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Abstract

The study of the impact of the economic crisis on attitudes toward democracy tends to be focused on satisfaction with specific democratic institutions. In this article we expand upon previous research to explore how the current economic crisis can affect core support for democracy as a regime. Based on European Social Survey data for the Eurozone countries, our findings are twofold. Firstly, we show that perceptions of the state of the economy have an impact both on satisfaction and support for democracy. Secondly, we show that citizens' support for democracy is higher in bailed-out countries. In intervened countries, the more critical citizens and those less satisfied with the outputs of democracy are the stronger advocates of democracy. We argue that it is connected with the tendency of critical citizens in bailed-out countries to blame external agents for the economic situation while increasing the saliency of democratic rules as a reaction to the imposition of unpopular measures.

Keywords: Economic crisis – support for democracy – satisfaction with democracy – legitimacy – bailout

Introduction

The narrative of the Euro-crisis is well known. Recession, initiated in the US due to the sub-prime mortgage crisis, rapidly spread to Europe's economies. Despite the fact that it was initially characterized as a financing system crisis, many Eurozone countries have faced sovereign debt crises since 2008 that have been linked to the loss of confidence in international markets. As a consequence, countries like Greece, Ireland, Cyprus and Portugal were forced to ask for a bailout loan programme and, in exchange, the implementation of unpopular structural reforms and budget cuts – both policies under the supervision of the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the so-called *Troika* (Glencross 2013, Frieden 2015).

The economic and social situation driven by this crisis has had relevant political consequences. For example, poor economic performance is a well-established factor that increases electoral volatility (Lewis-Beck and Paldman 2000) and, as a result of the crisis, incumbents have failed in their bids to be re-elected (Lewis-Beck and Nadeau 2012; Magalhães 2014a). Moreover, transformations concerning political attitudes towards the political system have taken place as well. Citizens' trust and evaluations of institutions (such as parties, parliaments and governments) have been eroded, especially in those countries affected more fiercely by the economic depression (Armingeon and Guthmann 2013). *Eurozone* countries in particular are under the threat posed by increased domestic contestation over the EU integration and the de-legitimation of decisions associated with political actors from other countries (Glencross 2013: 66)

Since Lipset's famous essay on the social requisites of democracy, scholars have pointed to a strong correlation between economic development and democracy (Geddes 2007). In fact, one of the most common justifications of its legitimacy is conditional on the production of desirable outputs (Rothstein 2009). However, democratic legitimacy also concerns citizens' evaluations associated with values and the general perception of the regime as right and appropriate. This latter vision should entail that short-term factors should only play a minor role. As Huang *et al.* put it: "The endurance of many emerging democracies is not under any immediate danger because popular belief in the superiority of democracy is not susceptible to ups-and-downs of government performance or the short-term economic fluctuation" (2008: 59).

This paper wants to challenge this idea by analysing how the current economic crisis has affected the satisfaction with the political system - specific support - and the attachment to democracy as a regime - diffuse support - (see Easton 1975; Mattes and Bratton 2007 for a review). Despite the fact that some scholars have shown that levels of satisfaction with the way democracy works dramatically declined across Europe during the last recession (Armingeon and Guthmann 2013), to our knowledge, there is no empirical evidence about its effects on support for democracy as a core value or how it relates with short-term economic shocks (Magalhães 2014c).

Our main argument is that external interventions eroding the decision-making capacity of national democratic institutions could increase the saliency of democratic values as a response of critic citizens to a perceived threat to democracy. *Troika* intervention in Eurozone countries offer the opportunity to address this idea as it entails a qualitatively different shock on national politics driving the reduction of policy responsiveness of political actors (Kitchelt *et al.* 2010; Morgan 2011). Supranational constraints involve the implementation of the same policies, irrespective of the party in government, and the perception that the political system no longer responds to citizens' demands. As recent studies have shown, citizens in bailed-out countries identify international agents as being responsible the poor performance of their economies (Hellwig and Coffey 2011; Armingeon and Guthmann 2013; Belluci 2014; Magalhaes 2014b) and have fostered different protest movements in Greece, Ireland, Portugal or Spain claiming that the sovereignty principle is being eroded.

Accordingly, despite the fact that in bailed-out countries many citizens have eroded their satisfaction with democracy (Armingeon and Guthmann 2013), we hypothesize that they should increase their attachment to democracy as a reaction to these external interventions, increasing the saliency and importance of democratic rule. This idea reveals a common pattern within other contexts such as in Latin American countries two decades ago, when supranational interventions led to a decrease in the satisfaction with democratic systems while, at the same time, the support for democracy increased (Lagos 2003).

In order to address this idea, we use data from the sixth wave of the European Social Survey in Eurozone countries, a region where supranational intervention has led to important constraints and political divisions in terms of *Troika*'s intervention. The contribution of the paper is twofold. Firstly, we show that both specific and diffuse support can be affected by the perceived performance of the economy (Magalhães 2014c). Thus, the short-term experience has a relevant effect in terms of how citizens express not only their satisfaction, but contrary to

Hung *et al.* (2008), also their attachment to democracy itself. Secondly we analyse how the economic crisis is playing a different role depending on the country. We show that those citizens dissatisfied with the performance of the economy in intervened countries increase their support for democracy rather than reduce it as a reaction (Alonso 2015).

The article is organized as follows: In the next section, we briefly present our theoretical arguments. Then, we present the data and methods of the analysis. In the fourth section we discuss our findings. Finally, we present our conclusions.

Theoretical arguments

The literature on the study of support for democracy is prolific, but conceptualizing and measuring attitudes towards it is not a simple task.¹ In order to address this complexity in a compelling way, David Easton's (1965, 1975) classic distinction between 'specific' and 'diffuse' support for democracy offers a useful conceptual framework. The former concept refers to the support and evaluations of 'the perceived decisions, policies, actions' of actors and institutions, while 'diffuse support' makes reference to a more common feeling of 'generalized attachment' to the democratic regime (Easton 1975: 444). Thus specific support –or satisfaction with democracy, relies on the evaluations of particular institutions, parties or leaders and the final performance of politics. Conversely, diffuse support for democracy is 'more durable', and its determinants are anchored to political values and attachments, thus resulting in more stable bonds.

Despite the fact that some scholars have argued that the endurance of emerging democracies is not in danger because the belief in the superiority of democracy is independent of satisfaction with governmental and economic performance (Huang *et al.* 2008), evidence tends to confirm a correlation between these components. For example, it has been shown that citizens tend to support their political system when they consider that it accommodates their interests (Weil 1989; Norris 1999: 232; Miller 1974; King 1997: 176; Borre 1995: 354), makes politicians accountable (Weatherford 1992), makes government stable and durable (Harmel and Robertson 1986; Schmitt 1983), makes the regime open and fair (Miller and Listhaug 1990;

¹ Easton (1975:436) defined support as the extent to which citizens present a positive evaluation towards authorities, the political regime or the community.

1999; Weil 1989; Fuchs *et al.* 1995: 328; Weatherford 1992), and that their civil liberties are protected (Norris 1999: 232).

In this vein, recent research has insisted on how government performance can also affect the diffuse support for democracy. As Magalhães (2014c) showed, people in democratic regimes tend to support it when governmental performance is good, when they are ‘well-governed’.² The core argument is that sustained discontentment with the way the regime works or an important shake-up in the principles of democracy, especially in recently established democracies, erodes the citizens’ bonds of attachment to it (Pharr and Putnam 2000). Thus, frustration in the expectations of political performance can affect the core support for democracy under a negative economic shock (Przeworski 1991).

It is well established that the economy can have an effect on electoral behaviour (Anderson 2000), especially since its forceful re-entry onto the agenda with the economic crisis (Lewis-Beck and Nadeau 2012). However, it is more difficult to grasp when the economy goes beyond the incumbent or political institutions and affects the system as a whole. Partisanship or electoral institutions determines accountability (Tilley and Hobolt 2011), so similar elements should play a role concerning the political system. Furthermore, it may be plausible that those citizens more directly affected by the crisis will reduce their support for the system to a greater extent (see Lewin 1991).

In this sense, the discussion about the impact of the economy requires refinement. For instance, Evans and Whitefield (1995) found that there is only a weak link between economic experience and support for democracy when the perceived responsiveness of the electoral system and support for marketization are controlled for. They insisted that both economic and political factors determine popular support for democracy, although politics matter more. Therefore, if it is assumed that the impact of the economy is mediated by political elements, the recent Eurozone crisis entails a qualitative difference in political terms compared with ordinary economic crises. Greater electoral volatility has emerged and southern European economies have struggled (Lewis-Beck and Paldman 2000; Lewis-Beck and Nadeau 2012; Magalhães 2014a) and it can be argued that its impact has gone beyond electoral competition.

Debt crisis in the Eurozone has led to bailout programmes in Greece, Ireland, Cyprus, and Portugal, in the context of a common currency zone (Frieden 2015). Moreover, the crisis has

² Magalhães measures government effectiveness on the basis of 15 different data surveys, mostly expert surveys of firms on the quality of the bureaucracy, the supply of the basic goods, policy stability and implementation, and the quality of budgetary and financial management (2014c: 82).

impacted the wider Spanish financing system and has meant the creation of specific intergovernmental aid programmes such as the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) or the European Financial Stability Mechanism (EFSM), all under the supervision of the European Commission (EC), the European Central Bank (ECM) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the so-called *Troika*.³ Those loans have been conditional on the implementation of adjustment programmes and structural reforms contained in bilateral Memorandums of Understanding (MoU). Thus, supranational institutions have taken a decisive role in the social and economic national policies in bailed out countries, a role that imposes stronger constraints than those forced by globalization or ordinary economic recessions (Belluci *et al.* 2012, Alonso 2015, Glencross 2013).

Troika interventions have entailed a major challenge in terms of programmatic decline, involving political actors losing their capacity to provide satisfactory policy responsiveness and the capacity to offer meaningful political alternatives (Kitchelt *et al.* 2010, Morgan 2011). In these contexts in which national governments are enforced to implement unpopular measures, citizens could react increasing their concerns about the lack of democratic governance and, in parallel, the saliency of democracy. This situation can be especially stark when there are three elements that interact. Firstly, an economic crisis that threatens the traditional capacity of governments to come up with innovative policy responses. Secondly, international constraints faced by national governments derived from the compulsory implementation of unpopular policies prescribed and supervised by supranational actors (Coppedge 2001). Finally, inter-party agreements that may obscure political actors' ideological differences and prevent them from presenting alternatives (Morgan 2011: 49-54).

It seems that to some extent, the three components have been present in the Euro crisis; macroeconomic indicators (including unemployment rates, public debt, and cuts in public expenses) have grown sharply forcing political systems to cope with huge economic challenges; the *Troika* enforcement has meant important constraints on the margin of manoeuvre of southern European governments⁴ and agreements between the bailed-out countries' mainstream parties (regardless of their ideological principles) to accept these impositions have emerged in countries such as Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain.

³ Information about the different instruments can be founded in ESM's webpage <http://www.esm.europa.eu/> and EFSM's webpage <http://www.efsf.europa.eu/about/index.htm> Since February 2015, "the institutions".

⁴ See the report of the European Parliament on *Troika*'s activities concerning the successes and failures of the measures enforced in bailed out countries: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+REPORT+A7-2014-0149+0+DOC+XML+V0/EN>

Thus, the expectation is that economic crisis by itself will lead to a lower satisfaction with the performance of the system. Nevertheless, this cannot be immediately extended to the diffuse support for democracy, both in empirical and theoretical terms. Armingeon and Guthmann (2013) have shown that the satisfaction with the way democracy works declined dramatically during the crisis. They also proved that the imposition of policies by supranational actors undermines it. However: “In order to be able to provide a more encompassing picture of the pattern of support during the crisis, we would need to analyse data on the development of more diffuse components of democratic support” (Armingeon and Guthmann 2013:17). Therefore, it lacks the linkage between the economic situation and the core support for democracy.

Recent research empirically demonstrates that in different contexts, the blaming of the economic situation was partially shifted or shared in bailed-out countries (Hellwig and Coffey 2011; Bellucci 2014; Magalhães 2014b). As Costa-Lobo and Lewis-Beck and Nadeau (2012) argued, among those citizens who believe that the EU is responsible for the state of the economy, economic voting is less intense. In fact, in the context of the Great Recession, some governments demonstrated their capacity to blame external agents, such as the IMF or the EC, for the economic situation, which reduced the impact of economic voting (Magalhães 2014b). Thus, external actors are credited as responsible for the economic troubles in bailed-out countries and key actors that restrain national governments’ margin of manoeuvre.

But, do citizens perceive this blame-shifting? Empirical evidence shows that citizens of bailed-out countries tend to attribute the responsibility for the ‘austerity measures’ to supranational institutions.⁵ In the case of Ireland, for instance, “[the loan programme] accentuated the political and popular shock of losing economic sovereignty in a sulphuric atmosphere of charge and counter-charge between government and opposition parties” (Gillespie 2012) and it is something similar to what happened in Cyprus, where it was clearly perceived that the governmental margin of manoeuvre had disappeared (Katsourides 2014: 650). Also in Portugal (Freire *et al.* 2014) the *Troika* has become a decisive actor, imposing its role of ‘veto player’ in national politics that to a great extent limited the power of the national actors (De Giorgi *et al.* 2015: 54). Finally, the attribution of responsibility for the poor economic situation (to national or to supranational institutions) and the level of trust in European institutions were two of the main variables explaining the recent electoral ascent of *Podemos*,

⁵ 46 per cent of Cypriot citizens consider that the EU is the responsible for the “austerity measures”, 41 per cent in Greece, 28 per cent in Slovenia, 26 per cent in Spain and 23 per cent in Ireland. On the other side, 7 per cent of Estonians, 13 per cent of Latvians, 14 per cent of Finnish, 15 per cent of Lithuanians and 18 per cent of Germans make this attribution. Eurobarometer 80 (2013).

a party openly against the austerity measures imposed by the *Troika* that emerged from the *Indignados* movement (Cordero and Montero 2015).

This situation headed to the emergence of different protest movements in southern European countries or even new anti-establishment parties (Cordero *et al.* 2015). Among their demands, one of the most regular claims of protesters –such as the well-known ‘*Troika go home*’, ‘*Screw the Troika*’, and ‘*Real Democracy Now!*’- was that external actors were eroding national democracy and limiting the freedom of their countries.⁶ This reaction involves the potential appearance of ‘critical citizens’ who use non-conventional ways of participation to get involved and take part in politics (Norris 1999; Ceka and Magalhaes 2015). In attitudinal terms, plausible expectations can be derived from other contexts such as in Latin America around the turn of the millennium. As Marta Lagos (2003) found, satisfaction with policies and the actual outcome of democratic systems began to drop even as support for democracy as a regime increased, which pointed out how Latin Americans distinguished between democracy as a system and democratic performance (Graham and Sukhtankar 2004).

Thus, as previous studies have pointed out, dissatisfied citizens will ‘shift blame’ to the external intervention (Bellucci 2014; Magalhães 2014a) and they will tend to increase the importance they give to the core values of democracy.⁷ The consequence is that discontentment with the economic and governmental performance will drive the reinforcement of citizens’ attachment to democratic regimes as a rejectionist attitude against international interventions and other regimes such as technocracy (Bratton and Mattes 2001). As Alonso put it: “The social effects of the crisis (...) and loss of national governments’ autonomy as a direct consequence of external interventions in their economies might lead individuals to be particularly sensitized to the value of democracy as an ideal and, therefore, particularly committed to it” (2015: 18).

Therefore, despite the fact that individuals who are dissatisfied with the government and the economic situation should tend to reduce their satisfaction with how democracy works (Armigeon and Guthmann 2013), this condition will rise the saliency of democratic government to people as a reaction to their loss of sovereignty and decline in responsiveness of the national

⁶ Numerous “screw the *Troika*” and “*Troika go home*” protests took place in Portugal and Cyprus in 2012 and 2013 respectively, and as in Greece, a series of strikes and also demonstrations were organized by the Movements “Direct democracy now!” and the “Indignant Citizens Movement”. In Spain, the “Indignant” movement occupied the centre of the main towns from May 2011, convened, among other similar movements, by the organization “Real Democracy Now”. The “occupy Dublin” and “occupy Dame Street” also protested against the intervention of the so-called *Troika*.

⁷ Survey data show two very different patterns. While people living in countries such as Finland, Estonia, Germany or the Netherlands consider the IMF or the G20 the most capable institutions to solve the crisis, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain consider these external actors the least capable to solve it.

political system (Morgan 2011). To sum up, we derive two clear expectations from this discussion:

H₁: The lower the satisfaction with the economic situation, the more dissatisfaction with the way democracy works in a given country.

H₂: The higher the dissatisfaction with the economic situation in a bailed out country, the more importance is given to living in a democracy as such.

Data and methods

In this paper, we rely on data from the sixth wave of the European Social Survey (ESS), gathered between September 2012 and April 2013. This wave presented a ‘rotating module’ about ‘understandings and evaluations of different elements of democracy’. This module is the only one that enables an in-depth analysis of attitudes toward democracy with a comprehensive coverage of European Monetary Union countries. In order to test our hypothesis we focus on countries whose governments are under the dual pressure of supranational constraints and the will of their citizens (Lagos 2003). It is not -only- about the economic crisis. Our argument addresses the idea that the decline in responsiveness of the national political system increases the saliency of democratic values in bailed-out countries.

The Eurozone countries perfectly fit this condition. The sovereign debt crisis has created a collision between international constraints driving the implementation of unpopular policies and the preferences of national constituencies (Kitchelt *et al.* 2010, Morgan 2011). These constraints have punished especially bailed-out countries. “In the Eurozone crisis, many observers anticipated that negotiations between debtors and creditors would, as is almost always the case, lead to some debt restructuring. However, it would appear that domestic political constraints in the creditors’ countries, Germany in particular, may have ruled out concession of this type” (Frieden 2015:11). Moreover South-European countries have suffered a process of “internal devaluation” that keeps the nominal exchange rate fixed, typically by austerity measures to put downward pressure on wages and prices (Frieden 2015: 9).

This situation has made that the debate about the democratic accountability in Eurozone starker than before because the MoU agreements linked debt relief with major reforms beyond the classical role of ordinary EU legislation. The implication is that Eurozone countries have been under important political stress (Lewis-Beck and Paldman 2000, Lewis-Beck and Nadeau

2012, Magalhaes 2014a) and driven a clear opposition: “Citizens from creditor countries were sceptical about the wisdom of providing bailouts while mass protests broke out against the socioeconomic reforms being imposed in recipient countries such as Greece or Spain” (Glencross 2013: 62). This has led to an unprecedented tension in Europe between political elites and ordinary voters, which in turn is destabilizing attitudes towards integration among national elites and democracy itself (Alonso 2015) and the emergence of new parties around anti-troika or anti-austerity platforms (Cordero *et al.* 2015). All those conditions make the study of Eurozone countries well deserved.

Satisfaction and support for democracy

The database includes a comprehensive sample of countries of the Eurozone (14 members), with 27,174 respondents. We have distinguished between satisfaction with democracy (specific support) and support for democracy (diffuse support). Despite some authors using the first concept as an equivalent to the latter (Anderson and Guillory 1997: 70; Fuchs *et al.* 1995: 330; Tóka 1998: 359), as discussed in the previous section, we consider these two concepts as distinguishable from a conceptual and empirical perspective (Fuchs 1993; Harmel and Robertson 1986; Klingemann 1999).

Thus, our first dependent variable relating to the specific conception of satisfaction with democracy is measured using the following question: ‘On the whole, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in your country: 0=Extremely dissatisfied; 10=Extremely satisfied’. The second dependent variable is the most abstract conception of support for democracy, avoiding specific evaluations of national democracies, parties and leaders. The wording of the selected question is the following: ‘How important is it for you to live in a democratic country: 0=Not important at all; 10=Very important’ as an index of support for democracy.⁸ Both variables have been extensively used in previous works as indicators of specific and diffuse support for democracy respectively (some examples are Norris 2001; Dalton and Weldon 2010; van Beek 2010; Gu and Bomhoff 2012; Stoycheff and Nisbet 2014). Alternative metrics – such as the more common use of dichotomous or categorical variables – usually reflect a remarkably low percentage of citizens critical of the regime (Inglehart 2003). On the contrary, the continuous metric of our dependent variable allows the analysis of the degree of support for

⁸ The correlations between the “importance of living in a democracy” and the degree of agreement with “my country is democratically governed” are positive in every country included in the sample, even in new democracies.

democracy in a more precise way. Additionally, the indirect approach of this question not only diminishes the social desirability of alternative wordings, but also avoids references to explicit elements of democratic performance –a measure of specific support (Inglehart and Welzel 2005). As residuals of both satisfaction and diffuse support for democracy are not normally distributed we use their logarithmic transformation.⁹

Figure 1 represents the average levels of satisfaction with, and diffuse support for, democracy in Europe.¹⁰ As shown, there is a clear gap depending on the impact of the crisis. For instance, Cyprus is the most convinced supporter of democracy, while at the same time, is one of the least satisfied with its outputs. Bailed-out countries follow a similar pattern, with Cyprus, Portugal and Spain among the 5 most dissatisfied with how democracy works – while, at the same time, being strong supporters of democracy as a political system.

[FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]

Independent variables and methods

Two main independent variables are used: satisfaction with the economy and satisfaction with the government. Specifically, satisfaction with the performance of the economy is measured using the question ‘On the whole, how satisfied are you with the present state of the economy in your country? (0=Extremely dissatisfied, 10=Extremely satisfied). The wording of the question measuring government support is the following: ‘Now thinking about the [country] government [the people now governing, the present regime], how satisfied are you with the way it is doing its job? (0=Extremely dissatisfied, 10=Extremely satisfied)’.

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of the variables. The controls introduced ‘interest in politics’,¹¹ and ‘voting for the incumbent’¹² (Anderson and Guillory 1997, Rudolph 2003, Dahlberg 2012), are related to higher levels of democratic support, as discussed in the previous

⁹ Models were replicated using the original variables obtaining analogous results. The analysis is available upon request.

¹⁰ For the sake of simplicity, original variables are presented in Figure 1, despite their logarithmic transformations being used in the following analysis.

¹¹ “How interested would you say you are in politics? 1=very interested, 2= quite interested, 3=hardly interested, or 4= not at all interested” (categories inverted for the analysis). The original metrics of the continuous and ordinal control variables have been rescaled, dividing its values by two standard deviations (Gelman 2008). This strategy facilitates the interpretation of the coefficients as dummy variables.

¹² Which party did you vote for in the last election? In case of coalitions, all parties forming each government are considered as “voted for incumbent”.

section. We also control for ‘unemployment’ as we expect an impact of personal negative effects of the economic situation on support and satisfaction with democracy.

Additionally, four control variables at the individual level have been inserted into the multivariate model as controls: gender, age, years of education and income. Those demographic variables have been included in different studies dealing with satisfaction and support for democracy (Anderson and Guillory 1997; Evans and Whitefield 1995; Booth and Sligson 2009; Carlin and Singer 2011, Armigeon and Guthmann 2013). Although it can be expected at the individual level that older, more educated and wealthier citizens tend to have a better predisposition towards democracy, the literature has not shown consistent evidence that they affect democratic values or the satisfaction with the functioning of the system (Anderson and Guillory 1997; Carlin and Singer 2011).

[TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

At the macro level, we add ‘bailout’, a dummy variable with value 0 for countries not rescued by the ‘*Troika*’ and 1 for rescued countries.¹³ Secondly, in order to quantify the impact of the economic crisis among countries,¹⁴ we consider the relative increase in per capita gross domestic product from the beginning of the crisis (taking 2008 as reference) and 2012, the year when the interviews were implemented (Δ GDP).¹⁵ This variable is added in order to add objective information, in addition to the subjective perceptions of the crisis by the citizens measured by the independent variables.¹⁶ Finally, in order to capture the effect of democratic experience on support for democracy, we distinguish between old (previous to World War II) and young democracies (after World War II, the Third Wave of democratization according to the categorization of Huntington 1991).

The five models for our two dependent variables (‘SatDemo’ and ‘SupDemo’) are the following:

¹³ It includes Cyprus, Ireland, Portugal and Spain. The discussions about the bailout in Slovenia took place after the fieldwork of the ESS 6th wave. In our study it is considered a non-bailout country.

¹⁴ We also inserted unemployment rate variations and GNI index in previous versions of the model, but no statistically significant differences were found.

¹⁵ Detailed information at www.epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu

¹⁶ Data from Eurostat.

$$(1) \quad Y(Demo) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Male + \beta_2 Age + \beta_3 Education + \beta_4 Unemployed + \beta_5 Income + \beta_6 PolInt + \beta_7 VoteGov + \beta_8 SatGov + \beta_9 SatEco + \beta_{10} NewDem + \beta_{11} AGDP + \varepsilon.$$

$$(2) \quad Y(Demo) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Male + \beta_2 Age + \beta_3 Education + \beta_4 Unemployed + \beta_5 Income + \beta_6 PolInt + \beta_7 VoteGov + \beta_8 SatGov + \beta_9 SatEco + \beta_{10} NewDem + \beta_{11} AGDP + \beta_{12} Bailout + \varepsilon.$$

$$(3) \quad Y(Demo) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Male + \beta_2 Age + \beta_3 Education + \beta_4 Unemployed + \beta_5 Income + \beta_6 PolInt + \beta_7 VoteGov + \beta_8 SatGov + \beta_9 SatEco + \beta_{10} NewDem + \beta_{11} AGDP + \beta_{12} Bailout + \beta_{13} Bailout * SatGov + \varepsilon.$$

$$(4) \quad Y(Demo) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Male + \beta_2 Age + \beta_3 Education + \beta_4 Unemployed + \beta_5 Income + \beta_6 PolInt + \beta_7 VoteGov + \beta_8 SatGov + \beta_9 SatEco + \beta_{10} NewDem + \beta_{11} AGDP + \beta_{12} Bailout + \beta_{13} Bailout * SatEco + \varepsilon.$$

$$(5) \quad Y(Demo) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Male + \beta_2 Age + \beta_3 Education + \beta_4 Unemployed + \beta_5 Income + \beta_6 PolInt + \beta_7 VoteGov + \beta_8 SatGov + \beta_9 SatEco + \beta_{10} NewDem + \beta_{11} AGDP + \beta_{12} Bailout + \beta_{13} Bailout * SatGov + \beta_{14} Bailout * SatEco + \varepsilon.$$

In order to test our hypothesis, we ran ten different OLS regressions. Despite the fact that, under certain circumstances, multilevel analysis is recommended when data structure is hierarchical, we consider individual and country characteristics in our regressions, as the number of observations at macro level (14 countries) is not sufficient¹⁷ for the use of this technique (Bickel 2007). For this reason, we use an alternative approach, clustering the standard errors by country in order to control for the hierarchical structure of the data.¹⁸

Results

Table 2 shows the results of ten OLS models, in which we analyse how individual and contextual factors impact satisfaction with the way democracy works (models 1 to 5) and support for democracy (models 6 to 10) in Eurozone countries. If the coefficients shown in Table 2 are relatively low, it is because the range of the dependent variable is not the original one (from 0 to 10), but its logarithmic transformation (from 0 to 2.30). As discussed above, the

¹⁷ Bickel (2007) suggests a minimum of 20 cases at each level of analysis.

¹⁸ The analysis was also replicated using multilevel analysis applied to the sample of 14 Eurozone countries. Also to the whole sample of the ESS, remaining the findings unalterable. The analysis is available upon request.

effect of the socio-demographic variables are not clear. The first five columns show how only gender control is statistically significant - males tend to be less satisfied with how democracy works. Columns 6 to 10 show how diffuse support is also affected by other socio-demographic variables. Gender presents again a statistically significant relationship with diffuse support for democracy, as does education and income. Specifically, women, more educated and with higher wages are those who support democracy to a greater extent. In addition, political variables at the individual level also affect diffuse support for democracy. Those citizens more interested in politics and those who voted for the incumbent support democracy to a higher extent.

[TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

‘First generation’ theorists on democratization have traditionally related the state of the economy with popular support for democracy (Lipset 1959; Rustow 1970). However, in accordance with ‘second generation’ theorists (see Evans and Whitefield 1995), our data does not show a significant role for our indicator of the evolution of the economy. The decline of GDP per capita during the economic crisis (2008-2012) by itself does not present statistically significant relationships with satisfaction or support for democracy. However, democratic experience plays a significant role in our model, with the new democracies being those less satisfied with the outputs of the political system.

In line with an important part of the literature, being satisfied with the government and a positive perception of the state of the economy, both have a positive impact on the satisfaction with democracy. Being satisfied with the government also affects positively the diffuse support for democracy. However, the perception of the economic situation does not seem to have an impact on the support for democratic values as such. Although those who are satisfied with the state of the economy tend to show higher levels of satisfaction with democracy, these short-term evaluations do not affect the core support for the political system. Interesting effects emerge when this relationship is made conditional to be a bailed-out country.

On the one hand, diffuse support for democracy is stronger in those countries intervened by the *troika*. This relationship is statistically significant even when controlling for additional macro variables. On the other hand, and in line with our hypothesis, short-term perceptions of the current economic situation impact diffuse support for democracy in a different way in bailed-out and non-bailed-out countries. As results in Table 2 show, the coefficients of the

interactions between satisfaction with the economy –and also with the government– are negative, highlighting that the effects of these variables on diffuse support for democracy is significantly less intense in bailed-out countries.¹⁹ However, these coefficients are not easy to interpret. Figure 2 is devised in order to give a more intuitive and easier interpretation of the results.

The first row of Figure 2 represents the level of satisfaction with democracy, and the second row represents the diffuse support for democracy. Lines and their confidence intervals²⁰ show that the relationship between satisfaction with democracy and both satisfaction with the government and satisfaction with the economy are positive in bailed- and non-bailed-out countries. Although slight differences can be found between these two groups of countries, these are slight and not statistically significant. Also, the relationship between satisfaction with the government and diffuse support for democracy (left graph, second line) is positive: being satisfied with the government affects positively the core support for the political system in both, bailed- and non-bailed-out countries.

[FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE]

Figure 2 (second line, right graph) shows the results already shown in Table 2. The relationship between the support for the state of the economy and the diffuse support for democracy is the opposite in bailed- and in non-bailed-out countries. Those citizens more satisfied with the economy tend to support democracy to a higher degree in non-bailed-out countries. Nevertheless, this relationship is negative and statistically significant in the case of bailed-out countries. Specifically, when controlling for additional individual and contextual factors, those less satisfied with the current state of the economy are those who present a higher degree of diffuse support for democracy as a political system.

As previous works have underlined, citizens in the Eurozone bailed-out countries are able to blame the *troika* for the economic situation (Costa-Lobo and Lewis-Beck 2012; Magalhães 2014b) and this perception operates aside from the independent impact of budget cuts. It

¹⁹ The analysis were replicated to a wider sample of countries in order to test the robustness and external validity of the findings. Specifically, we replicated the ten OLS models using the whole sample of the 5th wave of the ESS (including Albania, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Great Britain, Hungary, Iceland, Poland, Romania, Sweden, Ukraine and Kosovo). All the findings were confirmed and coefficients do not change appreciably. These results are available upon request.

²⁰ Confidence intervals represented by the grey areas.

underlines the fact that supranational intervention has interacted with the crisis to cause a reaction by citizens to what is considered as a loss of democratic responsiveness (Kitchelt *et al.* 2010; Morgan 2011; Armingeon and Guthmann 2013). Despite being less satisfied with the outputs of democracy (Bellucci 2014; Magalhães 2014b), those citizens that evaluate less favourably the functioning of the economy in bailed-out countries do not tend to reduce their attachment to democratic values. On the contrary, their support increases (Lagos 2003). To some extent, this perception of interference creates a potential legitimacy for democracy as an opposition to what is considered a non-democratic external intervention.

Our results illustrate that the perception of the economic and political situation do not only have an impact on the satisfaction with the performance of democracy (Armingeon and Guthmann 2013) but also on its diffuse support. This idea is particularly relevant for studies on democratic legitimacy. While positive perceptions of the economy are related to higher levels of diffuse support for democracy in non-bailed-out countries, in bailed-out countries those who are more dissatisfied tend to support democracy to a higher degree. Thus, supranational intervention seems to encourage a reaction similar to what Norris (1999) terms as ‘critical citizens’; individuals do not reduce their attachment to the political system but they consider that domestic policies are fundamental in terms of their democratic life (Ceka and Magalhães 2015).

Conclusions

Only a few contributions to the field of democracy analyse the impact of the European financial crisis on politics, mainly paying attention to the role of economic performance on governments’ electoral fortunes (Bellucci *et al.* 2012; Magalhães 2014a) and citizens’ political satisfaction (Armingeon and Guthmann 2013). However, as far as we know, the potential impact of economic crises on the attitudes towards democracy as a political system has received little attention. This paper addresses this gap. To do so, we have studied short-term factors, such as satisfaction with the economy and government, to analyse how these individual elements affect the support for democracy in a different way depending on the economic situation of the country.

We have distinguished between satisfaction with democracy and support for democracy, in line with Easton’s (1975) distinction between specific and diffuse support. Could the current economic crisis affect those dimensions? It has been stressed that democratic support can be

endangered by a breakdown of effectiveness (Lipset 1959; Dahl 1971; Linz 1978). Moreover, recent research shows how diffuse support of democracy can be driven by general governmental effectiveness (Magalhães 2014c).

Our argument is that bailout processes entail a qualitatively different shock on national politics, driving programmatic decline and the reduction of policy responsiveness of political actors (Kitchelt *et al.* 2010; Morgan 2011). Accordingly, we show that satisfaction with the way democracy works is affected by the perception of the economy. In line with previous literature, we demonstrate that a negative perception of the economic situation tends to erode evaluations of democracy. Moreover, we prove that support for democracy can be affected not only by the general political system performance (Magalhães 2014c), but also by short-term economic shocks. However, we show that the Great Recession and bailouts specifically, are generating relevant changes. In countries under *troika* supervision, those citizens who are dissatisfied with the economy increase their support for democratic values.

As previous literature has demonstrated, imposed austerity and the political interventions of supranational institutions make it possible for the state to shift the blame for the performance of the economy (Bellucci 2014; Magalhães 2014b), which entails the decline of political actors' responsiveness (Kitchelt *et al.* 2010; Morgan 2011). Since citizens are able to distinguish between austerity policies and their international enforcement, they confront them with democratic values as a form of 'reactive' support (Alonso 2015). Thus, they both erode their support for democratic outcomes but increase their attachment to democracy.

It is important to underline that this increase in 'reactive support' in bailed-out countries does not necessarily mean that democracy is safe from criticism. It can be seen as driving a change in the meaning of democracy as a concept (Ceka and Magalhaes 2015). It would not be a challenging scenario in Europe to imagine an authoritarian regime, but the possibility of having a technocratic government or the feeling of a non-democratic response by national powers could increase the saliency of democracy (as in bailed-out countries) fuelling public protest. This point requires further effort to disentangle how the present economic crisis can affect in divergent directions, citizens' beliefs and attitudes. Finally, these attitudinal changes also can explain changes in electoral patterns with the emergence of new parties in line with recent elections in southern European countries.

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Table 1. Descriptives of the variables included in the model.

	N	Mean	S.D.	Min	Max
Specific support: Satisfaction with democracy*	25,684	1.69	0.69	0	2.30
Diffuse support: Important living democracy*	26,441	2.10	0.30	0	2.30
Male	27,157	0.46	0.50	0	1
Age**	27,130	1.32	0.50	0.40	2.77
Education**	26,988	1.56	0.53	0	6.33
Unemployed	27,174	0.09	0.29	0	1
Income**	21,594	0.90	0.49	0.18	1.78
Political interest**	27,093	1.46	0.50	0.55	2.18
Voted for incumbent	54,673	0.33	0.47	0	1
Satisfaction with government**	26,557	0.76	0.48	0	1.94
Satisfaction with economy**	26,897	0.74	0.47	0	1.94
New democracy	27,174	0.50	0.50	0	1
Δ GDP 2008-2012**	27,174	0.05	0.48	-0.58	1.30
Bailout	26,214	0.30	0.46	0	1

* Logarithmic transformation of the original variable (originally 0-10).

** The original metrics of the continuous and ordinal variables have been rescaled, dividing its values by two standard deviations (Gelman 2008).

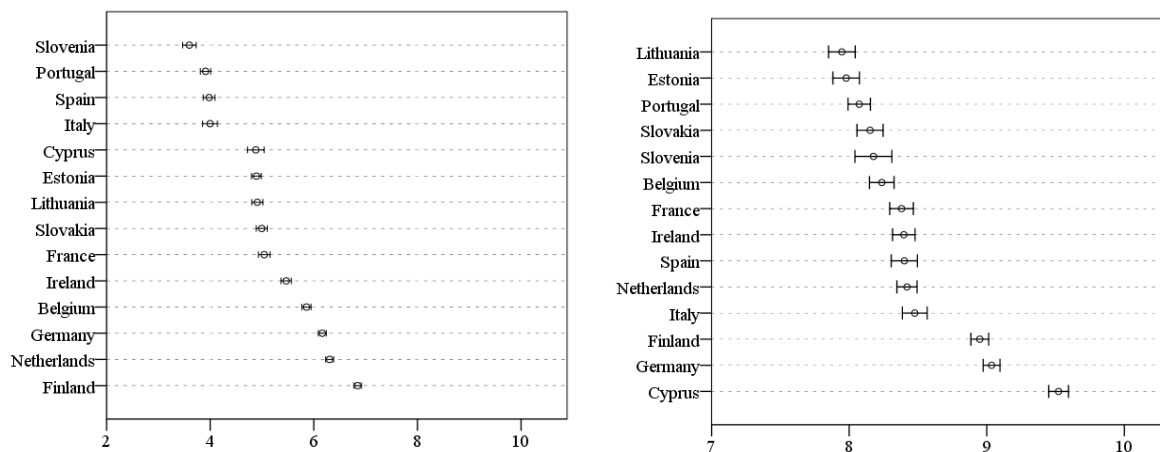
Source: European Social Survey, 6th wave. Created from data available at www.europeansocialsurvey.org

Table 2. Satisfaction with democracy and diffuse support for democracy in Europe.

	Satisfaction with democracy				Support for democracy					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Constant	1.22*** (0.03)	1.20*** (0.03)	1.21*** (0.03)	1.19*** (0.04)	1.20*** (0.04)	2.09*** (0.02)	2.07*** (0.02)	2.05*** (0.01)	2.05*** (0.02)	2.05*** (0.02)
Male	-0.02 (0.01)	-0.03* (0.01)	-0.03* (0.01)	-0.03* (0.01)	-0.03* (0.01)	-0.02* (0.01)	-0.01** (0.00)	-0.01** (0.00)	-0.01** (0.00)	-0.01*** (0.00)
Age	0.03 (0.01)	0.02 (0.02)	0.02 (0.01)	0.02 (0.02)	0.02 (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)	0.02* (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)
Years of education	-0.04 (0.02)	-0.04 (0.03)	-0.04 (0.03)	-0.04 (0.03)	-0.04 (0.03)	0.05*** (0.01)	0.05*** (0.01)	0.05*** (0.01)	0.05*** (0.01)	0.05*** (0.01)
Unemployed	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)
Income	0.01 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)	0.05*** (0.01)	0.05*** (0.01)	0.05*** (0.01)	0.05*** (0.01)	0.05*** (0.01)
Political interest	0.00 (0.03)	0.00 (0.03)	0.00 (0.03)	0.00 (0.03)	0.00 (0.03)	0.12*** (0.01)	0.12*** (0.01)	0.12*** (0.01)	0.12*** (0.01)	0.12*** (0.01)
Voted Government	0.01 (0.02)	0.00 (0.02)	0.00 (0.02)	0.00 (0.02)	0.00 (0.02)	0.02** (0.01)	0.02* (0.01)	0.02* (0.01)	0.02* (0.01)	0.02* (0.01)
Satisfied Government	0.46*** (0.02)	0.47*** (0.02)	0.46*** (0.01)	0.47*** (0.02)	0.45*** (0.01)	0.05** (0.02)	0.05** (0.02)	0.08*** (0.02)	0.05** (0.02)	0.07** (0.02)
Satisfied Economy	0.17*** (0.03)	0.16*** (0.03)	0.16*** (0.03)	0.17*** (0.04)	0.17*** (0.04)	0.02 (0.02)	0.03 (0.02)	0.02 (0.03)	0.05 (0.03)	0.04 (0.03)
New Democracy	-0.09** (0.02)	-0.12* (0.04)	-0.12* (0.04)	-0.12* (0.05)	-0.12* (0.05)	0.04 (0.03)	-0.03 (0.03)	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.03 (0.02)
Δ GDP	-0.09 (0.04)	-0.06 (0.04)	-0.06 (0.04)	-0.06 (0.04)	-0.07 (0.04)	-0.02 (0.04)	0.00 (0.03)	0.00 (0.03)	-0.00 (0.03)	0.00 (0.03)
Bailed out		0.05 (0.05)	0.05 (0.06)	0.08 (0.06)	0.07 (0.06)		0.09* (0.03)	0.14*** (0.03)	0.14** (0.03)	0.16*** (0.03)
Bailed out*Sat. Government			0.01 (0.03)		0.05 (0.03)			-0.09*** (0.01)		-0.05* (0.02)
Bailed out*Sat. Economy				-0.06 (0.04)	-0.09* (0.03)				-0.12** (0.03)	-0.08* (0.04)
N	19.413	19.413	19.413	19.413	19.413	19.997	19.997	19.997	19.997	19.997
Pseudo R ²	0.24	0.23	0.23	0.23	0.23	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26

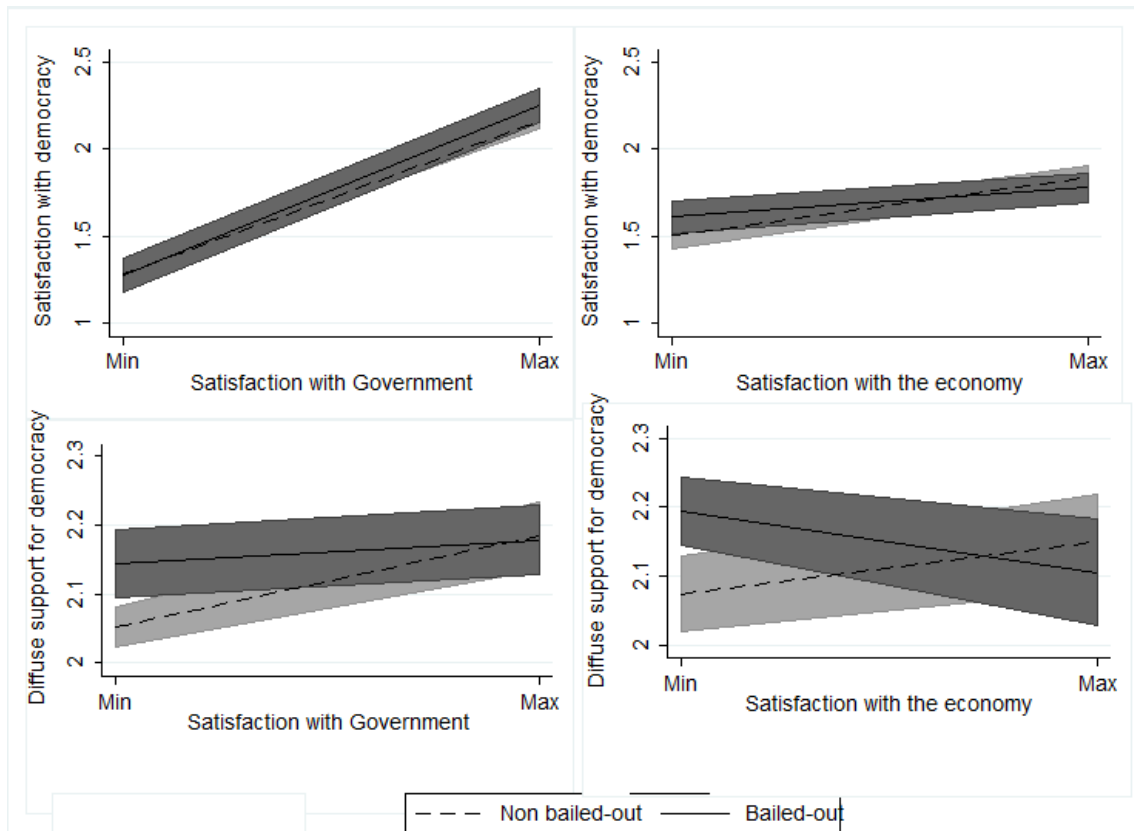
Source: European Social Survey, 6th wave. Created from data available at www.europeansocialsurvey.org
Standard errors in parentheses *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Figure 1. Satisfaction (left) and diffuse support for democracy in Europe (right), 2012



Source: European Social Survey, 6th wave. Created from data available at www.europeansocialsurvey.org

Figure 2. Satisfaction with democracy and diffuse support for democracy according to levels of satisfaction with the government and satisfaction with the economy



Shaded area shows 95% confidence intervals. Dependent variables (Y axis) range from 0 to 2.30. Independent variables (X axis) range from 0 to 1.94.

Source: European Social Survey, 6th wave. Created from data available at www.europeansocialsurvey.org

ANNEX

Table A.1. Number and percentage of observations by country

	N	%
Belgium	1,869	6.88
Cyprus*	1,116	4.11
Estonia	2,380	8.76
Finland	2,197	8.08
France	1,968	7.24
Germany	2,958	10.89
Ireland*	2,628	9.67
Italy	960	3.53
Lithuania	2,109	7.76
Netherlands	1,845	6.79
Portugal*	2,151	7.92
Slovakia	1,847	6.80
Slovenia	1,257	4.63
Spain*	1,889	6.95
Total	27,174	100

Source: European Social Survey, 6th wave. Created from data available at www.europeansocialsurvey.org

*Bailed-out countries. Slovenia was bailed-out after the fieldwork of the 6th wave of the ESS.