



UNIVERSITY OF  
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# DISSATISFIED DEMOCRATS

**A Matter of Representation or Performance?**

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## ABSTRACT

Research on political support around the world has demonstrated massive support for democracy as the underlying principle of governance. At the same time many citizens express dissatisfaction with the way democracy works in practice. People who believe in the principles of democracy, while at the same time expressing discontent with the performance of the political system are often referred to as critical citizens, or dissatisfied democrats. However, the phenomenon of dissatisfied democrats has not received as much empirical attention as it has been discussed theoretically. This paper sets out to empirically investigate and explain the gap between the strong support for democratic principles and the weaker support for the actual functioning of democratic governance, which could be seen as democratic deficit both on the micro- and the macro-level, with a focus on new and old democracies since different types of democracies face different problems and challenges. The paper empirically tests two contrasting explanatory perspectives. The first argues that the reasons for the democratic deficit are to be found on the input side of the political system, and that the solution lies in improving the representative institutions in contemporary democracies. The contrasting argument states that the sources of political support and legitimacy are to be found at the output side of the political system, where the quality of government in terms of non-corrupt and impartial institutions play the pivotal role. The results of the empirical analysis suggest that both explanations are relevant, but factors relating to the input side of democracy seem to be of somewhat greater importance for the likelihood of being a dissatisfied democrat, and that this is particularly the case in established democracies.

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The contemporary state of democracy in the world could be regarded as somewhat paradoxical. On the one hand, the last decades has seen a veritable growth in the number of electoral democracies all over the globe. Electoral democracy has more or less become the only legitimate means to gain political power, and surveys from all parts of the world show that democracy as a political regime is endorsed by large majorities of citizens in most societies, democratic as well as authoritarian (cf. Dalton et al. 2007; Inglehart 2003). At the same time, however, we are often approached by reports and academic studies – sometimes of the alarming sort – describing different types of challenges facing democratic political systems.

First, on the macro-level, it seems like the last decades' global growth of democracies has come to a halt, or even changed into reversal. Many new democracies display severe problems with respect to political rights and civil liberties, corruption, abuse of power and manipulation of electoral processes. In many places, the result has been democratic reversals and transitions to hybrid regimes, where formal democratic institutions are combined with authoritarian practices and an uneven political playing field tilted in favour of incumbents (cf. Levitsky & Way 2010; Schedler 2006; Puddington 2013).

Simultaneously, an increasing number of studies have testified to widespread public discontent with the performance of democratic political systems around the world. Fundamental democratic institutions such as political parties and governments face decreasing levels of public trust and traditional forms of political participation, not least in established Western democracies. Some observers argue that the most pressing challenge to contemporary democracies comes from its own citizens:

Contemporary democracies are facing a challenge today. This challenge does not come from enemies within or outside the nation. Instead, the challenge comes from democracy's own citizens, who have grown distrustful of politicians, sceptical about democratic institutions, and disillusioned about how the democratic process functions (Dalton 2004, 1).

However, scholars disagree about the potential danger of political discontent among citizens and electorates. Survey evidence points toward a somewhat contradictory situation. Although large shares of people around the world express discontent with the performance of democracy in their country, they simultaneously express strong support for the principles of democracy. In the literature, people harbouring these attitudes have been labelled 'dissatisfied democrats' or 'critical citizens', i.e. individuals who support the principles of democracy but at the same time are dissatisfied with the performance of the existing political system (cf. Norris 1999; Doorenspleet 2012; Qi and

Shin 2011). Although research on political support is nothing short of voluminous, surprisingly little empirical work has been devoted to the issue of dissatisfied democrats, and the factors that may explain why large shares of citizens who embrace the principles of democracy express discontent with the functioning of the political system, even in countries with long records of democratic stability and positive economic development (cf. Dalton 1999; Klingemann 1999; Holmberg 1999; Pharr & Putnam 2000).

This paper sets out to investigate the gap between the strong support for democratic principles and the weaker support for the actual functioning of democratic governance, which could be seen as a form of a democratic deficit (Norris 2011). In this effort, we focus on two contrasting theoretical perspectives. The first perspective argues that the reasons for the democratic deficit are to be found on the input side of the political system, and that the solution lies in improving the representative institutions in contemporary democracies. The contrasting argument states that the sources of political support and legitimacy are to be found at the output side of the political system, where the quality of government in terms of non-corrupt and impartial institutions play the pivotal role. We also introduce the hypothesis that support may be subject to different challenges in different types of countries, and that the factors explaining political support and discontent in established democracies may be different from those that explain support and discontent in more recently democratised countries. We believe that institutional consolidation is an important mechanism in the process of generating political support. In the empirical analysis we test these contrasting theories by multilevel regression analysis, using data from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES).

The paper is structured in the following way. We start out with a discussion of the concept of 'dissatisfied democrats' and how it is operationalized in our analyses. In the second section we discuss earlier research on the issue of dissatisfied democrats and present two theories that propose different explanations of support for the performance of the regime. In the third part, we present descriptive and multivariate analyses of dissatisfied democrats in old and new democracies. The paper ends with the concluding remarks.

## **Dissatisfied democrats: A resource or threat to democracy?**

The concept of dissatisfied democrats draws on a multidimensional understanding of the concept of political support (cf. Easton 1975; Norris 1999; 2011; Dalton 2004; Linde & Ekman 2003; Klingemann 1999). In many studies it has been shown that citizens express strong support for the principles of democracy while at the same time being discontent with the way the democratic sys-

tem works in practice (cf. Lagos 2003a; 2003b; Norris 2011; Klingemann 1999; Rose et al. 1998). Hence, when studying political support it is important to acknowledge the theoretical and empirical distinction between popular support for the *principles* of the regime and support for the *performance* of the regime.

Support for the principles of the democratic regime concerns beliefs in fundamental democratic values and principles, such as the importance of having a democratic political system with free and fair elections and a firm rejection of non-democratic regime alternatives. The regime performance dimension concerns citizens' perceptions of the workings of the democratic regime, such as satisfaction with the actual performance of the political system (Norris 2011; 1999; Booth & Seligson 2009; Linde & Ekman 2003). The multidimensional nature of support thus makes it perfectly possible for an individual to be convinced that democracy constitutes the best – or least worst – system of government for his or her country, but at the same time feel discontent with the way the democratic system works in practice. These are the type of citizens that in the literature have been labelled 'critical citizens', 'critical democrats' or 'dissatisfied democrats' and that make up the empirical phenomenon we set out to investigate. Since we aim to investigate the factors that make individuals with democratic orientations dissatisfied *or* satisfied with the way democracy works, in the empirical analysis 'dissatisfied democrats' are compared with 'satisfied democrats'.

For quite some time it has been debated how these two types of democrats contribute to the legitimacy and stability of democratic regimes. In *Critical Citizens*, Pippa Norris and collaborators drew attention to the discrepancy between citizens' strong support for democracy in principle and extensive discontent with the performance of democratic regimes (Norris 1999). The relatively high frequency of dissatisfied democrats found in different parts of the world was generally interpreted in positive terms. For example, in his global analysis of political support, Klingemann argued that:

The fact of dissatisfaction does not imply danger to the persistence or furtherance of democracy. A significant number of people spread around the world can be labelled 'dissatisfied democrats' /.../ The dissatisfied democrats can be viewed as less a threat to, than a force for, reform and improvement of democratic processes and structures ... (Klingemann 1999: 32).

Dissatisfied democrats were – and have often been since – perceived as being 'critical' because they were assumed to be highly educated, well-informed, politically interested and active, and could thus constitute a potential driving force in strengthening democracy. For example, it has been argued

that a general commitment to democracy as a system of government is not a sufficient condition when it comes to the importance of mass attitudes for democratization, but that critical democrats may put important pressure for change on authoritarian leaders that may lead to democratization (Qi & Shin 2011).

Everybody does not embrace this positive view, however. In his acclaimed book *Why Politics Matters*, Gerry Stoker argues that the growing scepticism towards political institutions and increasing levels of discontent with the functioning of democracy are more than just a reflection of healthy scepticism, and thus constitute a real threat to representative democracy (Stoker 2006; cf. Doorenspleet 2012). Similar concerns about the dangers of fading public trust in democratic institutions have been expressed in the field of political support (cf. Dalton 2004; Pharr and Putnam 2000). However, surprisingly few empirical studies concerned with dissatisfied democrats have been published. Are they really better informed and more interested in political matters and more likely to participate in political activities than satisfied democrats?

## **Explanations of dissatisfied democrats**

There is an abundance of empirical analyses of the determinants of satisfaction with democracy in general. Usually, the focus has been either on individual-level determinants or the political context, with an emphasis on formal political institutions (cf. Bernauer & Vatter 2012; Aarts & Thomassen 2008; Anderson & Guillory 1997). However, the studies that have investigated the particular issue of dissatisfied democrats in a systematic way are few, and also quite limited when it comes to geographical scope.

In a recent study covering eight African democracies, Doorenspleet (2012) empirically investigates the micro-level determinants of 'dissatisfied' and 'satisfied democrats'. The results show that the positive notion of dissatisfied democrats as an asset to democracy that has often been put forth in the literature should be interpreted with a certain amount of caution, to say the least. Compared to citizens with non-democratic regime preferences, dissatisfied democrats do indeed display higher levels of education, a more critical stance and are better informed in political matters, and should therefore be more prone to question the actions and authority of politicians. However, compared to the *satisfied* democrats dissatisfied democrats show *lower* levels of political participation and they also come out as less politically interested, which speaks against the hypothesis that dissatisfied democrats are the ones most likely to be active and organized, fighting for political change and a

deepening of democracy, and therefore constitute an important democratizing force (cf. Qi & Shin 2011).

These are of course interesting and important findings, and a good starting point for further inquiries of the issue of dissatisfied democrats, notwithstanding the narrow geographical focus and the strict individual-level analysis. In our study, we take Doorenspleet's main finding – that political disaffection among democrats seems to be a result of discontent with the government performance – as a point of departure. However, we set out to broaden the analysis empirically, theoretically and methodologically. Apart from testing two competing theoretical claims, a guiding question in our analysis is if there are different patterns of democratic dissatisfaction in old democracies with well-established democratic political institutions compared to more recently democratised countries, where new institutional frameworks and party systems are in the process of consolidation.

## **Theoretical framework and hypotheses**

The first explanatory perspective concerns the input side of the political system, and has to do with representation. In this view, people accept a political authority because they have been given the right to take part in elections that have resulted in a government that represents the majority of the people. Those who are on the losing side will still perceive the system as legitimate because they know that they stand a good chance of becoming the majority in the next elections (Rothstein 2009, 313). In the conclusions of the influential volume *Critical Citizens*, Pippa Norris argues that one of the key solutions to the problem of widespread political discontent could be to improve the institutions of representative democracy because large portions of the electorate feel that their views are not represented by the political elites governing them (Norris 1999b). Political support is thus contingent on the quality of representation and participation in the democratic process. Widespread public discontent regarding representation contributes to a democratic deficit, which in the long run could lead to a loss of legitimacy (Norris 1997; 2011).

Much research has focused on the impact of institutions on satisfaction with democracy, for example electoral systems. Proportional systems are in this respect supposed to be superior in linking citizens' vote preferences into parliamentary seats. However, according to the findings by Karp & Bowler (2001) and Aarts & Thomassen (2008) the relationship between election system design and people's assessment of how their democracy works, the connection seems to be the inverse, where proportional systems are related to somewhat lower levels of satisfaction with democracy. Nevertheless, one can expect an indirect impact of electoral systems on citizens' satisfaction with the

working of democracy since proportional systems are expected to produce multiparty systems. Such systems will increase the breadth of alternatives for voters to choose between, something that in turn can be expected to affect the levels of satisfaction with democracy (Lijphart 1999).

Furthermore it has been argued that a broader range of parties leads to greater representation of diverse values (Hoffman 2005), minority groups (Lijphart 1999) and women (Norris 2004). Lijphart argues that proportional systems are more consensual and that the crucial mechanism is whether a system is performing in a consensual versus a conflict manner. This assumption has been further elaborated in a recent article by Ezrow and Xezonakis (2011), in which they test whether increases in average party policy extremism is related to lower levels of satisfaction with democracy. The results indicate that this is the case. The more party system centrist in relation to the median voter position, the greater were citizens' satisfaction with the working of democracy.

We can thus expect that citizens who perceive their views to be represented by one or more of the main parties during elections to also be satisfied with the performance of the democratic system in general. However, newer parties are more likely to repeatedly adjust or change their policies and ideological profiles. Frequent changes in policies, identity and location may in turn be confusing for voters (Brug 2008). We can thus, hypothetically, expect the perceived ideological proximity between parties and voters to be greater in older democracies with consolidated and more stable party systems.

A competing, more recent, theoretical perspective argues that support and legitimacy are created at the output side of the political system (Norris 2012; Gjefsen 2012; Dahlberg & Holmberg 2013). The actual performance of political institutions and – most important – a high degree of *quality* of government in terms of impartial implementation of public policy. Hence, universalistic, impartial government institutions built on the rule of law is the key to generate public support for the working of the political system (Rothstein 2009; Rothstein 2011; cf. Wagner et al. 2009; Linde 2012; Holmberg & Rothstein 2012). Compared to established democracies, newly democratised countries often display poor records of government performance, particularly when it comes to different aspects of the quality of government. One – if not the most – important aspects of quality of government is the absence of corruption (Rothstein 2011; Rothstein & Teorell 2008; Adserá et al. 2003). Thus, in line with recent research on the strong relationship between citizens' evaluations of the extent of corruption and political support (cf. Linde 2012; Linde & Erlingsson 2012; Booth & Seligson 2009; Seligson 2002) we hypothesise that public perceptions of the extent of corruption in

the political system will have a significant effect on the likelihood of being satisfied or dissatisfied with the way democracy works. Citizens who regard corruption to be widespread will thus be more likely to be dissatisfied with the way democracy works, although they see democracy as the best way of government (cf. Holmberg 2011).

Earlier research on dissatisfied democrats has focused on both new and old democracies, but not in a systematically comparative manner. Different types of democracies face different problems and challenges. One of the most important factors in this regard is the degree of institutional consolidation. In countries that have recently gone through a transition from authoritarian rule the constitutional and institutional frameworks may be fragile, and often a fair share of the political game concerns the actual *rules* of the game. In consolidated democracies, the political game is played within a more or less fixed institutional framework where all major actors – and the public – agree on the basic rules of the game (cf. Linz & Stepan 1996; Diamond 1999). Moreover, established and new democracies often differ in terms of political cleavage structures and the extent of programmatic appeal of political parties (cf. Kitschelt 1995; Whitefield 2002). There are also reasons to believe that people’s general expectations about politics are different in old and new democracies, for example when it comes to issues of regime performance and the extent of political corruption. Thus, we hypothesize that the factors explaining democratic discontent may be different in established and new democracies. In the multivariate analysis we investigate this by interacting the main explanatory variables with type of democracy (old or new).

## Data

The analyses are based on data from the second module of the *Comparative Study of Electoral Systems*’ (CSES), which were collected in 2001-2006 in post-election surveys (see [www.cses.org](http://www.cses.org)).<sup>1</sup> Since we are studying citizens’ satisfaction with the working of democracy, we are for obvious reasons restricted to countries that are democracies. We have therefore excluded countries that were not classified as “free” according to the *Freedom House* index of political rights and civil liberties at the time when data was collected.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, it has been argued that a separation between presidential elections and parliamentary elections should be preferred since government formation processes in presidential elections are quite distinct from those in parliamentary systems (Clark, Golder & Gold-

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<sup>1</sup> The data can be received from CSES Secretariat, [www.cses.org](http://www.cses.org), Centre for Political Studies, Institute for Social Research, The University of Michigan. The data can also be downloaded from: [www.umich.edu/~cses](http://www.umich.edu/~cses).

<sup>2</sup> *Freedom House*. Selected data from Freedom House’s annual global survey of political rights and civil liberties. [www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org).

er 2009). For this reason we are focusing on countries with parliamentary elections. This leaves us with 34 countries in total. The countries that are included are depicted in figure 1. Due to missing data on independent variables the number of countries in the multivariate analysis is restricted to 24.

## The dependent variable: Dissatisfied democrats

Our dependent variable is a dichotomous division between dissatisfied and satisfied democrats. It is based on two different variables that can be regarded as standard items in operationalizations of public support for regime principles and regime performance. The first item measures respondents' support for democratic regime principles and reads: 'Please tell me how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statement: Democracy may have problems but it's better than any other form of government. Do you agree strongly, agree, disagree, or disagree strongly with this statement?' Respondents answering 'agree strongly' and 'agree' are classified as 'democrats'. In order to sort out dissatisfied and satisfied democrats, we use the frequently used 'satisfaction with democracy' (SWD) item, which reads: 'On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied, or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in [country]?' Here, respondents being 'very' and 'fairly satisfied' are regarded as 'satisfied' democrats, while those responding 'not very' and 'not at all satisfied' are classified as 'dissatisfied' democrats. While being probably the most frequently used indicator of support for regime performance, the meaning and measurement of the SWD item has been debated. Here we side with those that have argued, and shown, that it is a suitable indicator of public evaluations of the performance of the political system in general (Linde & Ekman 2003; Anderson 2002; Fuchs et al. 1995; Norris 2011). The operationalization of the dependent variable is presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1, (OPERATIONALIZATION OF 'DISSATISFIED' AND 'SATISFIED' DEMOCRATS)

<i>Regime principles: Support for democracy as the best system of government</i>			
		<b>High</b>	<b>Low</b>
<i>Regime performance: Satisfaction with democracy</i>	<b>High</b>	Satisfied democrats (coded 0)	Satisfied non-democrats (not included in the analyses)
	<b>Low</b>	<b>Dissatisfied democrats (coded 1)</b>	Dissatisfied non-democrats (not included in the analyses)

Our main interest in this study is directed towards those individuals whose orientations fit in the lower left cell in the table. Dissatisfied democrats are those who express support for democracy as the best way to govern the country but are dissatisfied with the performance of the democratic

system. However, since we aim to investigate the factors that make individuals with democratic orientations dissatisfied *or* satisfied with the way democracy works, the satisfied democrats are also of great importance in our empirical analysis.

## **Dissatisfied democrats in new and old democracies**

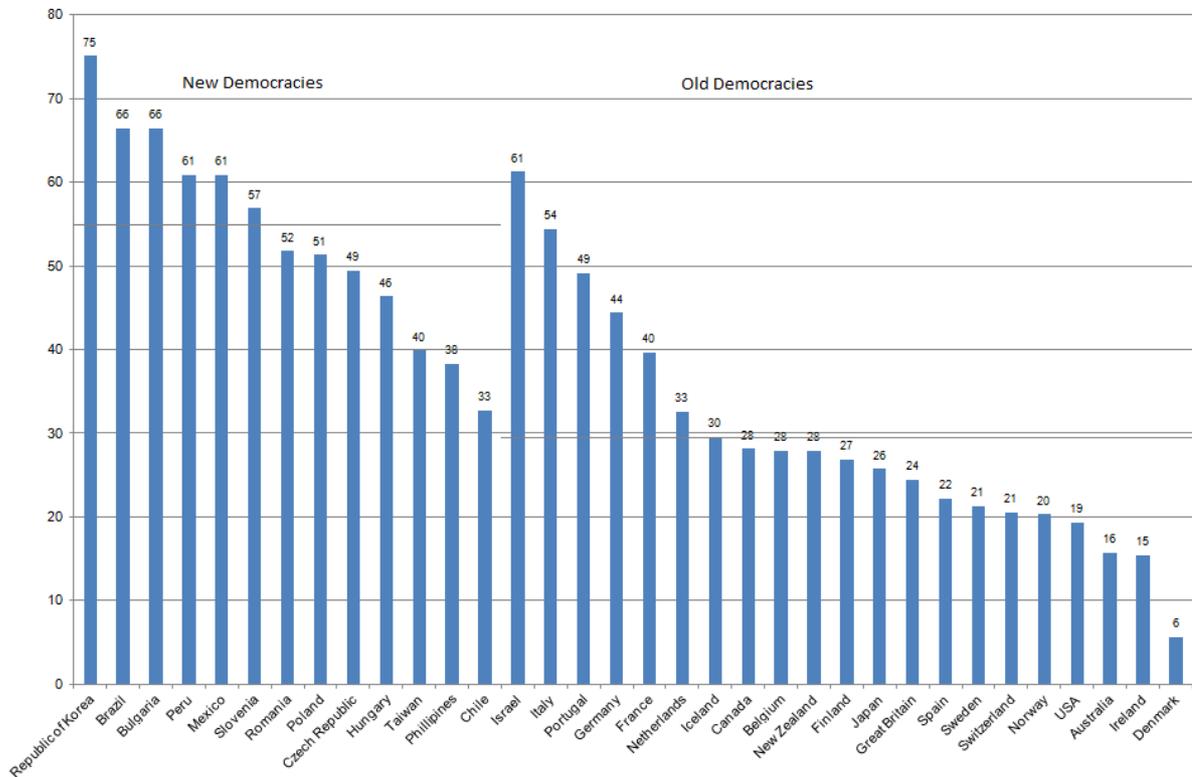
Political discontent and dissatisfied democrats have been observed in different political settings. Most often the discussion has been focusing on established Western democracies, although empirical studies have testified to substantial portions of dissatisfied democrats in other geographical and political settings, such as South-Saharan Africa (Doorenspleet 2012), Asia (Lagos 2003a), post-communist Europe (Lagos 2003a; Linde & Ekman 2003; Catterberg 2003), Latin America (Lagos 2003b; Catterberg 2003) and transitional countries (Qi & Shin 2011).

Figure 1 shows the aggregated shares of dissatisfied democrats in the democracies included in the CSES dataset. In order to examine if the phenomenon of dissatisfied democrats is predominantly found in newer democracies, as suggested by earlier research, we distinguish between old and new democracies. Countries that have democratized after 1980 are classified as new democracies and the rest as old democracies.<sup>3</sup> The data presented in Figure 1 clearly indicate that the existence of dissatisfied democrats cannot be considered a ‘Western’ phenomenon. In fact, dissatisfaction among democrats is more common in newer democracies. The average of dissatisfied democrats in new democracies is 55 per cent, compared to 29 per cent in older democracies. There is substantial variation within both groups of countries. Among new democracies the shares range from a low 33 per cent in Chile to quite remarkable 75 per cent in South Korea. In old democracies we find a small share of only 6 per cent in Denmark to 61 per cent in Israel. Israel and Italy are the only older democracies where dissatisfied democrats constitute an absolute majority of the public. Among the newer democracies, however, this is the case in nine out of fourteen countries.

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<sup>3</sup> The question of where to draw the line between old and new democracies is of course a subjective matter. Here we regard countries going through a transition from authoritarian rule during the ‘third wave of democratization’ (Huntington 1991) as new democracies. However, we place Portugal and Spain in the group of old democracies. They have been democracies for almost 40 years and have been members of the European Union since 1986. This distinction is also used by Aarts & Thomassen (2008) in their analysis of institutional determinants of satisfaction with democracies, drawing on the module 2 of the CSES data set. Also see Norris (2010), in which Spain is classified as an older liberal democracy.

FIGURE 1: SHARES OF DISSATISFIED DEMOCRATS IN NEW AND OLD DEMOCRACIES (PER CENT)



Source: CSES Module 2.

Note: Bars represent share of respondents in a country endorsing democracy as the best way to govern country and at the same time being dissatisfied with the way democracy works. Thus, the base consists only of those agreeing that democracy is the best way of government.

Thus, the data at hand show that quite substantial portions of citizens in both old and new democracies can be labelled dissatisfied democrats, i.e. viewing democracy as the best way to govern society while at the same time feeling discontent with the way democracy works in practice. We can also observe that the existence of dissatisfied democrats is more frequent in countries with shorter experience of democratic institutions.

### Who are the dissatisfied democrats and what drives them?

After having mapped out the cross-country variation, we will now move on to an issue that has often been discussed in the literature, but seldom empirically investigated. Who are the dissatisfied

democrats? Are they really more politically sophisticated and ‘critical’ than their fellow citizens that could be labelled ‘satisfied democrats’? In one of the few empirical analyses made, Doorenspleet found that in African democracies, ‘satisfied democrats are generally more likely to vote and have a higher level of political interest than dissatisfied democrats, who are less involved and less active’ (2012, 290). Thus, Doorenspleet did not find any evidence for the often made claim that dissatisfied democrats are more inclined to be politically active, struggling to improve the quality of the democratic political system. However, in a comparative analysis covering four Latin American and five East European countries, Catterberg (2003) found that people combining post-materialist and democratic orientations with weak support for the government were significantly more likely to take political action.

In the following, we set out to further explore this issue using data from a larger number of countries displaying substantial variation in terms of level of democracy and experience with democratic institutions. Table 2 compares different individual-level characteristics between dissatisfied and satisfied democrats in new and old democracies. Starting with some standard socio-demographic variables, we see that there are no major differences when it comes to gender. Looking at age, it is interesting to note that in the oldest cohort (70+) a minority of the respondents in new democracies are dissatisfied democrats, while in all other age groups dissatisfied democrats are in majority. In old democracies there are only small age differences and dissatisfied democrats are less than an one third minority in all age groups.

Education has often been hypothesised to impact political support in the sense that higher educated citizens hold a more critical stance towards authority. It is thus interesting to note that in our sample we find that in new democracies those with only elementary education are less likely to be dissatisfied democrats, while people with higher education tend to be more dissatisfied. In older democracies, however, the opposite pattern is visible. Here, people with low education are the ones most likely to be dissatisfied democrats. In both old and new democracies, unemployment seems to cause discontent, although in old democracies a majority of unemployed respondents are still satisfied with the way democracy works.

It is obvious from the results in Table 2 that the relationships between the socio-demographic variables and whether citizens tend to be dissatisfied or satisfied democrats are very limited. And that goes for people in old as well as in new democracies. People’s gender, age and income do not matter much for the probability of them being dissatisfied or satisfied democrats. Employment status

and level of education matter somewhat more, but not much more. The percentage difference in the tendency to be a dissatisfied democrat between employed and unemployed or between high and low educated citizens is only around 7-9 percentage points.

The relationship between being a dissatisfied democrat and some political variables like electoral participation, party identification and political knowledge is also of a limited scope. The relevant percentage differences are only between 2-7 percentage points. However, the correlations are of an expected direction, at least when it comes to participation and identification. Voters tend to be less dissatisfied democrats than non-voters and party identified persons are as well less dissatisfied democrats compared to people without a party identification. As to political knowledge, there is no relationship between degrees of political knowledge and the probability to become a dissatisfied democrat. In old and in new democracies, level of political information is not related to whether citizens turn into dissatisfied democrats or not.

TABLE 2, (WHO ARE THE DISSATISFIED AND SATISFIED DEMOCRATS?)

		<b>New Democracies</b>	<b>Old Democracies</b>
		<b>Dissatisfied (%)</b>	<b>Dissatisfied (%)</b>
<b>Total</b>		55	29
<b>Gender</b>	Men	54	28
	Women	56	29
<b>Age</b>	16-21	56	27
	22-30	56	30
	31-40	54	28
	41-50	56	29
	51-60	54	29
	61-70	54	29
	>70	48	27
<b>Education</b>	Elementary school	46	35
	High school	56	31
	Upper Secondary	55	28
	University	54	28
<b>Employment status</b>	Unemployed	62	39
	Employed	54	30
<b>Household Income</b>	1-2 quintile	53	30
	3< quintile	55	26
<b>Party Identification</b>	No	58	32
	Yes	52	25
<b>Political Participation</b>	Voted	54	28
	Did not Vote	59	35
<b>Political information</b>	Low	54	31
	High	56	28
<b>Assessment of Government Performance</b>	Bad	71	48
	Good	37	16
<b>Assessment of Corruption</b>	Widespread	58	38
	Not-Widespread	40	18
<b>Assessment of Subjective Representation</b>	Bad	63	43
	Good	43	18

Source: CSES module 2.

What seems to matter substantially though is how citizens judge the quality of the input as well as the output side of the democratic system. Evaluations of the performance of the government over the past years are strongly related to satisfaction with the way democracy works. In new democra-

cies, no less than 63 per cent of those expressing a positive view of government performance are satisfied democrats. The corresponding figure in old democracies is 84 per cent. The relationship between people's assessments of the performance of their government, levels of corruption and degrees of subjective feelings of being represented are in general strongly correlated with peoples tendency to become dissatisfied democrats. The theoretically relevant percentage differences are in the order of between 18 and 33 percentage points. Clearly, citizens' evaluations of government performance, extent of corruption and degree of representation condition the likelihood to become dissatisfied democrats. In the subsequent section we test the impact of the competing explanations described above more substantially in a series of multi-level logistic regressions.

### **Explaining dissatisfied democrats in old and new democracies**

We investigate the determinants of democratic dissatisfaction by a series of multi-level logistic regression models. In order to test our hypotheses concerning input and output related political support we use three individual-levels variables. The 'quality of government' argument is tested with two questions concerning corruption and government performance. The first question taps respondents' perceptions about the level of political corruption in their country. It reads: 'How widespread do you think corruption such as bribe taking is amongst politicians in [country]: very widespread, quite widespread, not very widespread, it hardly happens at all?' The item used as our indicator of perceived government performance reads: 'Now thinking about the performance of the government in general, how good or bad a job do you think the government has done over the past years. Has it done a very good job, a good job, a bad job, a very bad job?' The explanatory power of the 'representation argument' is tested using a question measuring the degree to which the respondent thinks that the electorates' views are being represented in the political system: 'Considering how elections in [country] usually work in your view, to what extent do elections result in members of parliament having views mirroring what voters want: very well, quite well, not very well, or not well at all?'. In order to investigate if there are any significant differences in effects between established and newer democracies, we construct a dichotomous variable coded 1 for new democracies and 2 for old democracies. The analyses also include a number of individual-level and system-level control variables. Exact wording and coding of these are presented in Appendix 1.

The analyses presented in Table 3 starts by unveiling the impact of a number of variables that in earlier research have been showed to affect political support. The results in Model 1 are in line with what could be expected from the descriptive analysis in Table 2 and earlier research on system sup-

port. When it comes to our control variables, people that are employed, identify with a political party and are more politically knowledgeable are less dissatisfied on average. In line with a growing body of recent research we also find that people who voted for a party that ended up in a government position express significantly less dissatisfaction than those who were on the 'losing' side (cf. Anderson & Guillory 1997; Anderson & Tverdova 2003; Blais & Gélinau 2007; Linde & Ekman 2003). Voting as such, however, does not affect dissatisfaction.

Model 1 also includes the three variables that are central to our theoretical point of departure: the extent of corruption, government performance and subjective representation. As pointed out by earlier research, democratic discontent (here, the likelihood of being a dissatisfied democrat) is to a large extent driven by negative perceptions of government performance (Doreenspleet 2012). When the governments' performance is perceived to be good, citizens tend to be more satisfied with the democratic system. All three variables are important but government performance has by far the largest effect on democratic dissatisfaction, under control for the impact of the other variables included in the model, followed by perceptions of the extent to which the electorate views are represented in the political system. As expected we also find a statistically significant effect of public perceptions of the extent of political corruption. Individuals that do view problems of corruption to be widespread also tend to be dissatisfied democrats. The fact that perceptions of government performance has a relatively strong impact on dissatisfaction is not surprising since performance and dissatisfaction with the democratic system are two closely related concepts. When asking about satisfaction with the way democracy works, the government's performance could very well be regarded as part of the concept. Nevertheless, the exclusion of this variable does not affect the relative impact of the two other measures relevant to the input and the output side of the political system. In general, the analysis shows that citizens' perceptions of different aspects of political performance are of greater importance for understanding democratic discontent rather than an individual's employment status or party identification. This is however a rather obvious result given that the different perceptions must be judged to be causally closer to our dependent variable than the socio-demographic or party political variables.

Model 2 looks at the importance of two system level factors together with a variable for institutional maturity. In order to assess the impact of our democratic input and governmental output factors in a more 'objective' manner, we include two global measures of institutional impartiality and ideological congruence. In order to assess the level of quality of government we use a new index of government impartiality, which measures to what extent government institutions exercise their

power impartially. The index is constructed from five expert survey items tapping the presence of the impartiality norm. Higher values indicate a more *impartial* public administration (for more detailed information, see Dahlström et al. 2011 and Teorell et al. 2011).<sup>4</sup> The ‘ideological congruence’ measure is based on the absolute distances between voters self-placement on an eleven point left-right scale and the median placement of the party voted for, made by the approximately 40 per cent most educated respondents in each country. The reason for using the placement of parties made by respondents with higher education is that people with lower levels of education tend to make less qualified party placements in that they tend to place parties they are unfamiliar with in the middle of the left-right scale (see Alvarez & Nagler 2004). The analysis presented in Model 2 shows that high country-levels of quality of government are associated with less democratic dissatisfaction on the individual level, while the effect of ideological congruence is in the expected direction, but does not reach statistical significance. And, interestingly, democratic discontent is not significantly different in old and new democracies when controlling for quality of government.

In Model 3 we re-introduce the individual level variables together with the system level variables. Together, the individual level variables clearly show the greatest explanatory potential.<sup>5</sup> The significant effect of quality of government disappears, leaving the strongest effects to perceptions of government effectiveness, subjective representation and corruption.

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<sup>4</sup> The QoG-impartiality measure is highly correlated with Transparency International's corruption perception index ( $r: .90$ ).

<sup>5</sup> The impact of the system related variables are, however, not unessential since their inclusion in model 2 contributes to a significant decrease in the intercept standard deviations between countries, from .744 in an empty base-model (displaying the intercept standard deviations in the dependent variable alone) compared to .454 in model 2; while the individual variables alone in model 1 simply contributes with a drop from .744 to .520.

TABLE 3, (DETERMINANTS OF DEMOCRATIC DISSATISFACTION 'LOGISTIC MULTI-LEVEL REGRESSION')

	Mod. 1	Mod. 2	Mod. 3	Mod. 4	Mod. 5	Mod. 6	Mod. 7	Mod. 8	Mod. 9
<i>Individual level variables</i>									
Age	0.112*		0.117*	0.114*	0.114*	0.106*	0.108*	0.111*	0.116*
Sex	0.032		0.032	0.029	0.033	0.037	0.036	0.037	0.037
Education	-0.075		-0.066	-0.060	-0.070	-0.065	-0.057	-0.054	-0.050
Employment	-0.316***		-0.314***	-0.309***	-0.314***	-0.317***	-0.312***	-0.312***	-0.309***
Party identification	-0.162***		-0.163***	-0.166***	-0.162***	-0.161***	-0.163***	-0.163***	-0.163***
Political knowledge	-0.227***		-0.230***	-0.213***	-0.229***	-0.233***	-0.220***	-0.221***	-0.220***
Voted for govern. party	-0.303***		-0.298***	-0.297***	-0.305***	-0.294***	-0.302***	-0.300***	-0.307***
Voted	0.008		0.009	0.010	0.011	0.004	0.009	0.009	0.010
Corruption	-1.018***		-1.001***	-0.034	-1.008***	-0.995***	-0.174	-0.178	-0.162
Government performance	-2.375***		-2.375***	-2.377***	-2.792***	-2.355***	-2.995***	-3.011***	-3.033***
Subjective representation	-1.648***		-1.651***	-1.644***	-1.654***	0.273	0.235	0.236	0.231
<i>System level variables</i>									
QoG-impartiality		-1.539***	-0.578					-0.597	0.170
Ideological congruence		-1.157	-1.006					-1.039	-0.009
New-old democracies		-0.122	-0.282	-0.558***	-0.822***	-0.151	-0.214	0.218	-0.110
<i>Interactions</i>									
Corruption*new/old				-0.574***			-0.486***	-0.480***	-0.490***
Government performance.*new/old					0.247		0.383**	0.393***	0.409***
Voters' views repr*new/old						-1.194***	-1.172***	-1.174***	-1.169***
<i>Controls</i>									
Gd/pc(log)									-0.150***

<b>Gd-growth/pc(log)</b>									-1.104**
<b>Constant</b>	2.269***	1.449**	3.856***	3.195***	3.636***	2.533***	2.643***	3.083***	3.020***
<b>Var. Lev 2</b>	-1.314***	-1.586***	-1.976***	-1.855***	-1.822***	-1.795***	-1.800***	-1.948***	-2.592***
<b>Std. Dev. Lev 2</b>	0,518	0,452	0,372	0,395	0,402	0,407	0,407	0,378	0,274
<b>Rho</b>	0,076	0,058	0,04	0,045	0,047	0,048	0,048	0,042	0,022
<b>Observations</b>	22,917	22,917	22,917	22,917	22,917	22,917	22,917	22,917	22,917
<b>Number of countries</b>	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24

*Comment: \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1. Data come from the CSES module 2, collected between 2001-2006. Level 2 in the random part refers to the country units and level 1 to individuals. The data is unweighted since the only weights that should be included in a multi-level model is weights for unequal selection probabilities within countries (see Asparouhov and Muthen 2004). All independent variables are rescaled, stretching from 0-1, showing the total effects on the dependent variable. '*

*Sources: CSES module 2; The Quality of Government Dataset.*

In general, subjective representation is somewhat more important than assessments of political corruption when explaining citizens' dissatisfaction with the democratic system, while the current state of corruption or ideological representation on a system level is of minor importance per se.<sup>6</sup>

The question is then to what extent the effect of these factors are related to democratic and institutional maturity. In Models 4 to 6 we include interaction terms between perceived corruption, government performance and assessments of subjective representation in new and old democracies. What we find in model 4 is that the effect of perceived corruption has an additional impact on dissatisfaction among citizens in older democracies (-.574\*\*\*). Hence, in older democracies with more established political institutions corruption has a stronger impact on the probabilities of turning from a satisfied to a dissatisfied democrat.

It is an effect of the fact that expectations of non-corrupt behavior are more pronounced in old democracies, where the problems of corruption and abuse of power are not as acute as in newly

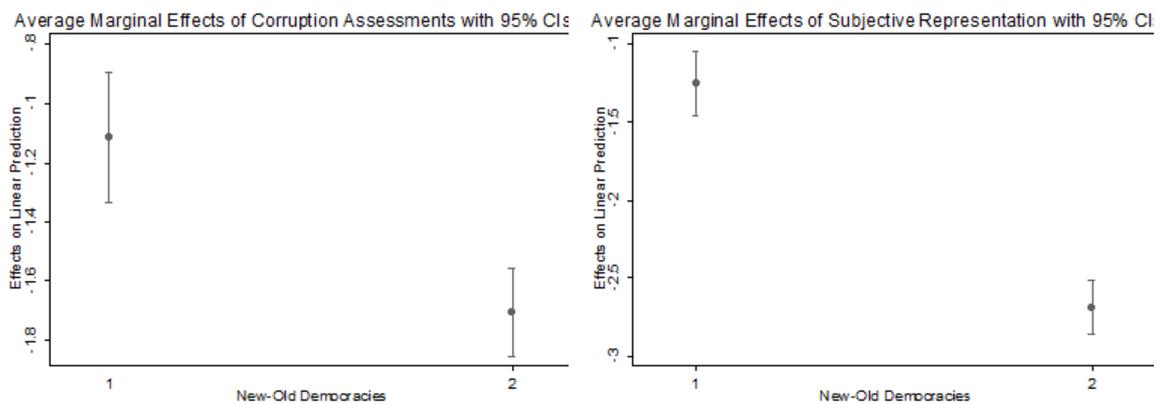
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<sup>6</sup> The effects in terms of absolute levels should, however, not be overstated since the relationships may suffer from endogeneity. As earlier mentioned, the causal order of subjective representation, government performance and perceptions of corruption on citizens' dissatisfaction with the working of democracy is theoretically not entirely straightforward. This implies that depending on the strength of any presumed backward causality, this will lead to an overestimation of the effect of the independent variables. This problem can easily be overcome by using panel data. Unfortunately we are here stuck with cross-sectional data since, to our knowledge, no country comparative panel data is available for these specific variables. However, in terms of comparing differences between newer and older democracies, the endogeneity problem is less severe since the interaction effects are less sensitive in this respect. More critical though is the comparison of variables in terms of absolute effect.

democratized countries. Model 5 reveals another interesting finding. While government performance alone is the factor that by far has the greatest negative impact on democratic discontent, the effect is equally strong in new as well as in older democracies (.247). Thus, institutional maturity does not seem to moderate the impact of general performance on citizens' dissatisfaction with democracy. In the sixth model, we interact perceptions of subjective representation with new versus old democracies. The results indicate an even stronger moderating effect compared to the effect of corruption perceptions in new and old democracies, with an additional effect of subjective representation in older democracies by means of (-1.194\*\*\*). An interpretation of this effect is that there are greater expectations in terms of performance, both on the input as well as on the output side of the democratic system in older more established democracies.

In order to more clearly illustrate the differences in the effect of perceived presence of corruption and subjective representation on public dissatisfaction as a function of democratic consolidation, figure 2 illustrates the marginal effects separately in newer and older political systems (based on model 4 and 6).

FIGURE 2, (MARGINAL EFFECT OF PERCEPTIONS OF CORRUPTION AND SUBJECTIVE REPRESENTATION ON DEMOCRATIC DISCONTENT AMONG CITIZENS IN NEW AND OLD DEMOCRATIES



As already could be seen in table 3, perceptions of government performance was by far the strongest single predictor behind citizens' dissatisfaction with the way democracy works. However, its effect was equally strong among citizens in both new as well as in older democratic states. Regarding the effect of our input- and output factors, the effects are significantly different among citizens in newer and older democracies. The effect of corruption assessments and subjective representation is much stronger among citizens in older democracies, which support our initial idea that citizens in

older democracies should have greater expectations when it comes to democratic representation and absence of political corruption.

The interaction effects are also robust under control for each other and for the system level variables, although the interaction term ‘government performance\*new/old’ only reaches significance at the 90 per cent level (Models 7 and 8). In the final model (9), we introduce two additional system level control variables; the log of GDP per capita and the log of GDP growth per capita, but the initial results are unaffected.

### **Representation and performance**

Contemporary democracies exhibit substantial shares of people declaring allegiance to democracy as a way to organise society, while at the same time expressing discontent with the performance of the democratic political system. Research on system support and political legitimacy has for quite some time discussed the implications of the occurrence of such dissatisfied democrats, but the causes (and effects) of the phenomenon have only rarely been investigated empirically. This paper therefore sets out to empirically investigate the issue of dissatisfied democrats empirically in a comparative perspective, using data from a broad range of democratic countries.

The most obvious finding is that dissatisfied democrats are not a ‘Western’ phenomenon. Dissatisfied democrats are in fact more frequent in newer democracies and there is a substantial degree of variation within both groups of countries. In the literature, the debate has to a large extent focused upon whether dissatisfied democrats constitute an asset or a threat to representative democracy. Although not frequently empirically tested, most notions have tended to view dissatisfied democrats as an important democratizing force, since they are assumed to be critical, well educated, politically interested and prone to political participation. However, our extensive comparative analysis clearly suggests that these speculations are not well grounded in empirical data. In line with the results of Doorenspleet (2012) we find only a weak relationship between being a dissatisfied democrat and socio-demographical factors or political variables such as electoral participation, party identification and political knowledge. Moreover, the data clearly demonstrate that where the relationships are significant they are tilted in favor of the satisfied democrats who in general display higher scores on these variables.

What seems to matter is rather how citizens judge the quality of the input as well as the output side of the democratic system. Our statistical analysis shows that the likelihood of being either a satis-

fied or a dissatisfied democrat is first and foremost determined by people's assessments of the performance of their government, the perceived extent of political corruption and subjective feelings of being represented. The analysis also shows that the quality of government and ideological representation on the system level are of minor importance compared to public *perceptions*. Factors relating to the input side of democracy, such as subjective representation, do, however, seem to be of somewhat greater importance for satisfaction with the way democracy works compared to factors related to the output side of the political system, such as assessments of corruption.

Concerning the impact of institutional consolidation, or democratic maturity, we find that the evaluations of government performance are equally important in old and new democracies. However, the impact of subjective representation and perceptions of corruption is more pronounced in older democracies. A feasible explanation could be that citizens in established democracies with a longer experience of political stability and economic growth have greater expectations in terms of general performance, both on the input as well as on the output side of the political system. While corruption and clientelism are more or less part of day-to-day politics in many recent democracies, citizens in established democracies with well-developed welfare states expect politicians and public officials to behave in a non-corrupt and impartial manner. Thus, when citizens perceive problems of corruption and public misconduct where it is 'not supposed' to be present, it may have a stronger effect on system support than in settings where such problems with the quality of government are more widespread and constitute an integral part of politics.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1. Coding of variables

### *Individual level variables*

*Age of respondent* (B2001): coded as: (16/21=1) (22/30=2) (31/40=3) (41/50=4) (51/60=5) (61/70=6) (71/max=7)

*Sex* (B2002): coded as (Male=1) (Female=2)

*Education* (B2003): (Elementary school =1) (High school (2/3)=2) (Upper Secondary (4/6)=3) (University (7/8)=4). Original CSES coding: 1=None, 2 Incomplete primary; 3 Primary completed; 4=Incomplete secondary; 5=Secondary completed; 6=post-secondary trade/vocational school; 7=University undergraduate degree incomplete; 8= University undergraduate degree completed.)

*Employment* (B2010): (5=0) (1/4=1) (6/12=1) (97/max=.) Original CSES coding: 1= Employed - full-time (32+ hours weekly); 2=Employed - part-time (15-32 hours weekly) 3=Employed less than 15 hours; 4=Helping family member; 5=Unemployed; 6=Student; 7=Retired; 8=Housewife/home duties; 9=Permanently disabled, 10=others (not in labor force).

*Party identification* (B3028): "Are you close to any political party?" (No=0) (Yes=1)

*Political Knowledge*: Additive index based on Political information items 1-3 (B3047\_1; B3047\_2; B3047\_3 ) coded as: (Correct=1) (Incorrect=0).

*Voted* (B3004\_1): "In current election, did respondent cast a ballot?" (Voted=0) (Did not vote=1).

*Voted for governing party* (Voted for non-governing party in current election=0) (Voted for party in government in current election=1).

*Corruption assessments* (B3044): " How widespread do you think corruption such as bribe taking is amongst politicians in [country]: very widespread, quite widespread, not very widespread, it hardly happens at all?" (Very widespread=1) (Quite widespread=2) (Not very widespread=3) (It hardly happens at all=4).

*Government performance* (B3011): "Now thinking about the performance of the government in [capital]/president in general, how good or bad a job do you think the government/president in [capital] has done over the past [number of years between the previous and the present election OR change in government] years. Has it/he/she done a very good job?" (A very good job=1) (A good job=2) (A bad job=3) (A very bad job=4).

*Subjective representation* (B3022): "Thinking about how elections in [country] work in practice, how well do elections ensure that the views of voters are represented by Majority Parties?" (Very well=1) (Quite well=2) (Not very well=3) (Not well at all=4).

### ***System level variables***

*QoG-Impartiality* measures to what extent government institutions exercise their power impartial. The impartiality norm is defined as: "When implementing laws and policies, government officials shall not take into consideration anything about the citizen/case that is not beforehand stipulated in the policy or the law." (Rothstein and Teorell 2008, p. 170). The index is built on five items from the Quality of Government expert survey, tapping the impartiality norm. Higher values indicate a more impartial public administration. For more detailed information (see Teorell *et. al.* 2011).

*Ideological congruence* is measured as the absolute distances between voters self-placement on an eleven point left-right scale and the median placement of the party voted for, made by the approximately 40 percent most educated respondents in each country. The reason for using the placement of parties made by respondents with higher education is that people with lower levels of education tend to make less qualified party placements in that they tend to place parties they are unfamiliar with in the middle of the left-right scale (see Alvarez & Nagler 2004). The absolute congruence measure is constructed as the average absolute distance between the citizens and the position of the party voted for, as suggested by Golder and Stramski (2010), where  $N$  is the number of citizens and  $C_i$  is the ideal point of the  $i$ :th citizen.

$$Absolute\ Congruence = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N |C_i - P|$$

For the classification of *new and old democracies*, see figure 1.

The variables for *GDP/per capita* and *GDP growth/per capita (percentage)* are taken from the World Bank's world development indicators (<http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog>) compiled by: Teorell, Jan, Marcus Samanni, Sören Holmberg and Bo Rothstein. 2011. The QoG Standard Dataset version 6Apr11. University of Gothenburg: The Quality of Government Institute, <http://www.qog.pol.gu.se>.