Data Collection*. Manifesto Project (MRG/CMP/MARPOR). Version 2013b. Berlin: WZB Berlin Social

Science Center.

Wagner, Alexander F., Schneider, Friedrich, and Martin Halla (2009). "The Quality of Institutions and Satisfaction with Democracy in Western Europe – A panel Analysis", *European Journal of Political Economy*, 25:1, 30-41.

Weil, Frederick D. (1989). "The Sources and Structure of Legitimation in Western Democracies. A Consolidated Model Tested with Time-Series Data in 6 Countries Since World War 2", *American Sociological Review*, 54:5, 682–706.

Yang, Yang, and Kenneth C. Land (2006). "A Mixed Models Approach to the Age-Period-Cohort Analysis of Repeated Cross-Section Surveys, with an Application to Data on Trends in Verbal Test Scores", *Sociological Methodology*, 36:3, 39-74.

Table 1: Ordinal logistic random-effects models predicting dissatisfaction with democracy in Italy: empty, individual-level and economy models.

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	Coef.	s.e.	Coef.	s.e.	Coef.	s.e.	Coef.	s.e.
<i>Thresholds</i>								
α_1	-3.458***	(0.090)	-4.712***	(0.137)	-5.263***	(0.363)	-2.884***	(0.367)
α_2	-0.899***	(0.087)	-2.112***	(0.135)	-2.667***	(0.363)	-0.283	(0.367)
α_3	1.079***	(0.087)	-0.052	(0.134)	-0.607*	(0.362)	1.778***	(0.367)
<i>Individual-level predictors</i>								
Woman (ref. cat. Man)			0.027	(0.017)	0.027	(0.017)	0.027	(0.017)
Education (ref. cat. < 15):								
15 - 19			0.014	(0.021)	0.014	(0.021)	0.016	(0.021)
> 19			-0.050**	(0.024)	-0.049**	(0.024)	-0.048*	(0.024)
Still studying			-0.127***	(0.039)	-0.130***	(0.039)	-0.126***	(0.039)
Employed (ref. cat. Not employed)			-0.065***	(0.020)	-0.068***	(0.020)	-0.066***	(0.020)
Age			-0.012***	(0.004)	-0.012***	(0.004)	-0.012***	(0.004)
Age-squared/100			0.008**	(0.004)	0.007*	(0.004)	0.007*	(0.004)
Satisfied with life (ref. cat. Not satisfied)			-0.754***	(0.018)	-0.753***	(0.018)	-0.754***	(0.018)
Political discussion (ref. cat. Never):								
Occasionally			0.118***	(0.018)	0.119***	(0.018)	0.119***	(0.018)
Frequently			0.389***	(0.025)	0.391***	(0.025)	0.390***	(0.025)
Left-right scale			-0.078***	(0.004)	-0.078***	(0.004)	-0.078***	(0.004)
Geographical area (ref. cat. North-West):								
North-East			-0.088***	(0.023)	-0.087***	(0.023)	-0.088***	(0.023)
Centre			0.073***	(0.023)	0.073***	(0.023)	0.074***	(0.023)
South			0.133***	(0.022)	0.132***	(0.022)	0.133***	(0.022)
Islands			0.247***	(0.028)	0.243***	(0.028)	0.246***	(0.028)
<i>Year-level predictors</i>								
Growth					0.000	(0.033)	0.005	(0.022)
Debt					-0.006*	(0.003)		
Unemployment							0.157***	(0.034)
Inflation							0.063***	(0.010)
Random effects								
σ_{year}		0.450		0.406		0.374		0.272
σ_{cohort}		0.134		0.124		0.117		0.114
Diff. BIC		-		2891.1		2874.3		2887.5
Diff. AIC		-		3025.9		3027		3049.2
ICC		0.058		0.048		0.041		0.022
R-sq.		-		0.187		0.311		0.635

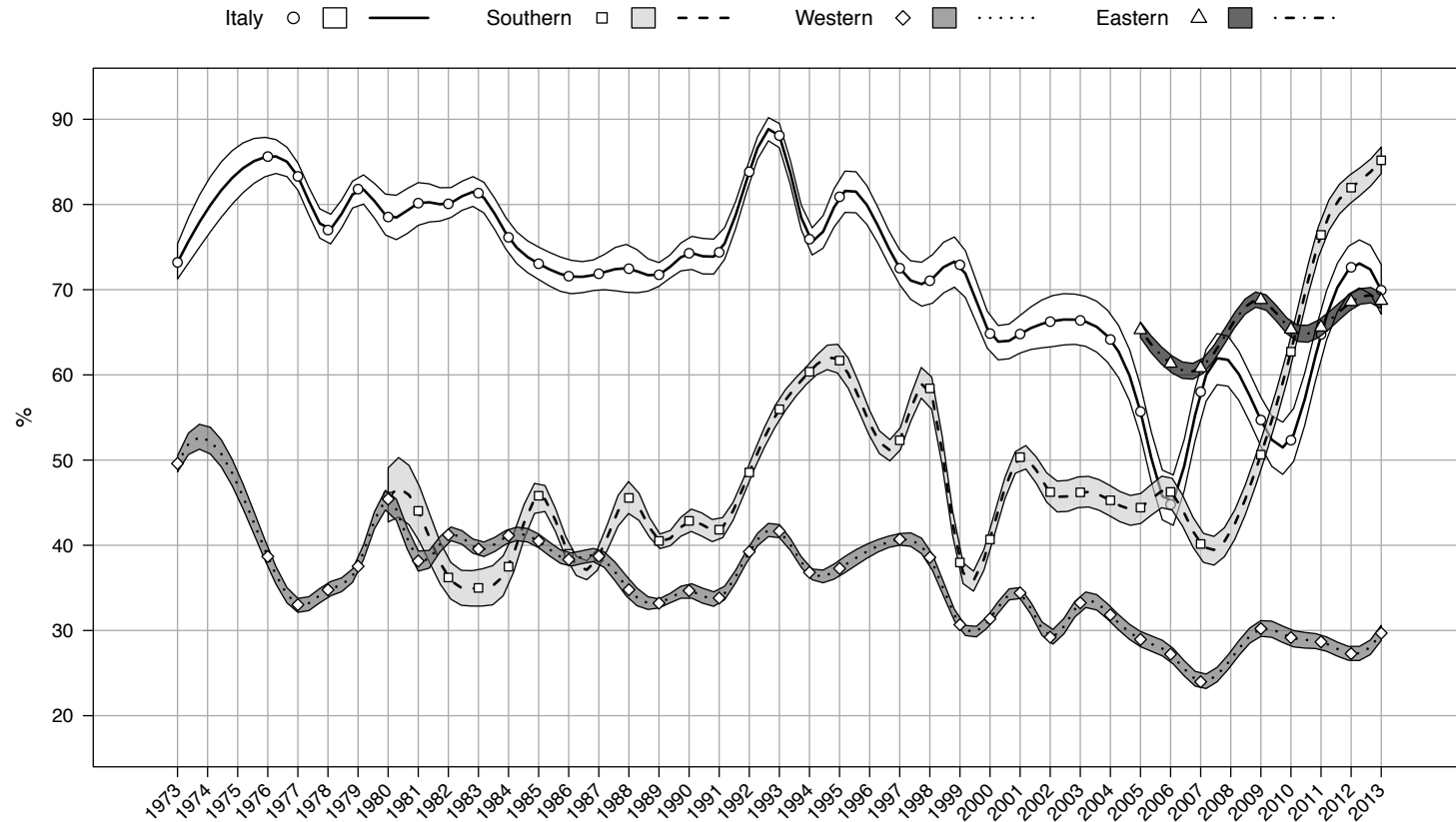
Note: number of level 1 observations 58,905; number of level 2 observations (years) 37; number of level 2 observations (cohorts) 11. The estimates are based on 3 imputed datasets from the Eurobarometer series according to Rubin (1987); Coef. = log-odds; s. e. = standard errors; sig.: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.10$; σ_{year} = year random effects standard deviation; σ_{cohort} = cohort random effects standard deviation; Diff. BIC (Bayesian Information Criterion) = Difference from null model; Diff. AIC (Akaike Information Criterion) = Difference from null model; ICC = Intraclass Correlation Coefficient at the year level; R-sq. = R-squared at the year level.

Table 2: Ordinal logistic random-effects models predicting dissatisfaction with democracy in Italy: institutions models.

	Model 5		Model 6		Model 7		Model 8	
	Coef.	s.e.	Coef.	s.e.	Coef.	s.e.	Coef.	s.e.
<i>Thresholds</i>								
α_1	-6.147***	(0.366)	-4.194***	(0.474)	-6.101***	(0.383)	-4.384***	(0.507)
α_2	-3.548***	(0.365)	-1.594***	(0.473)	-3.501***	(0.382)	-1.785***	(0.506)
α_3	-1.488***	(0.364)	0.467	(0.473)	-1.440***	(0.382)	0.276	(0.506)
<i>Individual-level predictors</i>								
Woman (ref. cat. Man)	0.028	(0.017)	0.028	(0.017)	0.027	(0.017)	0.028	(0.017)
Education (ref. cat. < 15):								
15 - 19	0.017	(0.021)	0.018	(0.021)	0.016	(0.021)	0.019	(0.021)
> 19	-0.047*	(0.024)	-0.048*	(0.024)	-0.043*	(0.024)	-0.046*	(0.024)
Still studying	-0.123***	(0.039)	-0.124***	(0.039)	-0.120***	(0.039)	-0.126***	(0.039)
Employed (ref. cat. Not employed)	-0.066***	(0.020)	-0.066***	(0.020)	-0.066***	(0.020)	-0.067***	(0.020)
Age	-0.011***	(0.004)	-0.011***	(0.004)	-0.011***	(0.004)	-0.011***	(0.004)
Age-squared/100	0.007*	(0.004)	0.007*	(0.004)	0.007*	(0.004)	0.007*	(0.004)
Satisfied with life (ref. cat. Not satisfied)	-0.751***	(0.018)	-0.755***	(0.018)	-0.753***	(0.018)	-0.755***	(0.018)
Political discussion (ref. cat. Never):								
Occasionally	0.119***	(0.018)	0.120***	(0.018)	0.118***	(0.018)	0.120***	(0.018)
Frequently	0.390***	(0.025)	0.391***	(0.025)	0.388***	(0.025)	0.392***	(0.025)
Left-right scale	-0.078***	(0.004)	-0.078***	(0.004)	-0.078***	(0.004)	-0.078***	(0.004)
Geographical area (ref. cat. North-West):								
North-East	-0.087***	(0.023)	-0.087***	(0.023)	-0.087***	(0.023)	-0.089***	(0.023)
Centre	0.077***	(0.023)	0.074***	(0.023)	0.076***	(0.023)	0.075***	(0.023)
South	0.135***	(0.022)	0.133***	(0.022)	0.135***	(0.022)	0.134***	(0.022)
Islands	0.247***	(0.028)	0.247***	(0.028)	0.249***	(0.028)	0.248***	(0.028)
<i>Year-level predictors</i>								
Growth	-0.023	(0.027)	-0.012	(0.018)	0.034	(0.027)	0.011	(0.020)
Debt	-0.008**	(0.004)			0.002	(0.003)		
Unemployment			0.071**	(0.036)			0.125***	(0.033)
Inflation			0.053***	(0.009)			0.039***	(0.011)
ENEP	0.152***	(0.056)	0.124***	(0.046)				
Polarization					-0.082**	(0.040)	-0.043	(0.034)
Disproportionality	0.030	(0.019)	0.018	(0.017)	0.013	(0.020)	0.001	(0.017)
Bi-polarism	-1.833***	(0.397)	-1.384***	(0.350)	-1.842***	(0.409)	-1.212***	(0.377)
Random effects								
σ_{year}		0.270		0.207		0.278		0.222
σ_{cohort}		0.113		0.108		0.113		0.112
Diff. BIC		2866.9		2873.1		2863.8		2868.2
Diff. AIC		3046.6		3061.8		3043.5		3056.9
ICC		0.022		0.013		0.023		0.015
R-sq.		0.640		0.789		0.619		0.756

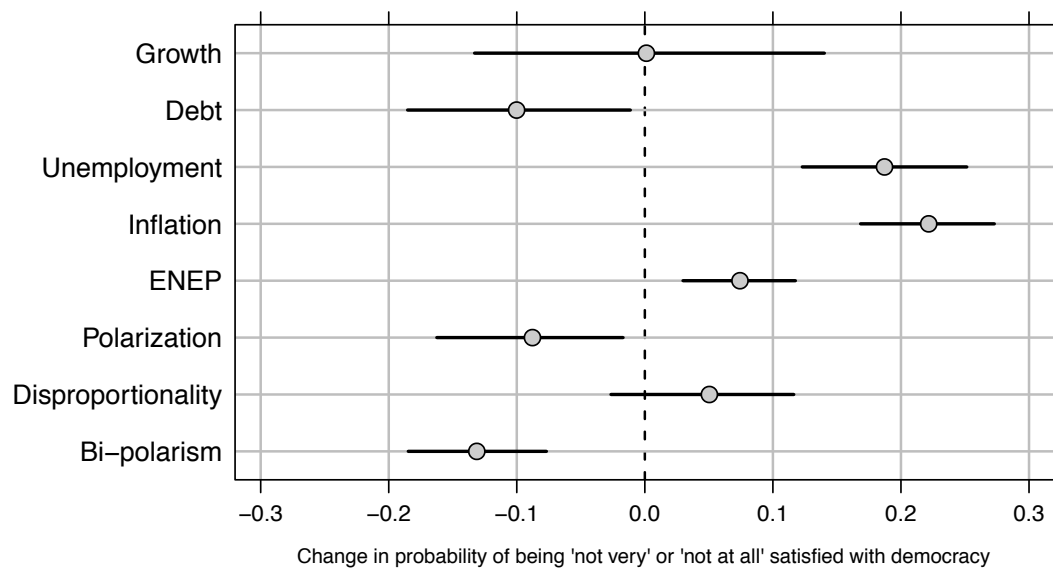
Note: number of level 1 observations 58,905; number of level 2 observations (years) 37; number of level 2 observations (cohorts) 11. The estimates are based on 3 imputed datasets from the Eurobarometer series according to Rubin (1987); Coef. = log-odds; s. e. = standard errors; sig.: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.10$; σ_{year} = year random effects standard deviation; σ_{cohort} = cohort random effects standard deviation; Diff. BIC (Bayesian Information Criterion) = Difference from null model; Diff. AIC (Akaike Information Criterion) = Difference from null model; ICC = Intraclass Correlation Coefficient at the year level; R-sq. = R-squared at the year level.

Figure 1: Percentage of respondents who declared they were “not very satisfied” or “not at all satisfied” with democracy in Italy, southern, western, and eastern countries of the European Union, from 1973 to 2013. Percentages are reported with 95% confidence intervals.



Note: Southern countries are: Greece, Portugal, Spain. Western countries: Austria; Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany (West), Great Britain, Ireland, the Netherlands, Sweden. Eastern countries: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia. Based on the Eurobarometer series. Lines are smoothed using spline interpolation.

Figure 2: Predicted change in probability of being “not very satisfied” or “not at all satisfied” with democracy over the range of growth, public debt, unemployment, inflation, ENEP, polarization, disproportionality and bi-polarism, with 90% confidence intervals.



Note: the probabilities are based on models 3, 4, 6 and 7 and are computed holding the variables at their means.