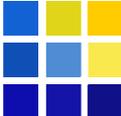# Understanding Democratic Values, Satisfaction with Democracy, and Political Alienation

Dr. Olga Gyárfášová

Prepared for a Workshop "Embedding Democratic Values: Social Transition and Political Socialization in Central and Eastern Europe„

Central European University, Budapest
December 4, 2015

Institute of
European Studies and
International Relations

Topics:

- How do people understand democracy and rights in democracy?

- Which rights do they consider to be more and less important?

- How satisfaction with democracy is affected by political alienation?

- What does it mean for embedding democratic values and participatory democracy?

Support for political regime

Lipset identifies **legitimacy and effectiveness** as key dimensions of democracy and examines their importance for stability of a democratic regime.

Legitimacy is defined as the "capacity of the system to engender and maintain the belief that the existing political institutions are the most appropriate ones for the society". It is characteristics of the system based on the belief and values of citizens.

Effectiveness is understood as "actual performance, the extent to which the system satisfies the basic functions of government and population" (Lipset 1966).

	Effectiveness	
Legitimacy	+ /+ (A)	+/- (B)
	-/+ (C)	-/- (D)

Objects, types, and sources of support

Types of support	Sources of support	Objects of	
		Regime	Authorities
Diffuse	Norms and values	Legitimacy of regime	Legitimacy of authorities
	Generelized utility	Trust in regime	Trust in authorities
Specific	Short-term utility		Satisfaction with day-to-day output

Source: Thomassen 2009: 336

Importance of people´s rights in democracy

("There are various opinions on rights in democracy. On the scale from 1 to 7, where "1" means "not at all important" and "7" means "very important", indicate how important it is that: ...")

	Means 2014
health care is provided to everybody	**6,50**
all citizens have fair standard of living	**6,41**
state authorities respect democratic rights whatever the circumstances	5,93
people have more opportunities to participate in public decision-making	5,80
state authorities respect and protect rights of minorities	5,65
citizens may demonstrate civil disobedience if they disagree with government action	5,55
the people who commit serious crimes are deprived of their civil rights	5,37
citizens have the right not to participate in elections	5,10
the people with the permit for a long-term residence in the country who are not nationals have the right to vote in parliamentary elections	4,37

Trends: importance of democratic rights

	2005			2014			
	Means	**St.dev.**	**N**	**Means**	**St. dev.**	**N**	**t**
all citizens have fair standard of living	**6,59**	0,93	1065	**6,42**	1,03	1154	**4,08*****
people have more opportunities to participate in public decision-making	**6,35**	1,01	1055	**5,80**	1,20	1123	**11,60*****
citizens may demonstrate civil disobedience if they disagree with government action	**6,03**	1,35	1035	**5,55**	1,35	1110	**7,54*****

"...to have democracy means to have a good governance" (Zakaria 2004: 24).

- ...in new democracies, democracy is perceived as the guarantee of social rights and equality – i.e. of what is usually indicated as "outputs" of democracy. Equality, impartiality, and fair-mindedness are understood as qualities of governance, good governance...

Inputs and outputs of democracy

- Quality of governance – especially for citizens in new democracies – is mainly the phenomenon on the part of outputs, and they point out the linkage between inequality of outputs of the political system and political equality of the input, i.e. equal opportunities of access to power and universal suffrage in democratic elections (Linde 2012: 37) which even the citizens of new democracies consider to be natural and available.

- The legitimacy is positively affected by fair and impartial attitude of institutions and public administration to exercising authority and implementation of politics. Citizens perceive this aspect of democracy as more important compared to the possibility to participate in elections and/or pursuing individual interests (Ibid.,57).

What is political alienation?

- The concept is closely related to political efficacy which means: awareness, a feeling that "individual political action affects or may affect political processes, in other words – it is worth meeting one's obligations as a citizen". (Campbell et al. 1954: 187)
- Later on: definition extended to include external (institutionalized) and internal (individual) efficacy.
- Internal dimension refers to the conviction of the individuals that they have instruments to influence the government, and external dimension is that the government response to such actions.

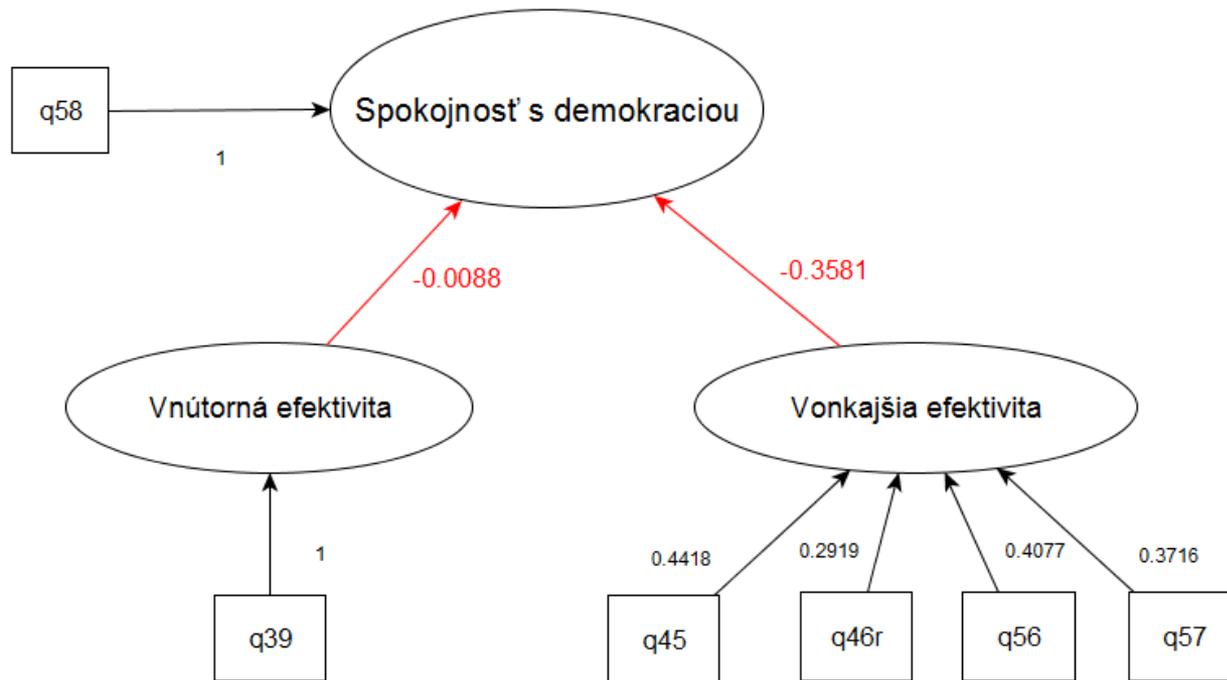# Indicators of external and internal efficacy

A.   external efficacy:

1.   The voice of people like me has no influence on government action.
2.   I don't think that the government is really interested in what people like me think.
3.   In most cases it cannot be believed that people in government do what is right.
4.   Most of politicians started their political carrier only for their personal benefit.
5.   If you think about public administration in Slovakia, to what extent it serves its citizens? (not very much/not at all)
6.   Corruption is prevalent in public administration.
7.   National Council of the Slovak Republic would not deal with my requirements.

B. Internal efficacy

1.   I do not understand important political problem.
2.   Most of citizens in Slovakia are better informed on politics and what the government does than me.
3.   I am not interested in politics.
4.   It is very unlikely I would take any action once the parliament discusses the adoption of law which is unfair or harmful.

Impact of external and internal efficacy on satisfaction with democracy in Slovakia

Trends 2005-2014

- **As for the external efficacy** – high, but stabilized dissatisfaction with political corruption, low responsiveness, unhonest political class – <u>political frustration seems to be fully „saturated“</u>
- **As for the internal efficacy** – much lower interest in politics, lower cognitive competence, lower potential of participation – <u>the individual alienation is on rise</u>

Conclusions

- Satisfaction with functioning of democracy is influenced by the quality of outputs - democracy is expected to provide good governance.

- Dilemma: freedom vs. social rights?

- Who could guarantee equality, social justice, and order and at what price?

- Rising spiral of disinterest and disaffection

- Viscous circle of institutional and individual alienation – how to break it?

Dr. Olga Gyárfášova

E-mail: olga.gyarfasova@fses.uniba.sk

Thanks for your attention.

Institute of
European Studies and
International Relations