

Total Faith is Blind Faith? – Political Trust, Satisfaction with Policy Outputs and System Responsiveness in Finland 2002-2013

Introduction

Political trust, defined in its simplest form as a basic evaluative orientation of a citizen toward the government (see Stokes 1962; Hetherington 1998), has been the subject of increasing scholarly attention in the recent decades. Political trust forms a basis of democracy and broader social and economic processes. High trust, it is argued, makes the institutions work effectively, facilitates social and economic exchange, diminishes transaction costs in markets and reduces the need for control and supervision (Lishaug & Ringdal 2008). In the long run, the lack of political trust may affect both the legitimacy and stability of democratic regimes (Easton 1965), prevent effective implementation of policy reforms (Hooghe & Zmerli 2011) or even increase willingness of citizens to engage in illegal behavior (Marien & Hooghe 2011).

The normative assumption, that the higher the trust the better for democracy (Almond & Verba 1963; Dalton 2006), has gained large support base among scholars. Consequently, the focus of studies has been on the variations of level of political trust, in general, and detecting the downward trend, in particular (e.g. Lishaug 1995; Lishaug & Wiberg, 1995). While Klingemann and Fuchs (1995) concluded in the mid-1990s that there is no general decline of political trust in Western Europe, Norris (1999) argued some years later that citizens had become more critical of the core institutions of democracy (even though they supported the democratic ideal). In the beginning of the 2000s, Dalton (2004) showed that the situation in this regard had worsened and political trust was declining in advanced industrial countries. It was argued that this downward trend of trust was linked, *entre autre*, to social trust, economic crises, rising educational levels and political skills, rise of postmaterialism and government overload (Lishaug 1995; Zmerli & Newton 2008; Uslaner 2002).

Although such large-scale comparisons provide important insights into the general trends and their background, the studies addressing the question of how a change in the level of political support affects the democratic system in the long and short

run have been few. Indeed, most studies fall short in evaluating the consequences that the constant decline or occasional fluctuations of political trust may have on the functioning of the political system and democracy. Could some amount of distrust or cynicism – and in that case which amount – be beneficial for democracy? Few scholars have bothered to say much about the issue. This was, however, a standpoint emphasized by Matti Wiberg in the mid-1980s. In his article *Wrong Persons Are Making Right Decisions without Hearing Us*, Wiberg strongly challenged the conventional wisdom on the positive ramifications of high political trust on political system by arguing that ‘a democratic political culture should be characterized by a vigilant skepticism or realistic cynicism, rather than an unquestioning faith in the motives and abilities of political authority’ (Wiberg 1986: 148). Consequently, in his empirical analysis, Wiberg ended up with rather optimistic view on the performance of the Finnish political system, claiming that despite the rather low levels of trust in political actors and its institutions, the satisfaction levels on policy outputs have remained high over the years.

In this chapter, we set out to critically explore Wiberg’s (1986) main arguments and re-examine the case of Finland empirically. First, we approach Wiberg’s thoughts in the light of the concepts of political trust, responsiveness of politicians and satisfaction with governmental policies. The theoretical discussion revolves around the fact that political trust, responsiveness and satisfaction are complex concepts and a result of several indicators that may or may not measure the same underlying phenomenon. The second part presents some previous findings on these indicators, particularly on political trust in Finland. The third part presents our data and the variables. In the fourth part, we replicate the analysis of Wiberg on Finland by employing the data from multiple waves of the European Social Survey between 2002 and 2013 in order to understand the trends of different indicators of political trust, responsiveness and satisfaction and to reflect these results to findings from 1970s and 1980s. The fifth and final part provides discussion and some concluding remarks.

Political trust, satisfaction and system responsiveness

Scholars have for decades examined the level of both specific and diffuse support of the political system and their interaction by following in David Easton’s footsteps. According to Easton (1965, 1975), specific support describes the citizens’ object-specific evaluations of the performance of particular political authorities, institutions or the implementation of policy outputs (Miller 1974; cf. Citrin 1974). Diffuse support of the political system, on the other hand, refers to evaluations of citizens on what a political object is or what it represents, not on what it does. Thus, the diffuse support is directed to the entire political system and its fundamental arrangements (Easton 1975: 444; see also Weatherford 1992; Dalton 2006: 251). These two elements of political support are considered to interact since the lack of specific trust may in the long run increase the distance between the citizens and the political system and thus have more persistent consequences on the system support (e.g. Bowler & Karp 2004).

Political support is, however, seldom unconditional: more often it is given to specific actors and institutions over specific domains (Levi & Stoker 2000). Short-term fluctuations in political support and trust are, thus, more the rule rather than the exception and they should not endanger democracy as such. However, in the recent decades, there has been increasing debate both in the academia and media whether the relationship between citizens and the state has fundamentally changed, and in case it has, what the consequences of this change are for representative democracies in Western Europe (e.g. Fuchs & Klingemann 1995). The responses to these questions depend significantly on what elements of political system we focus on when evaluating the link between citizens and the state. As Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2001: 243) put it: 'How could we expect there to be a single reason for the sentiments of so many different people towards so many different governmental referents over so many different eras, years, and days?'. What are necessary and sufficient conditions for a healthy democratic political system? How much and what kind of support a political system needs in order to function effectively and to be approved by the citizens it governs?

Wiberg (1986: 143) suggests a three-dimensional typology of the evaluation of government and its political performance, which contains assessments on a) the quality of the persons in government, b) the quality of the governmental decisions and c) the responsiveness of the politicians. He argues that there is little reason to worry about in the decrease of trust in politicians in general, since 'that would be a warning sign only if it were accompanied by overall dissatisfaction with the content of the actual policies of the politicians'. In other words, the political system may perform less well in trustworthiness of its actors, or fail in system responsiveness as long as the actual policy outputs are accepted by people. For Wiberg, then, the quality of governmental decisions is both sufficient and necessary condition for functioning of political system. Wiberg is not alone with these thoughts. For instance, Hooghe and Zmerli (2011: 2) point out that particularly among younger age cohorts a more critical outlook on political decision-makers seems to prevail and it should be seen as a positive democratic development.

Wiberg's idea contradicts fundamentally the conventional wisdom that the political system needs some amount of diffuse support (necessary condition) in order to outlast the temporary malcontent with the government performance and policy outputs (Dalton 2006). Similarly, he seems to challenge the view that long-lasting lack of specific support, for instance declining trust in politicians, will eventually erode the diffuse support for the political system which may further endanger its legitimacy, and the lack of legitimacy may further jeopardize the effectiveness of the government (Hetherington 1998). We argue, however, that this is far too simplifying picture of Wiberg's reasoning. Most importantly, Easton's (1965, 1975) classic differentiation between specific and diffuse support is rather unclear, particularly as to the satisfaction with the policy outputs: he does not directly categorize political institutions and actors according to the type of support they enjoy and consequently, political institutions may be objects of both specific and diffuse support simultaneously (e.g. Torcal & Montero 2006; Bellucci & Memoli 2012). Norris (1999) has clarified this conceptual confusion of Easton by identifying five levels or objects of political support. Although

her classification mainly follows the original Eastonian idea, it specifies it further by placing the different elements of political system on a continuum ranging from diffuse support to specific (political community, regime principles, regime performance, political institutions and political actors). Three elements of Wiberg's (1986) typology would fall both in the middle and the specific end of Norris's continuum (cf. Listhaug 1995): while quality of persons in government relates to personal characteristics of the decision-makers and quality of the governmental decisions to the regime performance, the responsiveness of the politicians is linked to both political institutions and actors. Since Wiberg argues that support for the regime performance overcomes the support for the political actors and system responsiveness, he indeed implicitly considers diffuse support to be superior to specific.

What is, however, fundamentally different in Wiberg's thinking is his views on the democratic ideal. The common claim, he argues, is that democratic societies should have decision-makers that the citizens trust and who make right and responsive decisions. He points out that political commentators are misinterpreting the empirical evidence by drawing a causal inference from the trust in politicians to the stability of the political system. Following the thoughts of Sniderman (1981), Wiberg (1986: 147) continues that 'supportive' citizens should be separated conceptually from 'committed' citizens. The political evaluation of the former is based on balanced judgment and awareness on the shortcomings of the democratic regime, while the assessment of the latter is blind, uncritical loyalty towards government. This argument approaches the conceptual discussion on 'trust' and 'satisfaction'. Could it be, like Grönlund and Setälä (2007) argue, that questions of trust reveal the citizens' normative expectations to the political system, whereas questions of satisfaction reflect the satisfaction with the policy outputs? Exceptionally high trust would, then, imply a high share of 'committed' citizens being of no use for the functioning of democracy, according to Wiberg. In contrast, changing levels of satisfaction with the political system (e.g. democracy, government etc.) would reflect the existence of 'supportive' citizens that are essential to maintain democratic order and that are alert. Hooghe and Zmerli (2011: 3) argue that 'at best, political trust is a very thin form of trust' and consider it more like an expectation that political actors behave in a fair manner in general. Although political trust seems to correlate with government performance, they continue, political trust is not totally experience-based and the trust in different institutions seems to correlate strongly. Thus, political trust is likely to reflect a general assessment of political culture, shared by all institutions.

In its simplest form the system responsiveness may be defined as congruence between the attitudes of constituents and of representatives on policy questions (Eulau & Karps 1977; cf. Miller & Stokes 1963). This congruence is hierarchical in character: the lower level of congruence relates to everyday political processes in a country, which are controlled by the structures of government, which form the higher level (Fuchs & Klingemann 1995). The attitudinal congruence can be considered a parallel term to external efficacy i.e. 'the judgment that an individual and the public can have an impact on political processes, because government institutions will respond to their needs' (Miller & Listhaug 1990: 358). Wiberg (1986) concentrates on the lower level

of congruence and external efficacy by arguing that the role of system responsiveness is only of secondary importance: the political system may work rather well despite the feeling of citizens that their voices are not heard in the decision-making processes.

Political support in Finland

Wiberg's (1986) empirical evidence from the 1970s and 1980s supported the view that despite increasing political skepticism, there was no sign of crisis in confidence, legitimacy or political stability. Dissatisfaction with the cabinet's policies did not seem to vary to any remarkable degree with the respondent's party preferences, and high turnout figures contradicted the idea that there would be low trust in the political system. Now when almost thirty years have passed, how does the academia see the state of political trust in Finland? First, it seems that the field lacks of rigorous empirical studies on the subject. Finland has been included in some comparative analyses (e.g. Listhaug & Ringdal 2011) but has not evoked interest of scholars as a single case study. Second, the scholars seem to agree that specific support of the Finnish citizens has eroded during past decades, although the diffuse support has largely maintained its level. This is indicated particularly by the massive electoral support for the Finns party, and it seems that a more general anti-elite sentiment is on the rise (Bäck & Kestilä-Kekkonen 2014). Unfortunately most studies are often cross-sectional analyses and concentrate only on one time point. This makes the evaluation of long-term trends challenging and gives a scattered picture of the recent developments.

As a geographical entity, the Nordic countries generally score rather high in trust dimensions in European comparison (Listhaug & Ringdal 2011). There is, however, significant internal variation. In particular, Finland seems to deviate from its Nordic neighbors. The European Social Survey 2010 shows that when operationalized as trust in parliament, politicians and parties (scale 0-10), average political trust in Finland (4.8) is clearly above European average when 24 countries are compared. Finland does, however, fall long way back when compared to Sweden (5.5), Denmark (5.4) and Norway (5.3) (Kestilä-Kekkonen 2014). However, it should be noted that support for the political system is a multi-faceted phenomenon, and the measured items may describe only one side of the complex concept of political support or several sides of it. Political trust of a citizen is influenced by civil society, political actors, political context and policy outputs, as well as interaction between all these elements. For instance, according to Paloheimo (2006) Finnish citizens display a fairly high level of satisfaction with the way democracy works in the country, and trust in political parties is the second highest in Finland after Denmark when 17 European Social Survey (2004) countries are compared. In contrast, Kestilä's (2006) comparative study shows that the average Finns trust the institutions more than the average Europeans, and are somewhat more satisfied with governmental policies. They do, however, display relatively negative views of the political elite (Kestilä 2006).

Since citizen perceptions of the political system and its institutions are contaminated by their image of political actors and processes, and by their partisan loyalties (Hibbing & Theiss-Morse 1995), temporary fluctuations in political trust may be due to scandalous behavior of the politicians, poor accountability of the decision-makers and policy responsiveness. In particular, economic fluctuations and especially the incumbent government's economic management have been perceived to influence the level of political trust (Listhaug 1995; Hetherington 1998). In Finland, the economic depression at the beginning of the 1990s naturally eroded the political trust of the citizens, but a slight increase of trust was observed again at the beginning of the millennium (Mattila & Sankiaho 2005: 82-87; Newton & Norris 2000: 56). In 2007-2009, the global financial crisis hit Finland hard after a long period of steady economic growth. This was illustrated particularly by falling production numbers as well as a decrease in private investments (Freystätter & Mattila 2011). Implications of euro crisis to the fluctuations of political trust still remain unexplored.

Political scandals may have short-term effect on political trust levels but as the time passes, the influence of them should fade (Listhaug 1995; Paxton 2005). Since the beginning of 1990s, Finland has experienced only one wide-scale political scandal which could presumably have implications on the political trust of the citizens, and particularly on how they perceive the political actors. This was the scandal of electoral funding after 2007 parliamentary elections which significantly damaged the credibility of the Finnish politicians. Several candidates did not report their sources of funding in time, which was required if the funding from a single donor reached the limit of 1700 Euros. In particular, it turned out that several known politicians of governmental parties received funding from the interest group *Kehittyvien maakuntien Suomi* (KMS) often considered as the lobbying organisation of three influential businessmen. This led to several charges against both donors and politicians; especially the Centre Party, the National Coalition Party and to a certain degree the Social Democratic Party suffered from the scandal. (Bäck & Kestilä-Kekkonen 2014). Over 70 % of the respondents in the 2011 Finnish National Election Study (Borg & Grönlund 2011) replied that the scandal of electoral funding changed their opinion about politicians towards negative direction prior to parliamentary elections.

Empirical design

In the empirical part, we replicate Wiberg's (1986) analyses from the 1970s and 1980s and examine whether the main findings still hold for Finland almost thirty years later. To evaluate the generalizability of his study, we explore if the patterns of responsiveness of politicians, political trust and satisfaction with governmental outputs he found resemble those in the 2000s, or if the original results were exceptional and tied to the particular political atmosphere of that time. As noted above, Wiberg challenged the pessimistic view that 'mistrust in politicians in general endangers the political stability of democracies'. Instead, 'vigilant scepticism or realistic cynicism' should be allowed and should not per se be seen as a 'threat to our political system, or to the democratic

order in general'. In that case, in contemporary Finland, we should expect that there will be relatively low scores for perceived responsiveness of politicians and trust in politicians as long as satisfaction with the policy outputs remains high.

Trust and satisfaction levels should also be allowed to vary over time so that short-term declines are followed by rebounds just as there was a rebound 'in the amount of satisfied respondents from the 1970's to the 1980's'. As regards differences between party supporters, there should be relatively small differences between supporters of government parties and supporters of opposition parties, something which would indicate that there is 'little sense in talking about large scale dissatisfaction and a crisis of confidence in our political system'.

The following outcomes will be investigated:

- Levels of responsiveness of politicians, trust in politicians and parliament and satisfaction with government performance among Finnish citizens;
- Patterns of change in responsiveness, trust and satisfaction;
- Variations in trust and satisfaction levels among supporters of government and opposition parties.

It is important to note that this study is a fairly loose replication since, given data availability, we are not able to use identical measures of trust and performance evaluations. Wiberg focused on trust in politicians, trust in government, responsiveness of politicians and satisfaction with the government's activities using data from various polls. He had access to time-series data (1974–1984) for responsiveness of politicians (members of parliament) and satisfaction with the cabinet's policies. In the present study, to attain relevant survey responses and expand our time perspective, we, first of all, use data from the European Social Survey. Personal interviews were conducted in Finland in 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010 and 2012. The indicators used are trust in politicians, trust in parliament and satisfaction with government performance in Finland. We also have complementary data for responsiveness: time-series data from EVA Attitude and Value Surveys 1988–2013 and two survey questions included only in the 2002 European Social Survey.

Analysis

Three measures of political responsiveness are presented to show the amount of cynicism in Finland in 2002 as well as the development between 1988 and 2013. In 2002, a large share of the respondents had negative views of politicians according to Table 1. The majority of the respondents reported that some, many or most politicians care what ordinary people think. But still over one-third thought that hardly any or very few politicians care. A similar pattern is found for whether or not politicians are more interested in votes than in people's opinions. Almost half of the respondents reported nearly all or most politicians are interested in votes rather than people's opinions.

TABLE 1. *Political responsiveness in Finland, 2002.*

"Politicians in general care what people like respondent think"	%	N
Hardly any politicians care	11.3	225
Very few care	25.9	516
Some care	44.7	889
Many care	15.5	308
Most politicians care	2.6	52
Total	100.0	1990
"Politicians interested in votes rather than people's opinions"	%	N
Nearly all just interested in votes	18.6	369
Most just interested in votes	27.0	537
Some just interested in votes	35.2	700
Most interested in opinions	18.5	368
Nearly all interested in opinions	0.7	13
Total	100.0	1,987

Figure 1 graphically shows the development over 25 years based on responses to the following statement: "Democracy in Finland works so well that statements about citizens' poor influence are without foundation". Overall a slight majority either said they disagree or strongly disagree with this statement, thus indicating discontent in terms of political responsiveness. About one fifth responded hard to say. But the trends

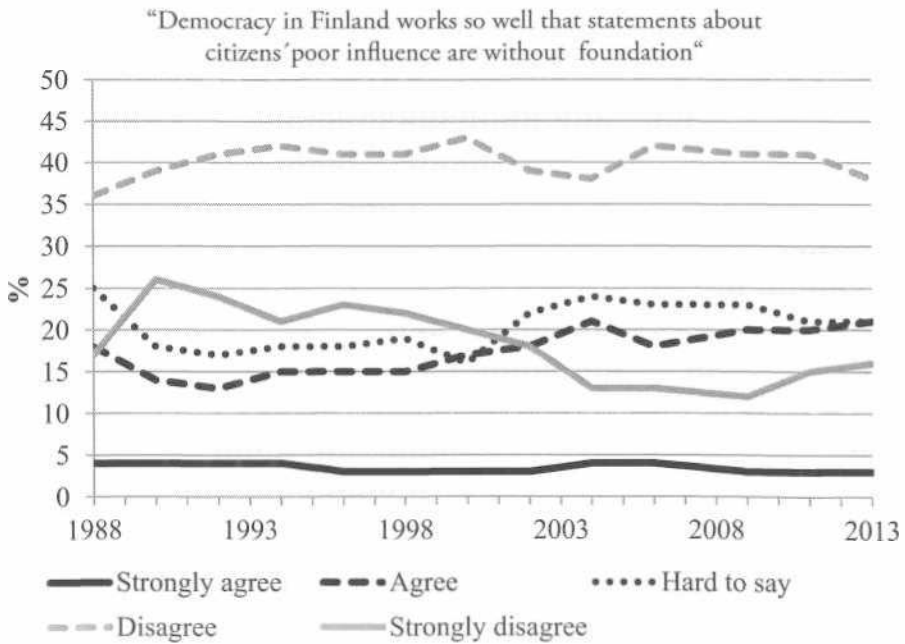


FIGURE 1. *Responsiveness in Finland, 1988–2013 (Source: EVA Survey on Finnish Values and attitudes)*

are clear in terms of people getting more positive in terms of responsiveness. The amount of people saying they agree with the statement has increased from about 15 to 20 % in 25 years. Instead, the amount of people responding strongly disagree has decreased, from 25 % in 1990 to 15 % in 2013. The overall picture, however, is that there is widespread cynicism in the responsiveness of politicians.

Next we move on the political trust and satisfaction with government performance between 2002 and 2012 based on the European Social Survey. Trust is measured on a scale between 0 (no trust at all) and 10 (complete trust). Satisfaction may also vary between 0 (extremely dissatisfied) and 10 (extremely satisfied). The means for each of these three indicators are presented in Table 2.

First, the results in Table 2 show that trust in politicians consistently has the lowest scores, while trust in parliament and satisfaction with government performance are higher. Annually the difference has been about 1 point. Trust in politicians has varied between 4.4 and 5.0 points between 2002 and 2012. This implies that the most specific objects of political support are most critically evaluated by the citizens. Trust in parliament is about one point higher in each year with a variance between 5.4 and 6.1 points. This is foreseeable given that parliament is a representative institution of democratic government which brings about deeper and more long-lasting trust, in contrast to political trust based on more short-term evaluations of the behaviour of politicians. In terms of satisfaction with government, the sample means vary between 5.4 and 6.3. These figures can be regarded as quite high with at least 80 % of the respondents marking a score between 4 and 8 points on the 0–10 scale.

TABLE 2. *Trust and satisfaction in Finland, 2002–2012.*

	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012
Trust in politicians	4.8	4.9	5.0	4.9	4.4	4.9
Trust in parliament	5.8	6.1	6.0	6.0	5.4	5.9
Satisfaction with government	5.8	6.2	6.3	6.0	5.4	5.9
N	1897	1899	1820	2094	1803	2108

Notes. Responses in the European Social Survey were given on a 0–10 scale. The reported values represent means which were calculated based on a design weight for each sample. Interviews were conducted: between September and December in 2002, 2004, 2006 and 2010; and between September and February in 2008/2009 and 2012/2013.

Second, the temporal patterns are interesting in the sense that no steady trends of decline can be detected. On the other hand, there are short-term fluctuations with declines followed by increases. The lowest levels of trust and satisfaction were recorded in 2010, but these figures recovered in 2012 to about the same levels as in the mid-2000s. Levels of trust and satisfaction increase unanimously from 2002 to 2004. This can at least partly be explained by the fact that the national economy was recovering from the early 2000s recession following the stock market bubble and excessive investment in information technology. Political trust levels remain stable in 2004, 2006 and 2008, while satisfaction with government performance and democracy decrease in 2008,

obviously following the 2007–2008 financial crisis. By 2010 both trust and satisfaction levels have reached their lowest marks. Trust in politicians and parliament drop by 0.6 and 0.4 points between 2008 and 2010. Compared to 2006, satisfaction with government drops by 0.3 points in 2008 and further 0.6 points in 2010. The economic recession might not be the sole explanation to the decline in confidence. Between 2008 and 2010 there was much publicity around a campaign funding scandal involving unannounced campaign contributions. This concerned particularly the Centre Party which was the Prime Minister Party, but also candidates from other parties were under criticism. Yet the most recent figures show that confidence in politicians, parliament and government bounced back by late 2012. Trust in politicians and parliament almost returned back to the mid-2000s levels, while satisfaction with government almost reaches the 2008 level.

Third, confidence scores among electoral winners and losers are reported in Table 3. Electoral winners are the respondents who voted for a party that joined the government coalition after the elections and electoral losers those who voted for an opposition party. There are small differences between supporters of government and opposition parties in the beginning of the time-series (2002–2006). The differences are somewhat larger for satisfaction with government, yet only between 0.2 and 0.4 points. In 2008, 2010 and 2012, however, the differences are much larger: between 0.4 and 0.8 points for trust in politicians and in parliament and 1 point or more for satisfaction with government. Particularly the rise of the populist Finns (PS) during this period pushed trust and satisfaction levels downwards (individual party scores reported in Appendix).

TABLE 3. *Trust and satisfaction in Finland by government or opposition party, 2002–2012.*

	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012
Trust in politicians						
Government	4.6	5.2	5.1	5.3	4.7	5.1
Opposition	5.1	5.0	5.1	4.7	4.3	4.5
Difference	–0.5	+0.2	0.0	+0.6	+0.4	+0.6
Trust in parliament						
Government	6.0	6.2	6.1	6.5	5.8	6.4
Opposition	6.0	6.2	6.3	5.7	5.2	5.6
Difference	0.0	0.0	–0.2	+0.8	+0.6	+0.8
Satisfaction with government						
Government	6.0	6.5	6.5	6.6	5.9	6.2
Opposition	5.6	6.2	6.3	5.2	4.8	5.2
Difference	+0.4	+0.3	+0.2	+1.4	+1.1	+1.0

The party clearly attracted the most dissatisfied citizens to their ranks. Furthermore, negative views among supporters of the Left Alliance (VAS) also seems to have contributed to lower rates in political trust. But otherwise, and in line with Wiberg's findings, there are no large differences between in- and out-parties. Changing from being an electoral winner to becoming an electoral loser, or vice versa, only seems to matter for supporters of the Social Democratic Party (SDP), and explicitly for satisfaction with government performance and democracy. In 2008 and 2010, when the Social Democrats are in opposition, satisfaction levels drop visibly.

Discussion and concluding remarks

In this chapter, we critically reviewed Matti Wiberg's (1986) arguments on the necessary and sufficient ingredients of the healthy democratic system. We also replicated his analysis by examining the case of Finland empirically with the data from European Social Survey (2002–2013). We were interested in 1) levels of responsiveness of politicians, trust in politicians and parliament and satisfaction with government performance, 2) patterns of change in responsiveness, trust and satisfaction and 3) variations in trust and satisfaction levels among supporters of government and opposition parties.

First, as regards responsiveness of politicians, it seems that there is widespread cynicism in Finland. Although citizens who perceive at least some responsiveness are still a majority, almost half of the respondents in European Social Survey 2002 did not believe that politicians are interested in their opinions or thoughts. When we look at patterns of change in political responsiveness, in the past ten years citizens have started to have a more positive views. Yet, these opinions fluctuate from year to year.

The same holds true for the temporal patterns regarding the trust in politicians, trust in parliament and satisfaction with government performance. There is no steady decline, but fluctuations where short-term downward moves are followed by increases. The most significant drops are most likely related to political scandals and economic downturns. As to the level of single items, trust in politicians gets the lowest scores, while trust in parliament and satisfaction with government performance are higher. There is, however, no significant differences between the voters of governmental and opposition parties in these three measures.

Thus, it seems that nothing much has changed from the 1970s and 1980s. Trust in politicians is still fairly low (for a Nordic country), but citizens seem to trust parliament more and are relatively satisfied with the government's performance. More importantly, since changes in all three items seem to be only temporary, even low scores should not endanger the functioning of democracy. This would mean, in Wiberg's terms, that citizens are still for the most part 'supportive' and not 'committed', and thus the absence of blind faith should keep the politicians alert. But how about the responsiveness of politicians? Should not a 'supportive' citizen evaluate also the political process which produces the decisions and not only the immediate political output? Is it not so that a critical evaluation of the processes is a sign of balanced judgment of the democratic system, and therefore fundamentally important for diffuse support of the system? Since

dissatisfaction with the system responsiveness cannot be channeled by the government/opposition mechanism, the citizens may eventually generalize dissatisfaction with the democratic mechanisms to democracy itself. This would seriously disturb the relationship between the citizens and the state: the state can no longer satisfy the demands of the citizens (Fuchs & Klingemann 1995).

Thus, while 'throwing the rascals out' may possibly improve the quality of the decisions and enable the change of political actors, it does not necessarily improve the opinion congruence between the representatives and the represented or citizens. As argued by Hooghe and Zmerli (2011), the lack of political trust may affect political processes by slowing them down and consequently may even lead to illegal or risk-taking behavior since citizens feel that there is no reason to comply with social norms or even laws of the country. Thus we argue that, while evidently not a sufficient condition, a certain level of system responsiveness and ability of citizens to control this responsiveness is necessary. This would, in fact, fit well to Wiberg's implicit thought on the superiority of the diffuse support that maintains political stability independent of the actual political actors and how they are perceived by the citizens.

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Appendix

APPENDIX 1. *Trust in politicians by party choice.*

Trust in politicians												
	2002		2004		2006		2008		2010		2012	
KOK	5.0	fm	5.1		5.1		5.1	fm	4.6	fm	5.2	pm
SDP	4.6	pm	5.0	fm	4.9	fm	4.9		4.5		5.0	fm
KESK	5.1		5.4	pm	5.3	pm	5.4	pm	4.9	pm	5.2	
PS	5.8		3.7		4.4		3.7		3.0		3.8	
VIHR	5.2	g	5.1		5.3		5.4	g	4.6	g	5.1	
VAS	4.5	g	4.4		4.8		4.5		4.4		4.8	
KD	5.6		5.4		5.1		4.9		5.1		5.0	
RKP	5.4	g	5.1	g	5.4	g	5.6	g	4.9	g	5.5	
Other party	4.4		4.6		4.8		4.1		4.5		4.3	
Non-voter	3.8		4.2		3.9		4.0		3.7		4.1	
Total	4.8		4.9		4.9		4.9		4.4		4.8	

Notes. pm = prime minister's party; fm = finance minister's party; g = government party. Responses in the European Social Survey were given on a 0–10 scale. The reported values represent means which were calculated based on a design weight for each sample. Interviews were conducted: between September and December in 2002, 2004, 2006 and 2010; and between September and February in 2008/2009 and 2012/2013.

APPENDIX 2. *Trust in parliament by party choice.*

Trust in parliament												
	2002		2004		2006		2008		2010		2012	
KOK	6.3	fm	6.4		6.4		6.4	fm	5.7	fm	6.6	pm
SDP	5.7	pm	6.0	fm	6.0	fm	6.0		5.3		6.2	fm
KESK	6.1		6.5	pm	6.2	pm	6.4	pm	5.8	pm	6.3	
PS	4.8		5.5		5.2		4.2		3.9		4.8	
VIHR	6.3	g	6.4		6.5		6.7	g	5.9	g	6.3	g
VAS	5.5	g	5.6		5.6		5.5		5.5		5.8	g
KD	5.8		6.2		5.9		6.0		6.0		5.9	g
RKP	6.5	g	6.2	g	6.6	g	6.6	g	6.0	g	6.9	g
Other party	5.3		5.9		5.6		5.3		5.5		5.5	
Non-voter	4.8		5.3		5.0		5.0		4.5		5.0	
Total	5.8		6.0		6.0		6.0		5.4		5.9	

Notes. See Appendix 1.

APPENDIX 3. *Satisfaction with government performance by party choice.*

Satisfaction with government performance												
	2002		2004		2006		2008		2010		2012	
KOK	6.4	fm	6.4		6.5		6.8	fm	6.1	fm	6.6	pm
SDP	5.9	pm	6.1	fm	6.3	fm	5.4		4.8		6.0	fm
KESK	5.6		7.0	pm	6.8	pm	6.7	pm	6.1	pm	5.9	
PS	6.8		6.6		6.1		4.7		4.1		4.5	
VIHR	5.8	g	6.1		6.4		5.9	g	5.4	g	6.2	g
VAS	5.0	g	5.4		5.6		4.6		4.6		5.5	g
KD	5.9		6.5		6.2		5.7		6.1		6.1	g
RKP	6.2	g	6.1	g	6.7	g	6.6	g	5.8	g	6.7	g
Other party	5.2		5.6		6.2		5.6		5.5		5.0	
Non-voter	5.2		5.7		5.3		5.3		4.8		5.4	
Total	5.8		6.2		6.3		5.9		5.4		5.9	

Notes. See Appendix 1.

