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Economic performance, quality of democracy and satisfaction with democracy

Pablo Christmann

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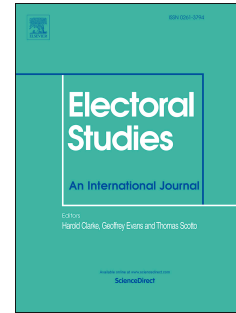
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Economic Performance, Quality of Democracy and Satisfaction with Democracy

This study tests the links between economic performance, democratic quality and satisfaction with democracy (SWD) at multiple levels. By analysing a time-series cross-sectional (TSCS) dataset of 57 democracies between 1990 and 2014, it finds the two types of performance matter almost equally: countries with good democratic and economic records tend to show higher levels of SWD than countries without them. Over time, an improvement in 'objective' democratic and economic conditions is shown to be related to increasing levels of national SWD. The second part of the study reconfirms these relationships at the individual level by analysing survey data from the "Europeans' understandings and evaluations of democracy" special module of the sixth round of the European Social Survey. It shows that respondents' evaluations of the economy and democracy are strongly related to their SWD. Finally, it demonstrates that the effect of objective democratic and economic performances on SWD is mediated by peoples' evaluations of them.

Keywords: Satisfaction with democracy – Economic performance – Economic crisis – Democratic Quality – Panel analysis – European Social Survey

Under what conditions are people content with democracy? Studies on satisfaction with democracy (SWD) often provide two performance-based arguments as answers to this question. One line of reasoning stresses the importance of economic factors in shaping regime evaluations (Clarke et al. 1993; Quaranta and Martini 2016). For instance, recent studies of the decreasing levels of SWD in crisis-struck economies such as Greece, Ireland, Italy, Portugal and Spain have mainly attributed the change in public opinion to the worsening economic context and the effect of the unpopular austerity measures following the Great Recession (Armingeon and Guthmann 2014; Christmann and Torcal 2017; Quaranta and Martini 2017; Sousa et al. 2014). Analysing individual-level survey data, other studies

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