CITIZENS AND REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY: a problematic relationship? Disaffection and Political Distrust in Europe

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Abstract
In recent years there has been a steady alienation of citizens from representative institutions, criticizing, among other things, representatives' lack of competence. From the perspective of the theory of representation (Pitkin, 1967), this is due to a distorted perception of representation by the citizens (Mansbridge, 2003). Following this argument, some authors claim that people just want to replace liberal democracy with direct democracy, imperative mandate or with technocracy (Manin, 1997; Sartori, 2005; Hibbing y Theiss-Morse, 2002). Other authors explain the criticism of the representative system in terms of political disaffection (Torcal and Montero, 2006): citizens do not question the representative system, but the actors involved in it. Thus, rather than an expert government, citizens would demand more political competence.

This paper will focus on political disaffection and its relationship with technocracy and liberal democracy. Using the European case of study, the authors will try to demonstrate that such a political attitude doesn't affect the stability of the democratic regime. Both quantitative and qualitative data will be used to accomplish with these objectives. Data will be taken from European Social Survey. Furthermore, 7 focus groups realized in Italy in 2012, during Monti's technocratic government, will be analyzed.
Results will be analyzed and discussed using the frame of Bobbio's democratization theory (1984).

1. INTRODUCCIÓN
The public disaffection and its impact on representative democracy are being studied by the academic community for decades now. In recent years, this debate has gained force and importance due to the decline of civic engagement in activities of institutional political participation. At the same time, we would be witnessing the rise of citizen claims about a new political-institutional model. Also, many investigations have revealed as distrust of institutions, one of the indicators of political disaffection, has
been growing in almost all Western democracies (Niemi et al., 1989; Dalton, 1996, 1999; Newton and Norris, 2000; Newton, 2006).

Thus, the academy has been reflecting on the origins of this disaffection and its possible effects on the political system and the representative democratic system. All authors agree that in general disaffection, and distrust of institutions in particular, are caused by discontent with certain public policies, often liberal policies (Marsh, 2013), and the perception of corruption within democratic institutions.

Regarding the effects of disaffection on the political system, scholars highlight a rift between political parties and citizens (Mair, 2005, 2007; Marsh, 2013). This usually is explained by the dismantling of mass parties, the introduction of a policy based on the leaders and surveys rather than the content, along with the scant diversification of economic programs between parties, almost all characterized by the support of neoliberal theories. For many scholars these factors are behind the drop in turnout and membership in political parties. At the same time, political disaffection would have increased citizen involvement in activities of non-institutional political participation, for example, demonstrations or strikes (Inglehart, 1999).

Regarding the impact of disaffection on the democratic system, some authors suggest that citizens' demands for representative democratic system, which arise from this discontent, are based essentially on ignorance of the basic principles of political representation. This leads to the request of forms of direct democracy or representative mandate, which use to be seen unfeasible from a democratic perspective (Pitkin, 1967, Manin, 1997, Mansbridge, 2003, Sartori, 2005). However, there are scholars who don’t see political disaffection as a risk to the representative democracy (Bobbio, 1986), because the discontent of citizens don’t really generate incompatible requests with the basic principles of representative democracy (Easton, 1975; Montero and Torcal, 2006). All this may be because citizens do know and respect these basic principles, as they have been socialized with them since an early age (Norris, 2011).

This paper aims to provide clarifying elements in this field of research. More specifically, we want to emphasize that political disaffection does not affect the
importance that people attach to certain basic principles for the proper functioning of
democracy. Second, we will try to demonstrate that citizens don't want nor technocracy
nor direct democracy. On the contrary, their claims are perfectly compatible with the
regulatory framework of representative democracy, because they are aimed at
improving the representation and the "democratization" of society. To do this, we are
going to take into account the case of 19 European countries. We rely on quantitative
data from the European Social Survey. But, at the same time, we will analyze 8 focus
groups realized in Italy during Mario Monti's technocratic government. In Italy, with
high rates of political disaffection, we can observe directly to what extent expert
governance is seen as a solution to the political crisis and what citizens mean by
disaffection.

2. Theoretical Framework

For some considerably time the idea that representative democracy is in crisis sounds
steadily regarding citizens political disaffection. This can be defined as "the subjective
feeling of disempowerment, cynicism and lack of trust in the political process, political
representatives and democratic institutions, but without putting in question the
democratic regime" (Di Palma, 1970, p. 30 ). The disaffection is composed of a set of
indicators as cynicism, negative assessment of the responsiveness of the political
authorities and, above all, lack of trust in institutions (Montero and Torcal, 2006). These
indicators are apparently important and they have been constant over time for three
decades (Pharr et. Al., 2000). Various empirical studies have confirmed a widespread
trend of declining public confidence in political institutions, thus identifying the key
issue that representative democracy faces (Niemi et al would face., 1989; Dalton, 1996,
1999; Newton and Norris, 2000; Newton, 2006).

On the one hand, political disaffection would affect the political system as it is leading
to profound changes in the relationship between citizens and parties. For example,
according to Mair (2001; 2005), citizens would be abandoning the conventional
political participation. Indeed, it is possible to observe a worldwide decline in voter
turnout, stability of electoral preferences and sympathy and party affiliation. This
distance would be the product of the combination of different factors. We should appreciate the systematic changes generated by the breakdown of political parties, the non-differentiation between economic programs between major parties and the birth of a more pluralistic public opinion, less influenced by large public ideological blocs. On the other hand, we should pay attention to the responses of the elites to such changes, aimed at survival in the "day to day" rather than grounded in long-term strategies. These include vertical and centralized party structures, building strong leaderships, along with the introduction of political marketing and the struggle for the audience in the media (Mair, 2007; Marsh, 2013). In turn, this phenomenon has been partnering, with an ever increasing vigor and strength, with a change in the political involvement of citizens towards non-institutional forms of political participation. Inglehart (1999), for example, noted a decline in trust in political institutions, but instead of disaffection, he linked it to a change in political practices that extend latently support to democracy by other means and from other standards.

Regarding the effects of disaffection on the democratic system, however, there is less consensus among scholars. Some see this set of elements as the origin of the crisis of representative democracy. Others, however, think that this set of factors have an impact on the political process, but not on representative democracy. All of them, however, approach this phenomenon from the normative theory of representative democracy. That is, from the basic criteria that must be respected for it to function properly. In this line, Bobbio defines democracy as a "set of rules (primary or fundamental) that establish who is authorized to take collective decisions and under what procedures" (1986, p. 14). Only respect these rules ensure the smooth functioning of democracy. And it is from these principles that many authors have focused on studying the potential "crisis of democracy" that, over recent years, have characterized the Western world (Manin, 1997), trying to outline a diagnosis of themselves and their potential consequences. In this context, there are two main streams that can be mentioned.

The first, which we call "classical normative" has focused primarily on regulatory principles concerning the process of representation. Following them, the increasing distrust of institutions is caused by dissatisfaction with public policies implemented by the political representatives. From there, people would develop a diagnosis about the
political system governed in simplistic perceptions of democratic reality. Indeed, legislative behaviors come into play great complexity and plurality of determinants that usually are unaware for citizens (Pitkin, 1967). Thus, based on a distorted interpretive framework, the public would demand changes that would collide with the set of principles necessary to the operation of representative democracy (García Guitian, 2009). Mansbridge (2003) argued that before making an empirical judgment on the quality of the representation of a political system we should define the regulatory requirements included in the representative relationship to be taken into account. So, we could wonder whether those requirements changed. Usually “classical normative” scholars suggest that people are wrong, because the core of representative system is something constant, as Sartori said: "representative institutions disappoint us, no doubt, but these failures are largely a reflection of our own ignorance of what representation should and can do and, in contrast, cannot do" (2005, p. 23). It's understood that political crisis, in this framework, led people to overcome the current representative forms, imposing an imperative mandate with the electoral base and opening more direct representation spaces (Manin, 1997). Besides, citizens would be asking for more "skillful" representatives and a greater involvement of experts and technicians in the process of political decision-making (Hibbings and Theiss-Morse, 2002).

![Figure 1: classical normative approach.](image)

The second theoretical approach, which we call the "democratization", doesn't see in the distrust of institutions, policies or behaviors associated with it, any threat to
representative democracy. Again the process is triggered by dissatisfaction with certain public policies. However, as posed Bobbio, "political apathy in no way is a symptom of crisis in a democratic system [...] but a sign of his perfect health: simply interpret apathy not as a rejection of the system, but as benevolent indifference ",(1986, p. 55). Advanced requests by citizens wouldn’t have as its object the approach to positions of imperative mandate or direct democracy: "no criticism to representative democracy leads directly to direct democracy" (p. 35). The expansion of democracy that citizens would be asking is perfectly contemplated by the inherent normative principles of representative democracy. If today we are witnessing a process of democratization, it wouldn’t be the passage of representative democracy to direct democracy, but to extend the rising power alongside the field of civil society in all its joints, not just policies. This would not, therefore, imagine a new kind of democracy, but the occupation of traditional forms of democracy spaces hitherto dominated by hierarchical or bureaucratic organizations, such as administration, parties, big business, etc. In short, the public discontent would lead people to expand the regulatory framework of representative democracy to the whole society.

Ilustración 2: Planteamientos de la teoría de la "democratización". Elaboración propia.

2.1 Political attitudes: disaffection and democracy

Scholars who have attempted to provide empirical support for this second approach have focused mainly on the study of political attitudes of citizens. They all refer to the
reflections of Easton on the concept of political support (1975), which the author defines as "the way in which a person is oriented evaluatively toward an object, either through their attitude or their good behavior" (p. 3). The author raises an important conceptual distinction in relation to the construct of political support, because "not all unfavorable expressions towards the system have the same serious consequences for the system itself. Some may be consistent with its maintenance, and others can lead to radical changes "(1975, p.4). Therefore, the author distinguishes between "specific" support and "diffuse" support. The first is the satisfaction with the results and operated by political authorities. In this case, when speaking of authorities it’s included all public officials, from CEOs, legislators and judges to local administrators, and institutions such as parliaments, courts or councils. The diffuse support, moreover, refers to judgments about what an object in itself is, not what it does. This is characterized by being more durable, as directed towards the regime as a whole and to the political community. Diffuse support also originates through processes of socialization during childhood and adulthood, in addition to direct experience. Norris (1999; 2011) endorses this definition, however introducing some nuances. More specifically, the author suggests that the difference between diffuse and specific support policy is not dichotomous, but develops along a continuum that provides five different components and which are arranged along a gradient ranging from a more diffuse support to a more specific one. First, the sense of belonging to the nation state and pride associated to it. This would be the most diffuse political support component. Second, it would be the level of support for the basic principles and normative values in which democracy is based. The third component would coincide with the assessment of the work of the regime. That is, the satisfaction with the functioning of democracy. Fourth, it would be the trust in the institutions of the regime, defined as the belief among citizens that political institutions fulfills their function properly, even when the citizen is not constantly monitoring his performance (Citrin and Muste 1999)\(^1\). Finally, the fifth component, which is most related to the specific support is the approval to the representatives in charge. That is, political parties, elites and public sector authorities. It

\(^1\) Consequently, this theoretical construct would be a reflection of the general sentiments of citizens on the institutions of their country (Newton and Norris 2000) and, more specifically, the confidence in these. In turn, confidence is the result of the conception of each political institution as worthy, credible, competent, transparent and efficient (Levi and Stoker 2000). When measuring this component, Norris (2011), like Easton, suggests that, as measured in surveys trust towards institutions, it is likely that people evaluate, in response, the system operated by the institutions rather than the institutions themselves. In various empirical studies (Bonet, Martin and Montero 2006; Zmerli, Newton and Montero 2007) trust is associated to institutions to political attitudes toward democracy
is measured by the satisfaction with the work of presidents of individual governments, or support to individual matches. The outstanding element of this approach lies in the fact that while it is possible to detect, in some historical and political issues, a drop in the specific surface, in regimes already established this fall should have no impact on the legitimacy and stability moments of nation states.

This approach has been taken by some scholars of political disaffection, according to which it would not question the democratic and representative system itself but the actors involved in it and the management of the institutions that support them (Montero and Torcal, 2006) That is, the focus of attention goes away from the assessment of representative link and regulatory principles that sustain it, to move towards the people who are protagonist in this link. According to Offe (2006), symptoms of disaffection are due to the impact of the strategies of the elites and the style in carrying out their trade on political institutions. It is the elite who is moving in the institutions, not the institutions themselves, those that generate this kind of response among citizens. If it’s disassociated political disaffection from support to democratic regimes, it is assumed that the negative evaluation can be oriented towards actors or specific institutions, without involving the representation itself and without having effects on citizen involvement in politics (Gunther and Montero, 2006) . This assertion is supported by research (Torcal, Montero and Gurthen 2002). According to the authors, negative feelings towards political parties, conceived as a particular type of institution, differ between reactants and cultural. The former are contingent and are linked to the performance of institutions and their protagonists, while the others are stable and related to the nature of the institution.

2.3 Hypothesis and Objectives

This paper aims to provide further empirical support for the theoretical approach of the current "democratization" frame. To do this, it is considered that the distrust of institutions is the product of dissatisfaction with the policies implemented in a particular country, as it is assumed in the two theoretical positions described above. However, in this paper it is argued that the distrust of institutions has only impact on the political system, but not on the support to representative democracy. Since distrust is more
associated with officials working in the institutions, it is included in the indicators of specific political support. So, it should have some influence on satisfaction with how democracy works in one country, intermediate point proposed by Norris scale continuum (1999; 2011), rather than on the importance attached to certain democratic principles. The effect of distrust on the political system, political disaffection index, would be observed in the reduction of citizen involvement in political participation and institutional support to the traditional parties. It is also expected an increase in non-institutional political participation as theory suggests.

In short, the objective of this research is articulated in five research hypotheses:

H1. Since political disaffection is influenced by the inherent dissatisfaction towards actors and specific policies, its level in the population would be marked by cyclical events like the current economic crisis.

H2. Despite its contingent nature, political disaffection is not a simplistic and emotional response to a given state of affairs. Conversely, this political attitude is compatible with the knowledge and respect for the basic principles governing the operation of representative democracy.

H3. Macroeconomic and country indicators influence disaffection trough the feeling of satisfaction citizens feel about public policies. High levels of corruption and high levels of inequality should have an impact over satisfaction with public policies.

H4. Political disaffection only influences the level of satisfaction that subjects experiences about the functioning of democracy. But it has no effect over the importance people give to living in a liberal democracy or to the basic principles that make representative democracy work.

H5. Citizens' petitions about political and democratic system fit with normative theory of representation, as they don't ask for direct democracy nor for technocracy.

In this research, political distrust will be used as a proxy variable for political disaffection. In order to test the research hypotheses presented above 14 European countries will be studied. More specifically, the ESS data for Germany, Belgium, Denmark, Slovenia, Spain, Finland, France, Hungary, Ireland, Netherlands, Poland,
Portugal, United Kingdom and Sweden will be used. Quantitative data analyses, such as time series, multilevel and path analyses will be used.

In order to test H5 a qualitative approach will be used. The researchers realized 7 focus groups in Italy in 2012, during Monti's government. The analysis of these focus group will allow a deep understanding of citizens' petitions about democratic and political system, as they have been realized in a particular political situation. Monti's technocratic government offers the perfect setting to understand what citizens want from political and democratic system and, more specifically, what do they think about technocracy.

3 METHODS

3.1 Quantitative analysis
This work is based on the use of different methodologies of analysis. Mainly, we use time series analyses based on ANOVA, multilevel and path analyses. Data from ESS will be used and a set of complex indicators will be made in order to perform such analyses.

3.1.1 Analyses

In order to verify hypotheses number 1 and 2, time series analyses will be implemented. If hypothesis 1 is correct, then data should show an increase in political disaffection in those countries that more suffered the consequences of recent economical crisis. If hypothesis 2 is correct, then such an increase should take place between all segments of a given population, included more politically interested subjects.

In order to test hypothesis 3, multilevel analysis will be used. Data from the last wave of ESS (2012) will be used. By this way, it will be possible to show the relationship between macroeconomics variables and corruption of a given country over different political attitudes such as disaffection, satisfaction with government labor, importance subjects give to living in a democracy and the evaluation they make about the functioning of democracy in their country. All this, would allow observing the effect that macroeconomic context provided by each country have about these relationships.
Hypothesis 4 will be tested at an individual level using a path analysis model. More specifically, using data from all 19 European countries, the relationships between disaffection and support to democracy, importance given to representative democracy principles, satisfaction with working of democracy and perception of accomplishment of democratic principles will be tested.

3.1.2 Data

We used data provided by European Social Survey (ESS) about different European countries in relation to the years 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010 and 2012. More specifically, analyses have been implemented in relation to the following countries: Belgium, Denmark, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Estonia, Finland, France, Hungary, Ireland, Norway, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, UK, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.

The samples are representative of all people aged 15 and over (no upper age limit) who live in those countries. We do not stand very large differences between the sample sizes of 5 years of conducting the surveys. Looking ahead to the analysis of time series, this implies the possibility to compare percentages / averages achieved by a particular variable between years.

Multilevel and path analysis models have been implemented using data from the aforementioned countries with the addition of Italy. Their exclusion from the analysis of time series is due to the lack of data in this country for the previous rounds.

3.1.3 Indicators

A total amount of 12 indicators have been used, 9 of them taken from ESS. More specifically, interest in politics (1), importance given to living in a democratic country (2), satisfaction with the national government (3) and satisfaction with the way democracy works in the country of origin (4) have been taken directly from ESS datasets, without modification.

In addition, 4 complex indicators have been calculated, also using ESS data\(^2\). First of all, the construct of political distrust (5), proxy variable for political disaffection, has

\(^2\) All of them have been calculated by implementing several factorial analyses. Extraction method: Unweighted Least Squares (ULS). Rotation: Promin. Procedure for determining the number of
been assessed using 3 different variables: trust in country's parliament, trust in politicians and trust in political parties. Such indicator has been calculated for the latter 5 waves of ESS (2004-2012).

The second complex index is "importance given to normative elements of representative democracy" (6). Norris (2011) used a similar construct in order to study how much citizens know about basic principles representative democracy is based on. She called it "procedural" knowledge. The sixth wave of ESS contains 12 indicators about procedural knowledge, assessing the importance people give to several basic aspects of democracy in order to make it work properly. In table 1 are shown those items, which have been used to implement the factorial analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items (how important is for the correct functioning of democracy...?)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National elections are free and fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different political parties offer clear alternatives to one another</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opposition parties are free to criticise the government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The media are free to criticise the government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The media provide citizens with reliable information to judge the government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The rights of minority groups are protected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrants only get the right to vote in national elections once they become citizens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The courts treat everyone the same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The courts able to stop the government acting beyond its authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governing parties are punished in elections when they have done a bad job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The government protects all citizens against poverty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The government explains its decisions to voters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The government takes measures to reduce differences in income levels</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Importance given to basic principles of representative democracy (0-10). Items taken from ESS.

"Application of representative democracy principles" has been calculated as a complex indicator too. It assesses the perception of citizens about the respect of basic principles of representative democracy in their countries. Items are also taken from the sixth wave of ESS. In table 2 are shown the 11 items used to calculate it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(In Country) national elections are free and fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(In Country) different political parties offer clear alternatives to one another</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(In Country) opposition parties are free to criticise the government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(In Country) the media are free to criticise the government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(In Country) the media provide citizens with reliable information to judge the government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(In Country) the rights of minority groups are protected</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

dimensions: Optimal implementation of Parallel Analysis (PA). Dispersion matrix: Polychoric and Pearson correlations (depending on data distribution).
(In Country) the courts treat everyone the same
(In Country) governing parties are punished in elections when they have done a bad job
(In Country) the government protects all citizens against poverty
(In Country) the government explains its decisions to voters
(In Country) the government takes measures to reduce differences in income levels

Table 2: In country application of representative democracy principles. Items taken from ESS.

The last complex indicator is "satisfaction with public policies" and it has been also calculated using a factorial analysis. Such analysis has been implemented using 3 variables: satisfaction with economy, education and health system of one's home country.

Finally, 3 country level variables have been used. Gini index, which gives a measure of income inequality in a given country, and social protection expenditure have been taken from Eurostat. In order to assess the level of corruption in a given country, the "corruption perception index" elaborated by Transparency International has been used.

3.2 Qualitative sample and analysis

In order to know what are the perceptions of Italian citizens about their political system and the meaning of political crisis acquired for them in procedural terms, seven focus groups were conducted. The sample selection and composition of the groups were made attending to representativeness criteria of social positions and discourses. Sampling took into account the political attitudes considered to be influential variables in the object of study: 1) disaffection is normally lower in individuals who join in associations or political parties; 2) non militants or non-activists are normally portrayed as more disaffected people. We introduced a third cleavage: 3) socioeconomic, educational levels and different ages (youth/adult). In the following table we show the profile of each focus group.

When designing the focus groups, activist was understood as a person who belonged to an organization and actively participated in it (three groups). Non activist would be the person who did not belong or participate (four groups). The political party activists were those who were either political party members or sympathized and supported a party more sporadically. We decided to introduce a sample of conservative and left-wing militants. We also opened the sample to introduce members of

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3 As a percentage of GDP. Pension and unemployment expenditure have not been taken into account.
neighbourhood organizations, as they make up the ideal of social organization in Spain, very institutionalized in cities and being the classical link between the municipal council and citizenry. The two groups of students sought to collect different youth social profiles with varying social projection (college vs. professional training students), but they weren’t intentionally members of any organization.

The profiles correspond to two of the main features that the literature on political participation has highlighted. The first and most important is the socioeconomic and educational bias of citizenship (SES). This explains much of the probability that a person participates and to what degree they may be disaffected. The group of professionals and small businessmen, with university students, would face the professional training students workers group.

The second feature we have taken into consideration before making up the sample was the degree of the citizens' political socialization. This has usually been understood as differences in political interest; trust in institutions or society and participation in social or political organizations. Our groups also draw a sociopolitical division from that cleavage. The conservative activists and militants, leftist activists and members of neighbourhood organizations, will be contrasted with groups made by professional training students, college students, small business and workers, consisting of non-active participants. We have conducted the focus group in different cities in Italy, from north (Lecco y Verona) to south (Salerno), through the center (Roma)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Profile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lecco</td>
<td>CALTA Professionals and small businessman (40 years old or more)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salerno</td>
<td>UDC Militants of &quot;Unione di Centro&quot; (it’s part of European Popular Party). Between 30 and 60 years old.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salerno</td>
<td>ASS Activist in social organizations. Between 25 and 60 years old.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roma</td>
<td>UNI University students. Between 20 and 27 years old.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roma</td>
<td>PD Militants of PD, italian socialdemocracy. Between 25 and 50 years old.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salerno</td>
<td>FP Professional training students. Between 18 and 20 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verona</td>
<td>COBR Manual workers. Between 25 and 40 years old</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. RESULTS
In this section will be presented the results of the statistical analyses implemented. First of all, time series analysis and ANOVA results will be shown. Then, multilevel and path analysis results will be discussed. In each case, research hypotheses will be associated with the analyses and results they should be tested by.

4.1 Time series analyses
Several ANOVA analyses have been implemented in order to explore whether economical crisis and the way it impacted over different countries are associated with higher levels of political disaffection (H1). Countries included in the present research have been organized in 4 groups using a cluster analysis. Such analysis has been implemented using the GDP change during the economical crisis, the level of corruption and the inequality level of each country. The first group includes almost all the PIIGS countries: Spain, Ireland and Portugal. Also France is part of this group. These countries are characterized by a great loss in GDP, high levels of corruption and inequality. The second group is composed by northern countries with higher levels of GDP, less level of corruption and inequality: Germany, United Kingdom and Belgium. The third group is composed by northern countries with the best punctuations in each one of the indicators used for cluster analysis: Denmark, Finland, Netherlands and Sweden. Finally, east European countries, such as Hungary, Poland and Slovenia are included in the fourth group. Their GDP has been decreasing in the last years, but not as much as in PIIGS countries. However, they show similar levels of corruption and inequality.

In order to confirm H1, distrust of institutions should have been increasing in those countries where corruption, inequality and economical recession have the strongest negative impact. That is, those countries included in group 1.

ANOVA analyses have been used to see if differences in political disaffection between the 4 clusters and trough different years were significant or not.

As we can see from chart 1, Political Disaffection only grows in a significative way in those countries that are part of cluster 1. Even if cluster 4 presents higher levels of distrust, it is not a result of a recent increase. Finally, northern countries that are included in cluster 3 present a decrease in distrust of institutions from 2004 to 2012.

In order to test H2, the time series presented for cluster 1 has been segmented by the variable "interest in politics". If Political Disaffection is an attitude that doesn't rely on a simplistic diagnostic of political scenario, then it should also increase between people who are highly interested in politics. ANOVA analyses confirm this hypothesis as all segments of population show the same patterns of evolution/decreasing of political disaffection that can be seen at a national level. Looking at chart 2, it can be said that both politically interested and uninterested citizens have known a significant increase in Political Disaffection.
Even though citizens not interested in politics show the higher levels of disaffection, the highest rates of increase of disaffection are those showed by people with the highest level of interest in politics.

4.2 Multilevel Analysis

In order to test H3, a multilevel analysis has been implemented. The model tested in the present study is a basic two-level multilevel regression model, in which the dependent variable is "satisfaction with the national government", a proxy variable of satisfaction with public policies. If H3 is correct, then this indicator should be influenced by country-level variables such as macro-economic variables and overall corruption level. The macro-economic indicators chosen for this research are the amount of social expenditure and the Gini Index. Also total amount of social expenditure has been introduced into the model.
First of all, the null model has been implemented. According to it, the proportion of variance in satisfaction that lies between countries is .171. So, the results of the null model suggest that the development of a multilevel model is warranted. Furthermore, both variance between and variance within countries are significant (table 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Wald Z</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lower Bound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>5.202369</td>
<td>.038974</td>
<td>133.482</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>5.126539</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept [subject = CNTRYNUM]</td>
<td>1.074560</td>
<td>.359150</td>
<td>2.992</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>.558128</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Estimates of Covariance Parameters of null model.

In a second moment, model 1 has been implemented by introducing the second level variables mentioned above. The difference between the 2log-likelihood of the two models is significant, which means that the difference in explained variance between them is significant too.

All together, the 2 variables explain the 70% of the of the between-groups variability in satisfaction with the national government. Table 4 shows that Gini Index and Corruption have a significant effect over satisfaction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lower Bound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>4.654582</td>
<td>1.437452</td>
<td>17.941</td>
<td>3.238</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>1.633893</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GINI</td>
<td>-.135634</td>
<td>.040701</td>
<td>17.938</td>
<td>-3.332</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>-.221165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CORRUPCION</td>
<td>.046300</td>
<td>.009390</td>
<td>17.970</td>
<td>4.931</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.026569</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Estimates of Fixed Effects (Model 1)

Gini index has a negative effect, which implies that the higher is inequality; the lower is satisfaction with government. The estimate of corruption is positive but, as higher levels of "corruption perception index" implies lower levels of corruption in the country, it can be said that corruption has a negative effect over satisfaction with national government.
4.3 Path Analysis Model

In order to test H4 a path analysis model has been implemented. It includes the relationship between disaffection and attitudes towards democracy will be explored. If H4 is correct, then disaffection should have a negative influence over the "satisfaction with the way democracy works" and no effect over "importance given to normative elements of representative democracy".

This model also includes the relationship between disaffection and satisfaction with public policies, which, following Norris continuum, should also be related with the

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4 Also in this case, data are taken from ESS. Nevertheless, researchers added 4 more countries: Czech Republic, Estonia, Italia and Slovakia.
satisfaction with democracy work. Finally, the model includes interest in politics as a control variable.

Results show that disaffection has no significant effect over "importance given to normative elements of representative democracy" and, at the same time, has a strong-negative effect over "satisfaction with the way democracy works". These results support H4.

Interest in politics has significant relationships with all the other variables included in the model. Except for the one with political disaffection, that is negative, all the other relationships are positive.

Finally, satisfaction with public policies, besides the positive and significant effect over disaffection, also has a significant and positive influence over "satisfaction with the way democracy works".

Furthermore, indexes show a very good fit of this model with data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATISTICAL</th>
<th>ABBREVIATION</th>
<th>CRITERION</th>
<th>VALUE OBTAINED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comparative fit index</td>
<td>CFI</td>
<td>&gt;0.9</td>
<td>0.988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tucker-Lewis Index</td>
<td>TLI</td>
<td>&gt;0.9</td>
<td>0.941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normed Fit Index</td>
<td>NFI</td>
<td>&gt;0.9</td>
<td>0.988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodness of Fit Index</td>
<td>GFI</td>
<td>&gt;0.9</td>
<td>0.995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index</td>
<td>AGFI</td>
<td>&gt;0.9</td>
<td>0.964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Root mean square residual</td>
<td>RMR</td>
<td>Near 0</td>
<td>0.053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Root mean square error of approximation</td>
<td>RMSEA</td>
<td>&lt;0.08</td>
<td>0.077</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Goodness of Fit Indexes (model 2).

4.4 Analysis of focus groups

We decided to conduct the focus groups in Italy, because this country at that time represented the best example of technocratic government idea. Somehow, Italy during the government of Monti could test stealth democracy hypothesis. Is it really that political disaffection led people to desire technocratic governments? What does the results we found with quantitative analysis mean?

For the study of the 7 discussion groups an analysis of the typology of elementary contexts by T-LAB software (ver. 8.1) has implemented. The (EC) elementary contexts
are composed of no more than 500 characters phrases. The analysis of elementary contexts allows a representation of corpus contents through few and significant clusters. Each of these clusters is composed of a set of EC that relate to relatively homogeneous topics.

The analysis results can be interpreted as isotopies (understood as "context effect", that is, something that does not belong to words considered in isolation, but as a result of their relations within the texts or speeches). In fact, each cluster consists of a set of words that share the same frame of reference. Thus, each cluster allows us to reconstruct a "thread of discourse" within the textual corpus to be analyzed.

This analysis has drawn five clusters. We proceeded to the interpretation of each of these thematic clusters. To do this, we used the slogans and the characteristic elementary contexts (sentences) of each cluster that have been extracted by the software. In the table below we show the clusters extracted by the analysis and the percentage of variance explained by each

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLUSTERS</th>
<th>Percentage of explained variance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The “Italian job”</td>
<td>24,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional players of the “democratic game”</td>
<td>22,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technocrats or representatives?</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics, managing of public funds and economics</td>
<td>18,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizens, information and political decision making</td>
<td>18,4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tabla 1: Clusters and percentages of explained variance.

The first cluster is related to the description of the problems of the Italian political system due to socio-political characteristics of this country. First, it stands out as the electoral law "Porcellum", which eliminated the open lists and prevents voters choose their representatives directly. This would have generated for participants a system impervious to change, composed of political representatives involved in different judicial matters, with higher average age and lack of competences. The problem of the mafia stands out in the Italian political system, made possible by the market for votes. All this is accompanied by a certain resignation by those interviewed. First because it is
perceived that the Italian political system and its shortcomings reflect the characteristics of the Italians still individualistic and little accustomed to the political union of this country. Minority multiple streams present in parliament, in fact, make a constructive opposition to them, but also favor political instability.

The second cluster is related to bodies representing the interests of the population in the Italian political system. First, political parties. According to participants, membership in a political party is no longer a question of adherence to certain ideals or political views. Rather it is the result of processes of exchange of favors between parties and citizens. It is considered that political parties have lost their link with the territory and its role in defending the interests of the electorate, to become management centers of power, both political and economic. The ideologies have fallen, and with them, it seems the sense of political representation have been lost. All this is reflected to the participants into two political phenomena inherent to the representative process: turncoats and the disappearance of the parties that have not come together in grand coalitions. In this cluster the subject of trade unions are also covered. The role of trade unions is seen as vital to the democratic process, but also the role of trade unions would have distorted. First, by its low level of internal democracy. Secondly, by its excessive politicization.

The third cluster consists of speeches on the technical issue in politics, then in power in Italy. In the following section will be described in more detail. The fourth cluster is connected to the effect of mismanagement of public resources on the growth of the Italian public debt and economic problems of this country. First, it is perceived that public spending generated by the organs of political representation at both national and provincial and regional level is too high. This due to the existence of too many representative institutions and political representatives. Thus, participants perceived the need to reduce them. Also, the waste of public money that has characterized the political management of the past 30 years is criticized. According to participants, the engine of the economy and Italian society has always been the private sector. This sector currently hampered by the lack of political ability to remove privileges to certain categories and corporations. Participants call for regulations to do more transparent the political influence of corporations and lobbies.
Finally, the fifth core theme includes the position of the people interviewed about the possibility for citizens to make their own political decisions. Overall, the participants are quite contrary to this option, because citizens don’t have enough information about political affairs to make decisions. In addition, the Italian information system is perceived as biased. Direct democracy would be a democracy of "stomach", emotional, unable to grasp the needs of Italian society in the long term. Nevertheless, the interviewees want greater citizen involvement. First, through greater involvement in the search and consumption of information on public issues. Secondly, getting more involved in the political process. The citizen must not only vote, she should also be involved in some decision-making processes in local government or bring their views to their elected representatives. The environment provided by the municipalities, which is characterized by a reduced number of players involved and the proximity to the citizen, is ideal to promote this kind of citizen involvement.

To meet the objectives of this study, we are going to describe the third cluster in detail.

*Clúster 3: Los técnicos y los representantes políticos.*

Table 1 shows the most representative lemmas of this cluster. You can view the presence of the lemmas "political representative", "Technical", "responsibility", "political class" and "technical government". This cluster, in fact, is associated with representations that respondents have about the technical and, more specifically, the government of technicians that has characterized the recent history of Italian politics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEMMAS &amp; VARIABLES</th>
<th>CHP²</th>
<th>E.C. IN CLUSTER</th>
<th>E.C. IN TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Representantes políticos</td>
<td>333,232</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Técnico</td>
<td>226,722</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falter</td>
<td>46,015</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsabilidad</td>
<td>39,698</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sistema político</td>
<td>37,531</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representación</td>
<td>30,3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrativo</td>
<td>25,315</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incompetencia</td>
<td>25,315</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacidad</td>
<td>18,086</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representativo</td>
<td>16,643</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competencia</td>
<td>16,196</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacrificio</td>
<td>14,687</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overall, participants are favorable to experts, but only as politician’s advisers. Political decisions, in fact, should remain in the hands of the elected representatives. They should be the ones who, legitimized by the vote, take responsibility for these decisions.

"Creo que los políticos deben tener el valor y el coraje de tomar decisiones. El técnico es útil cuando faltan determinadas competencias concretas, pero debe de ser el representante político quien tome las decisiones...puede que necesite algún consejo, pero una decisión política es ámbito de la política." (Grupo: PD)

"En los gobiernos extranjeros los técnicos se utilizan, más que para adoptar decisiones políticas, para asesorar. Esto no viene a decir que los políticos no tengan sus características y peculiaridades. Los norteamericanos dicen: "vosotros estáis sorprendidos no sólo por tener a un gobierno de técnicos, sino también por tener a técnicos dentro de los ministerios". Aún así, Obama no es un técnico, es un político." (Grupo: CALTA).

"El gobierno técnico es arriesgado porque es demasiado técnico...se necesita alguien con competencias humanísticas, científicas...alguien que tenga una inteligencia súper partes y una cultura que le permita dirigir a un equipo de técnicos. Pero hay que dirigirlos a los técnicos... " (Grupo: COBR)

On this basis, the idea that participants had about the technical government was negative. Participants perceived that, thanks to the Monti’s government, politicians had even been able to avoid its responsibilities. Italian political representatives, in fact, had delegated in others very unpopular decisions, as has been the tax increases contained in the "saving decree-Italy" first political act by Monti’s government. They did it, because they didn't dare to face the electorate. Moreover, this situation allowed the political class not to cut the privileges they enjoy:
"Yo estoy en contra de este gobierno técnico! Los técnicos existen y siempre serán presentes en la política, sin su expertise no se va a ningún sitio, pero estoy en contra de un gobierno de personas que...vamos, los políticos deben de estar y se deben tomar sus responsabilidades, no pueden delegar a los técnicos." (Grupo: PD)

"Yo, tendencialmente, soy partidaria de la vuelta al ordinario, a la responsabilidad política. El técnico de-responsabiliza a la política y así es demasiado fácil. Quien toma las decisiones debe tomarse sus responsabilidades. Porque con el técnico uno dice: 'total, el técnico está lejos del pueblo'. Sin embargo, mientras al gobierno están los técnicos ¿quién vota en el parlamento sus leyes? ¡Los políticos!" (Grupo: ASS)

"La política no debe abdicar...es decir, no es que porque ahora tengamos un gobierno técnico los políticos deben abdicar. Porque los representantes políticos han hecho un paso atrás para no ir a tocar sus privilegios, porque si hubiesen sido ellos los que pedían sacrificios a los italianos, seguramente hubieran tenido que recortarse sus privilegios también" (Grupo: CALTA)

According to some participants, the experience of the technical government is not due to a failure of representative system, but the lack of competence of the political representatives. In Italy, respondents perceive a lack of good politicians, that is, people who can make political decisions that benefit in the long run the whole community. Even knowing that, in the immediate, their decisions would be very unpopular. If they don’t know take unpopular political decisions, the policy would become a slave to the polls:

"El pueblo está en grandes apuros, por esto tenemos a los técnicos, pero ello se debe precisamente a los políticos, que han fracasado en cumplir con su rol...pero no la política, son los políticos que han fracasado" (Grupo: CALTA)

"Volvemos al problema de la formación del político...el perfil característico de un representante italiano no es precisamente lo del político competente...de hecho en Italia no tenemos a ningún político de verdad...quiero decir, los últimos 10, 15 años de gobierno han tenido como protagonistas a personas que tenían otras...bueno, a lo mejor un poco el gobierno Prodi, pero tampoco se le puede considerar a Prodi un gran político" (Grupo: UNI)
"Si, es cierto que el político debe interpretar lo que la gente quiere, pero, volviendo a los localismos que limitan a nuestro territorio, también es cierto que un buen político debe saber decir que no. No es que porque la opinión pública quiere algo y entonces: 'hagamos aquella cosa'. Hay que saber decir que no. Cuando no sabes decir que no te vuelves esclavo del consenso […] Estos son los límites de la democracia en EEUU cuando la masa, la dictadura de la masa…Si la masa quiere algo y el representante político no se la da, el representante político pierde los votos. Este es limite estructural..." (Grupo: ASS)

Finally, respondents perceive that there is a wide gap between politicians and citizens. If the former have privileges to which they do not want to resign, the latter are holding very high economic sacrifices. This would prevent representatives understand the needs of citizens in such a critical and hard times:

"Por otro lado, los políticos siguen queriendo mantener su posición de prestigio y poder…sobre todo de poder…dejando a lado…es decir, hoy existe una distancia muy evidente entre representantes y ciudadanos. Es decir, los que están en Roma no se han dado todavía cuenta de las condiciones en las que vive el ciudadano de a pié. Y por ciudadano de a pié entiendo todos aquellos de la clase media para abajo" (Grupo: UDC)

"Lo que en mi opinión hace funcionar mal al sistema político, porque, en general yo creo que en Italia funcione mal, es la diferencia que existe entre la vida cotidiana de los políticos y aquella de los ciudadanos comunes. Esta diferencia no les hace entender cuáles son las exigencias de los ciudadanos" (Grupo: UNI)

In short, what is involved in these focus groups is not a change in the democratic system. What is required is more consideration to citizenship, even extending the current democratic system by introducing some tools such as open lists and strengthen ties with their political representatives. Politicians are asked to meet certain requirements and exercise a public service oriented citizenship, who give them the power to rule, and not according to their personal interests and strategies of party. To do this they should fulfill their electoral programs, in which, again according to participants, it should be based voting.

So, not a return to the imperative mandate arises. Quite the reverse: people would be asking a return to representative instead of what Bobbio defined as "privatization of the
public", that is, the gradual absorption of civil society by the state. What is happening in modern democracies, according to the author, it is the missing of state as a point of convergence and unity of social conflicts (systemic conception of the state). "If it is identified in the law the highest manifestation of the collective will and the crucial proof of the existence of a higher public-private sphere, a number of phenomena that we witness in contemporary society can be defined as a revenge the contract, the typical legal manifestation of the private sphere "(p. 18). More than a manifestation of the collective will the contemporary state is presented as a huge compromise between different interests. The most obvious manifestation of the privatization of the public's patronage: private relationship that takes the place of the public relationship between representative and represented. The rationale for removing the imperative mandate is precisely the need to transform private political relationship, understood as a relationship of exchange between people, characteristic of a legal state.

5. CONCLUSIONS
In recent years citizens have been progressively distancing from institutional politics, demanding for changes in the democratic system. Different authors have been studying those requests, trying to understand if they could fit with the rules and basic principles underlying representative democracy. On the one hand, there is a theoretical approach that sees in these petitions a potential danger to representative democracy. This is mainly because such claims are based on ignorance of the basic principles of political representation. This would lead citizens asking for direct forms of democracy or the returning of the imperative mandate (Pitkin, 1967, Manin, 1997, Mansbridge, 2003, Sartori, 2005).

On the other hand, different authors suggest that the disaffection and requests originating from it are the result of citizens' dissatisfaction towards the action of their political representatives, not towards democracy itself (Easton, 1975; Montero and Torcal, 2006). From this perspective, citizens would be aware of the importance of respecting certain principles for the functioning of democracy (Norris, 2011). Therefore, they are not asking for a change in the democratic system, but for a deeper "democratization" of modern society. That is, the extension of the areas of application of representative democracy to all those areas that have an influence over citizens' lives, including big companies and public administration (Bobbio, 1986).
In this paper we tried to deepen the understanding of political disaffection, assessed in terms of distrust towards institutions, and of its effects over different political and democratic constructs. More specifically, the main objective of this work was testing several hypotheses:

1) Political disaffection reflects discontent with public policies and is influenced, even if indirectly, by objective country-level indicators, such as inequality and corruption. Consequently, disaffection has a more contingent component that reflects changes in the political and economical landscape. Even though, it is not due to a poor diagnostic about civil and political reality, as it is also experienced by citizens really interested and involved in politics.

2) Following Easton and Norris (2011), disaffection should have no effects over the importance that citizens give to the normative principles of representative democracy. It has only some effects over the perception of how democracy works in a given country. In order to test these hypotheses different analyses have been implemented. Results show an increase of disaffection in those countries that experienced the worst effects of economical crisis. Furthermore, multilevel models showed that corruption and inequality have a significant and negative effect over satisfaction with public policies: the more inequality and the more corruption a country has, the more citizens get unsatisfied with public policies. This is a form to objectify the relationship between country level indicators and individual attitudes as, for example, disaffection, which is influenced by satisfaction with public policies. Finally, path analysis models showed low, but still significant effects of disaffection over institutional (negative) and non-institutional (positive) forms of political participation. At the same time, disaffection showed to have no effect over importance given to democratic principle and a significant and negative effect over satisfaction with work of (in country) democracy.

3) Analyzing focus groups allowed us to study closely what citizens are exactly meaning by changes to be introduced in the political system. The results seem to provide evidence to the hypothesis that such requests are not directed towards a change of representative democracy, but to improve it. In line with the approach of "democratization," people do not want or eliminate representation or link it to binding mandates. Rather it is the opposite: to try to take again about the "common good", dismantling processes of "privatization of the public". What is required is that political representatives are more oriented towards the needs of citizens. That is, to go beyond
the particularities and needs of specific social groups, in order to seek solutions to the problems of society as a whole. What ultimately coincides with the return to representative mandate raised by Bobbio

These results invite us to do a reflection on citizenship requests about the democratic system. First, the respect of those requests to the rules governing the proper functioning of participatory democracy make them "legitimate" demands from the normative perspective. All would make them an issue to take into consideration by the political actors. Second, the fact that the cure for political disaffection does not go through a change in the democratic system, but a change in attitude of those who operate in the institutions on behalf of the citizenry. Therefore, it is important to investigate the effects of a possible change in the way political representatives work and the influence of democratization of society on political disaffection.
6. REFERENCES


