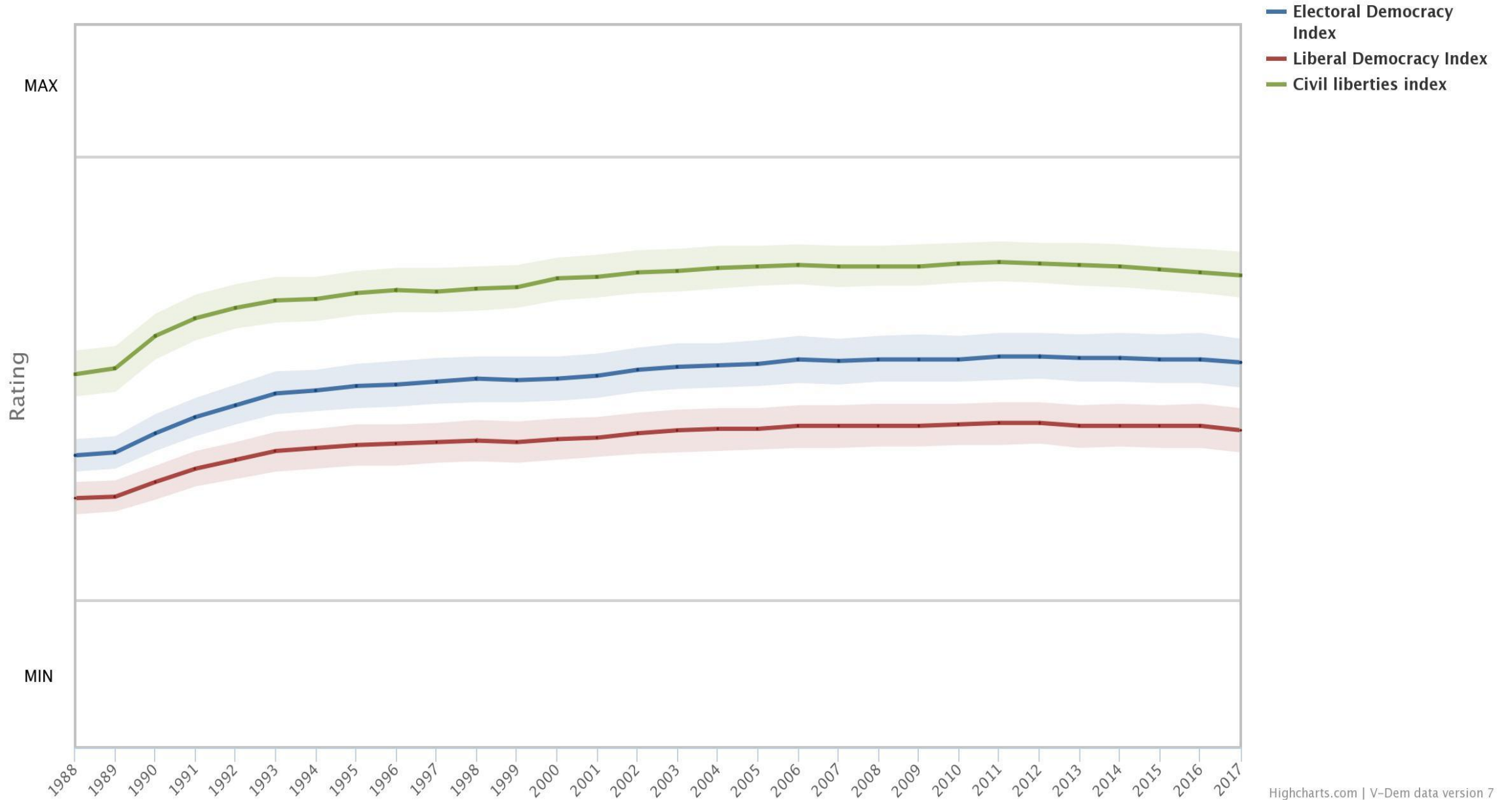# Democracy under Threat – A Crisis of Legitimacy?
Edited by Ursula van Beek

Book Launch
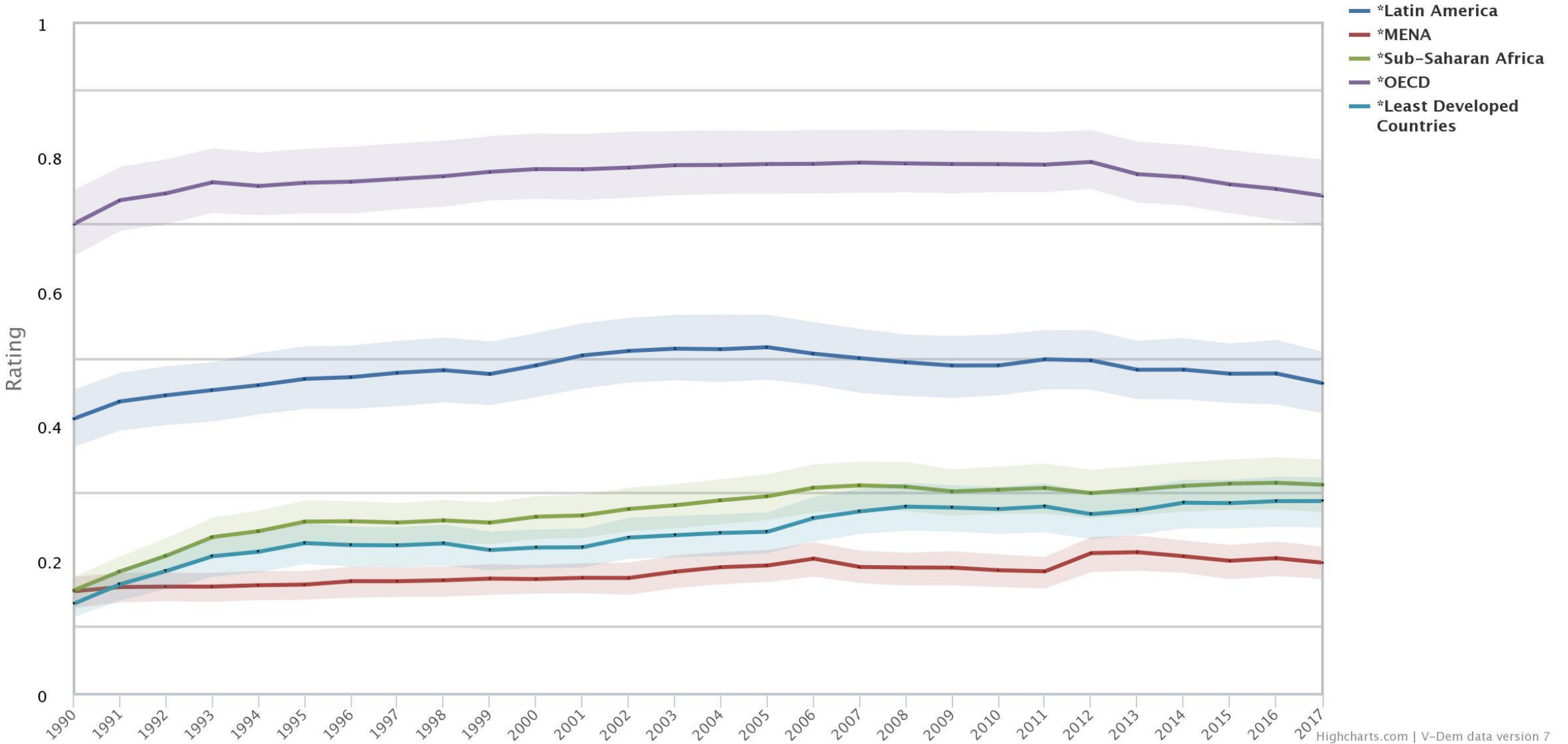
Wednesday, 26th September 2018

at SU Museum, Stellenbosch
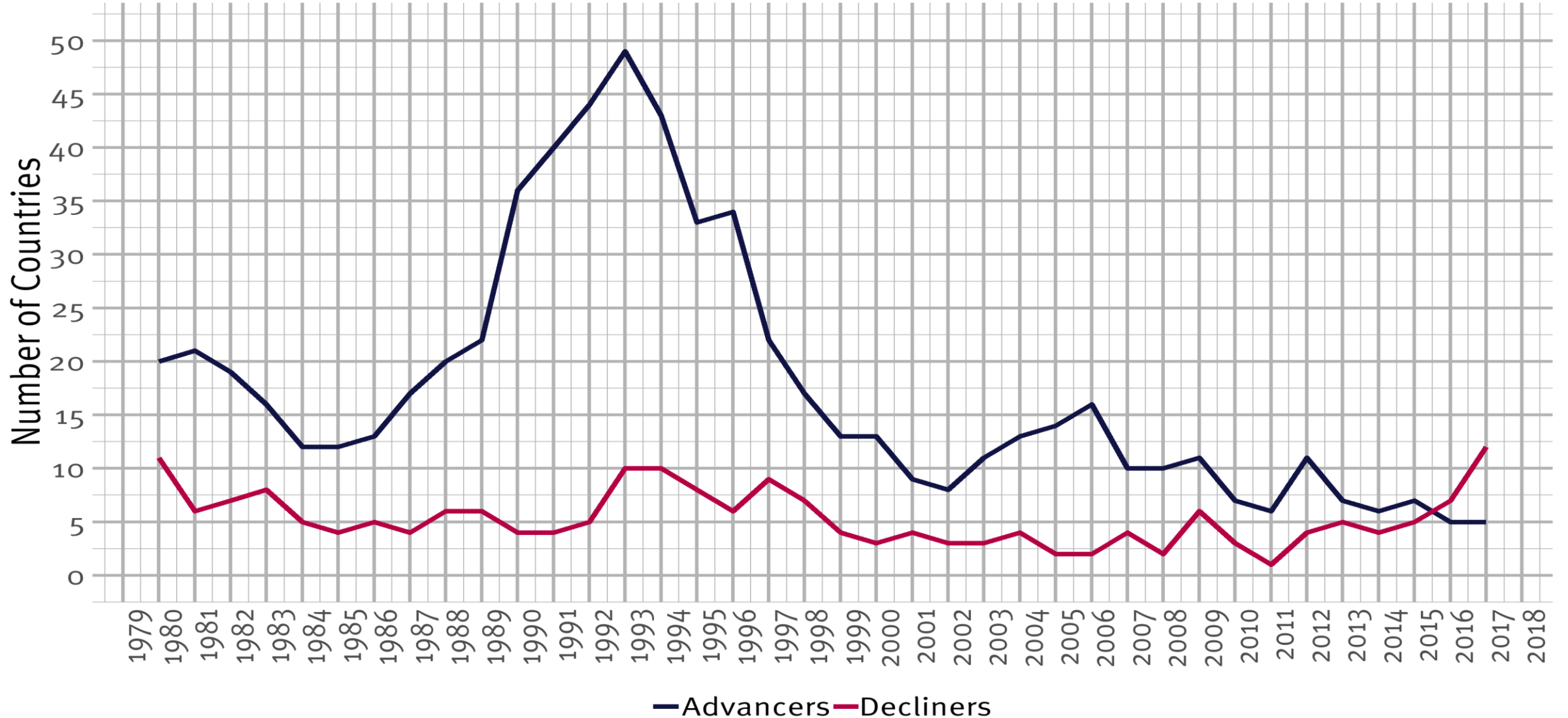
*World

Legend:
- Electoral Democracy Index
- Liberal Democracy Index
- Civil liberties index

Y-axis: Rating (MAX, MIN)

X-axis years: 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017

Liberal Democracy Index

Legend:
- *Latin America
- *MENA
- *Sub–Saharan Africa
- *OECD
- *Least Developed Countries

Rating (y-axis): 0, 0.2, 0.4, 0.6, 0.8, 1

Years (x-axis): 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017

Highcharts.com | V–Dem data version 7

Representative Government
Advancers and Decliners

Source: International IDEA, The Global State of Democracy Indices, 2017, ‹http://www.idea.int/gsod-indices›

Globalization and Political Legitimacy in Western Europe

Dieter Fuchs and Edeltraud Roller

Contents

1. Outline of the problem
2. Legitimacy of democracy
3. Satisfaction with the functioning of democracy
4. Conclusions

Starting point

- Contemporary diagnoses on the state of democracy:

  - "What we find is deeply concerning. Citizens in a number of supposedly consolidated democracies in North American and Western Europe … have also become more cynical about the value of democracy … and more willing to express support for authoritarian alternatives." (Foa/Mounk 2016: 7)

  - "a new and unexpected competition between democratic liberalism and authoritarian illiberalism" (Diamond et al. 2016)

  - "Populism is spreading across the globe … the consequences are worrisome because research suggests the very real possibility of democratic backsliding worldwide." (Frantz 2017)

  - *How Democracies Die* (Levitsky/Ziblatt 2018)

  - *The People vs. Democracy: Why Our Freedom Is in Danger and How to Save It* (Mounk 2018)

→ Conclusion: *Democracy Under Threat* (title of our book)

Research question

- Main reasons for the threat:
  - Consequences of globalization
  - Populist and authoritarian challenges

- Varying situations in different regions of the world

- Research question:
  Democracy under threat in Western European countries?

Theoretical assumptions

– The stability of a democratic regime depends on its legitimacy in the eyes of the citizens.

– Specification: If a majority of citizens does not support democracy then democracy is under threat.

– Two levels of support of democracy:

- preference for democracy as a value
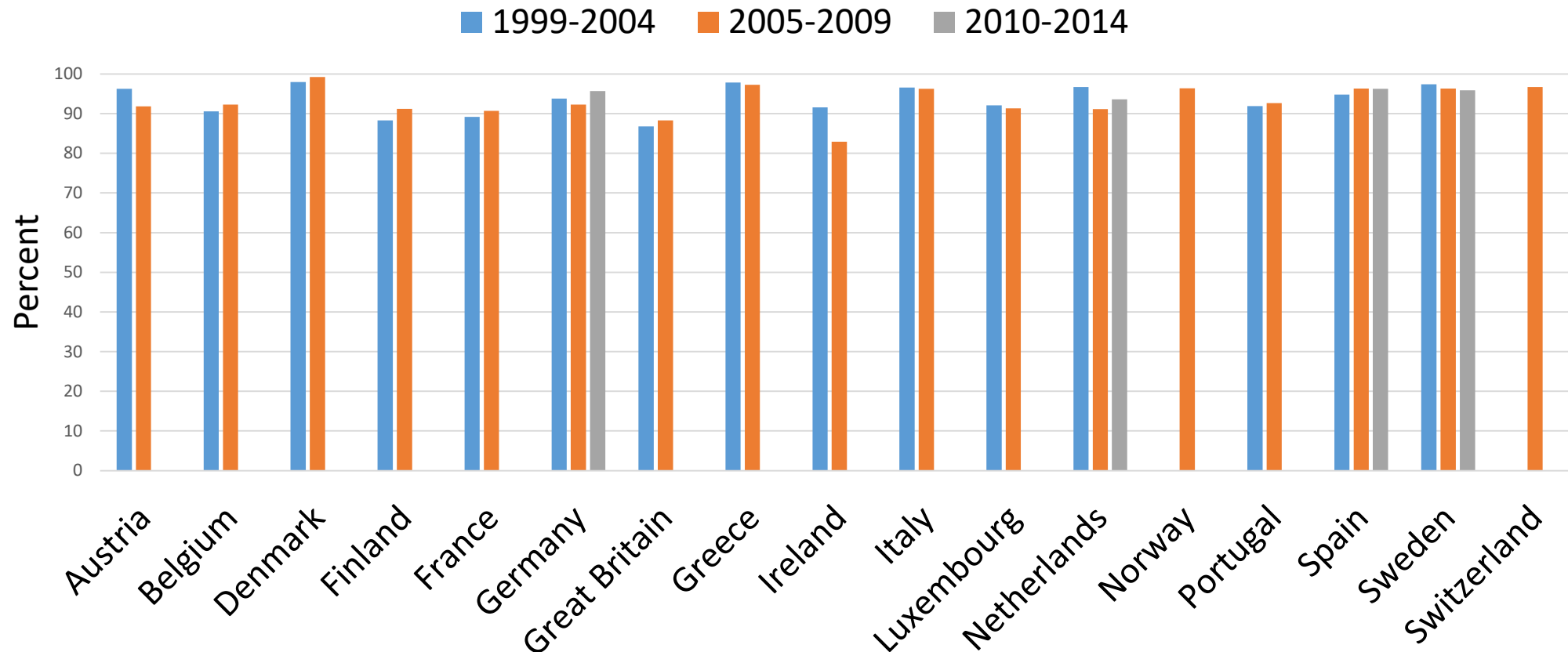- satisfaction with the functioning of democracy in one's own country

Legitimacy of democracy

– two indicators

- preference for democracy: "Having a democratic political system" (very good, fairly good, fairly bad or very bad)
- preference for autocracy: "Having a strong leader who does not have to bother with parties and elections" (very good, fairly good, fairly bad or very bad)

Figure 1: Preference for democracy

Question: "Having a democratic political system" (response categories „very good" and „fairly good").
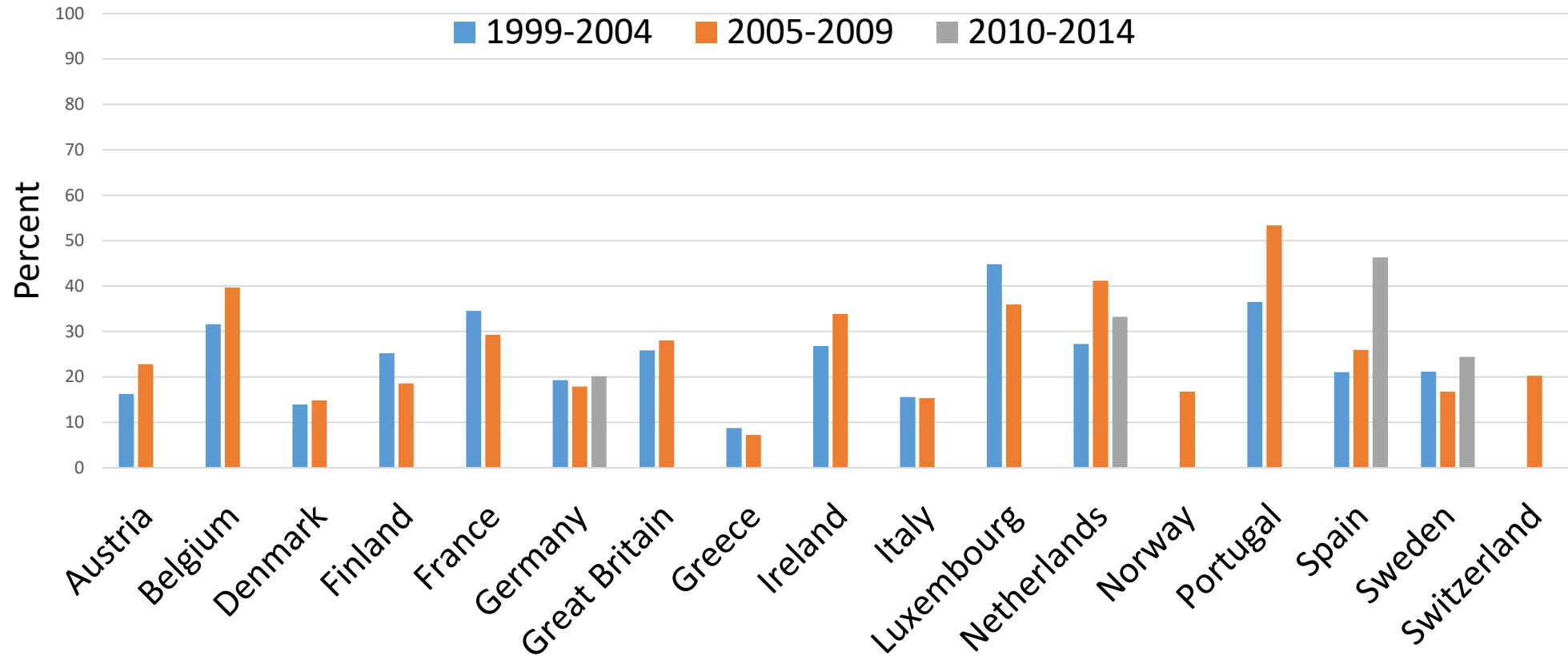Source: European Values Survey/World Values Survey 1999-2004, 2005-2009, 2010-2014.

Preference for democracy

– in all Western European countries at least 90 percent of the citizens express a preference for democracy

– no decline over time

Figure 2: Preference for autocracy (strong leader)

Question: "Having a strong leader who does not have to bother with parties and elections" (response categories „very good" and „fairly good").
Source: European Values Survey/World Values Survey 1999-2004, 2005-2009, 2010-2014.

Preference for autocracy (strong leader)

– in seven countries (Belgium, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, and Spain) between 30 and 40 percent of the citizens express a preference for a strong leader

– an increase of this preference over time can be observed in six countries (Belgium, Ireland, Austria, Portugal, Sweden, and Spain); the increase is significant in Portugal and Spain
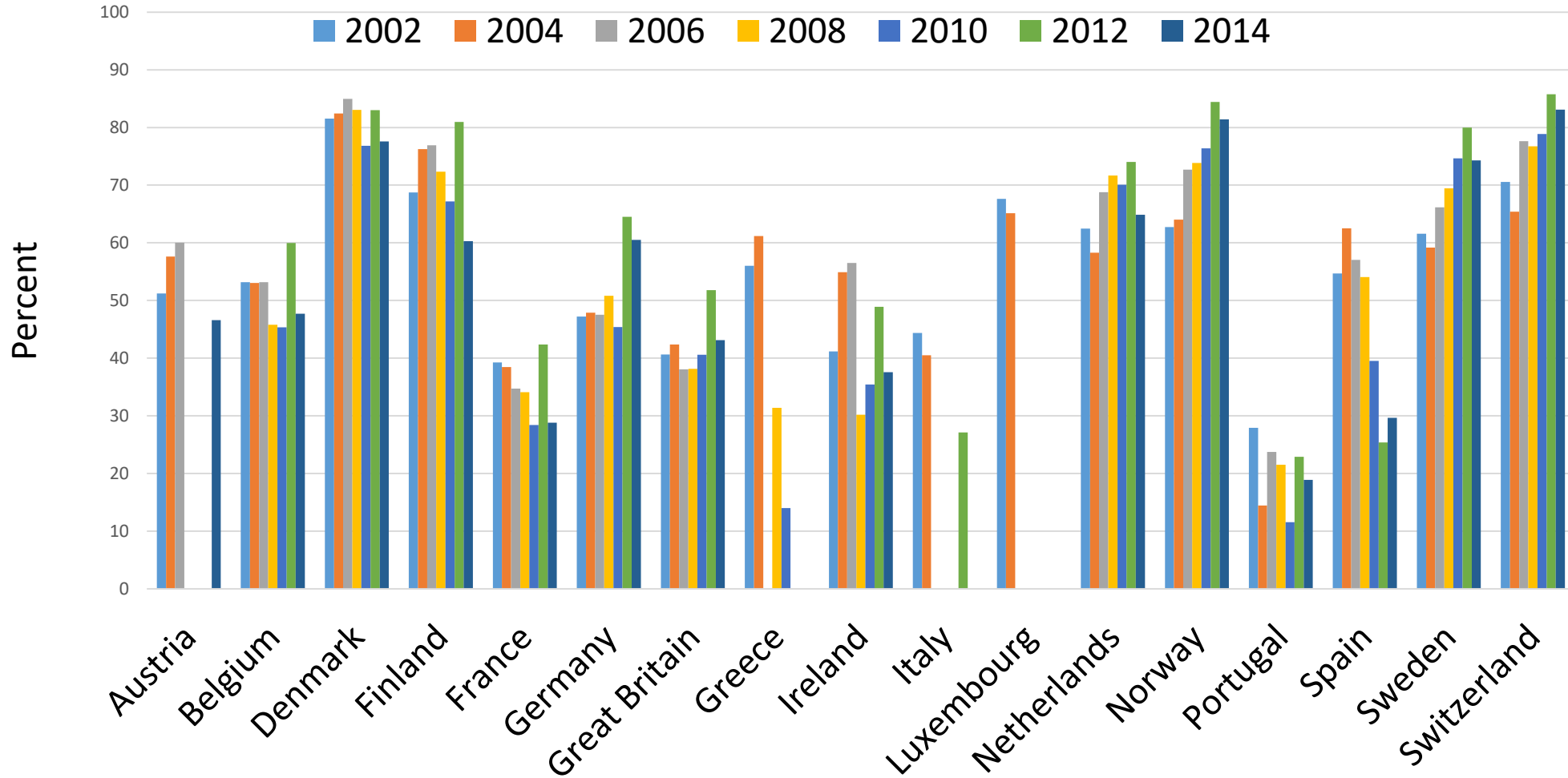
Satisfaction with the functioning of democracy

- Indicator:
  "And on the whole, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in [country]?"
  0 = extremely dissatisfied … 10 = extremely satisfied

Figure 3: Satisfaction with democracy

Question: "And on the whole, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in [country]?"
  Codes 6-10 (scale 0 = extremely dissatisfied … 10 = extremely satisfied).
Source: European Social Survey 2002-2004.

Satisfaction with democracy

- there exist significant differences between the Western European countries

- in seven countries (Denmark, Finland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland) between 60 and 80 percent of the citizens are satisfied with the performance of their democracy

- in three countries (France, Italy, and Portugal) satisfaction with democracy is below 30 percent

- in two countries (Greece and Spain) there is a sharp decrease of satisfaction with democracy over time

- no general pattern for Western European democracies

Summary

- ## Legitimacy of democracy
  - Positive finding: Neither a crisis nor an erosion of legitimacy exists in Western European democracies.
  - Sceptical finding: In seven of the Western European countries more than 30 percent of the citizens express a preference for a strong leader and in six of these countries this preference is increasing over time.

- ## Satisfaction with democracy
  - no general pattern observable; in some countries satisfaction with democracy is high, while in other countries it is low; between 2002 and 2014 a strong decrease of satisfaction with the performance democracy can be found in the so-called crisis countries of Greece, Portugal, and Spain
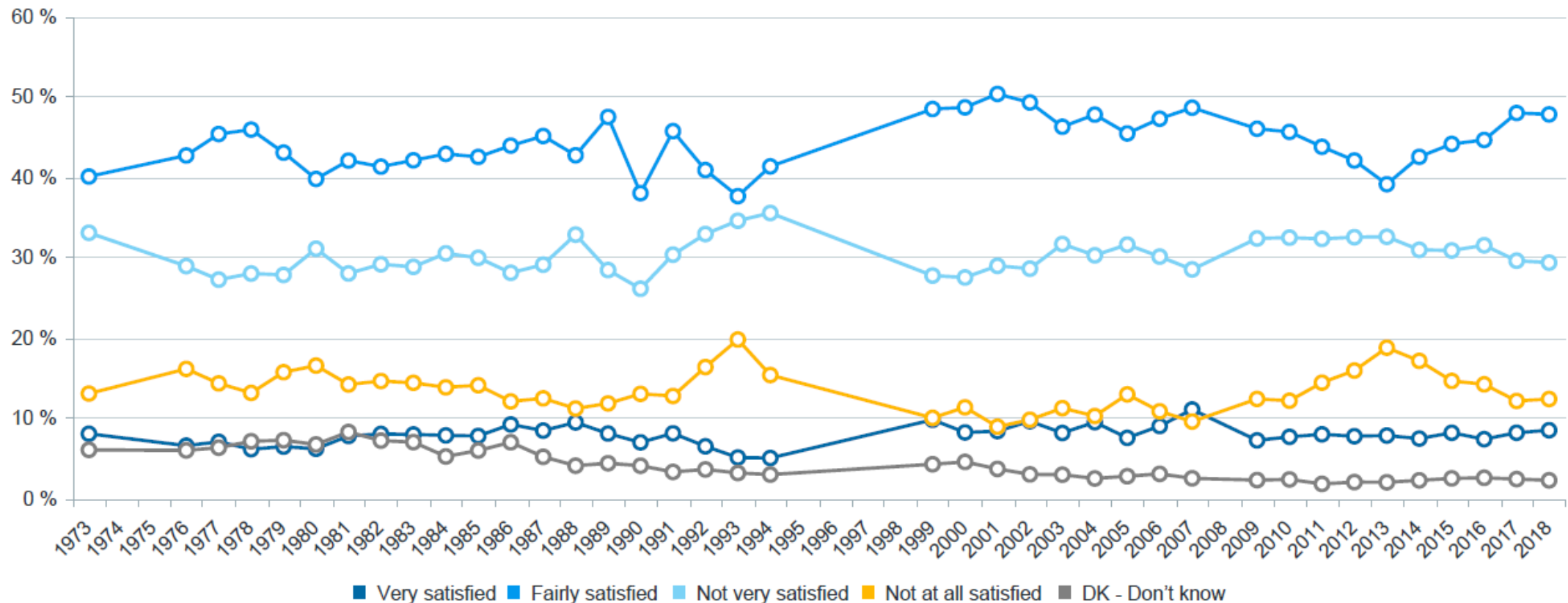 - hence, a general crisis of performance of democracy does not exist in Western Europe

Prospects

– In Western European countries democracy is not under threat. However, there is a potential for the populist challenge.

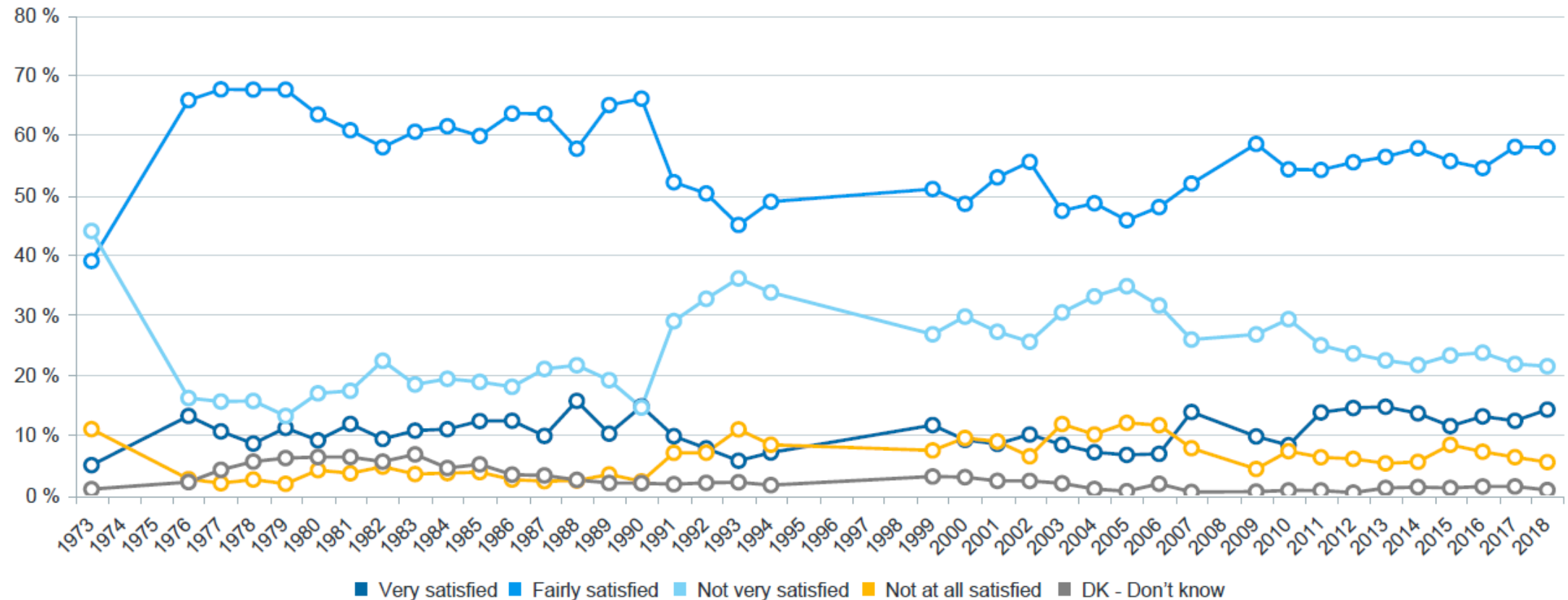# European Union (Eurobarometer)

On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in (your country)? Would you say you are ,,, ?
How about the way democracy works in your country ?
European Union (from 09/1973 to 03/2018)

■ Very satisfied ■ Fairly satisfied ■ Not very satisfied ■ Not at all satisfied ■ DK - Don't know

Germany (Eurobarometer)

On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in (your country)? Would you say you are ,,, ?
How about the way democracy works in your country ?
Germany (from 09/1973 to 03/2018)

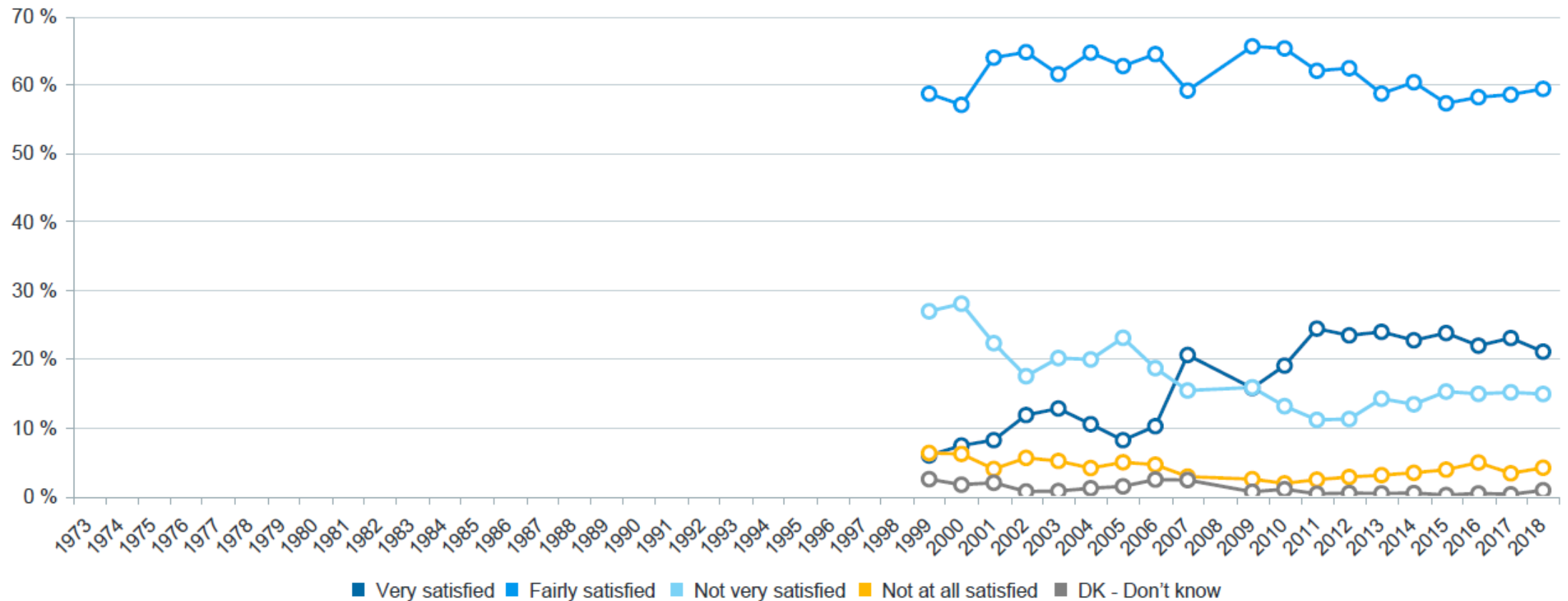■ Very satisfied ■ Fairly satisfied ■ Not very satisfied ■ Not at all satisfied ■ DK - Don't know

Sweden (Eurobarometer)

On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in (your country)? Would you say you are ,,, ?
How about the way democracy works in your country ?
Sweden (from 09/1973 to 03/2018)

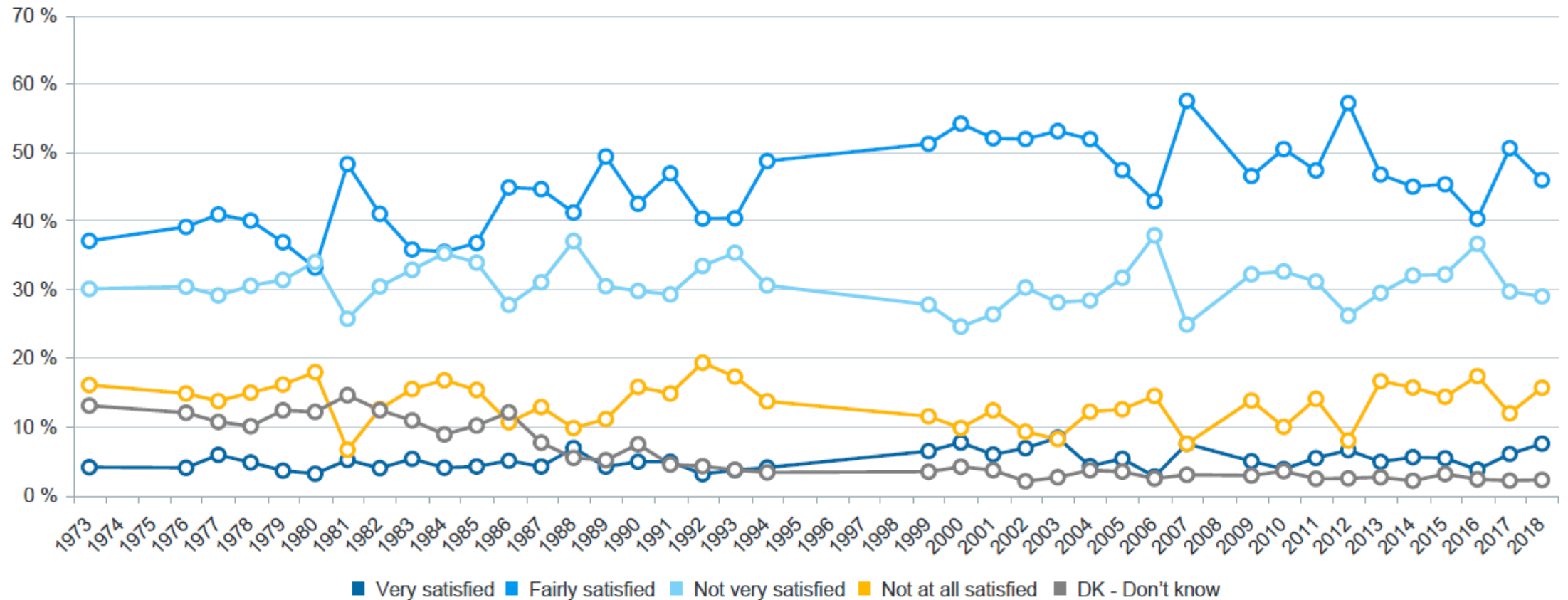Very satisfied ■ Fairly satisfied ■ Not very satisfied ■ Not at all satisfied ■ DK - Don't know

France (Eurobarometer)

On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in (your country)? Would you say you are ,,, ?
How about the way democracy works in your country ?
France (from 09/1973 to 03/2018)

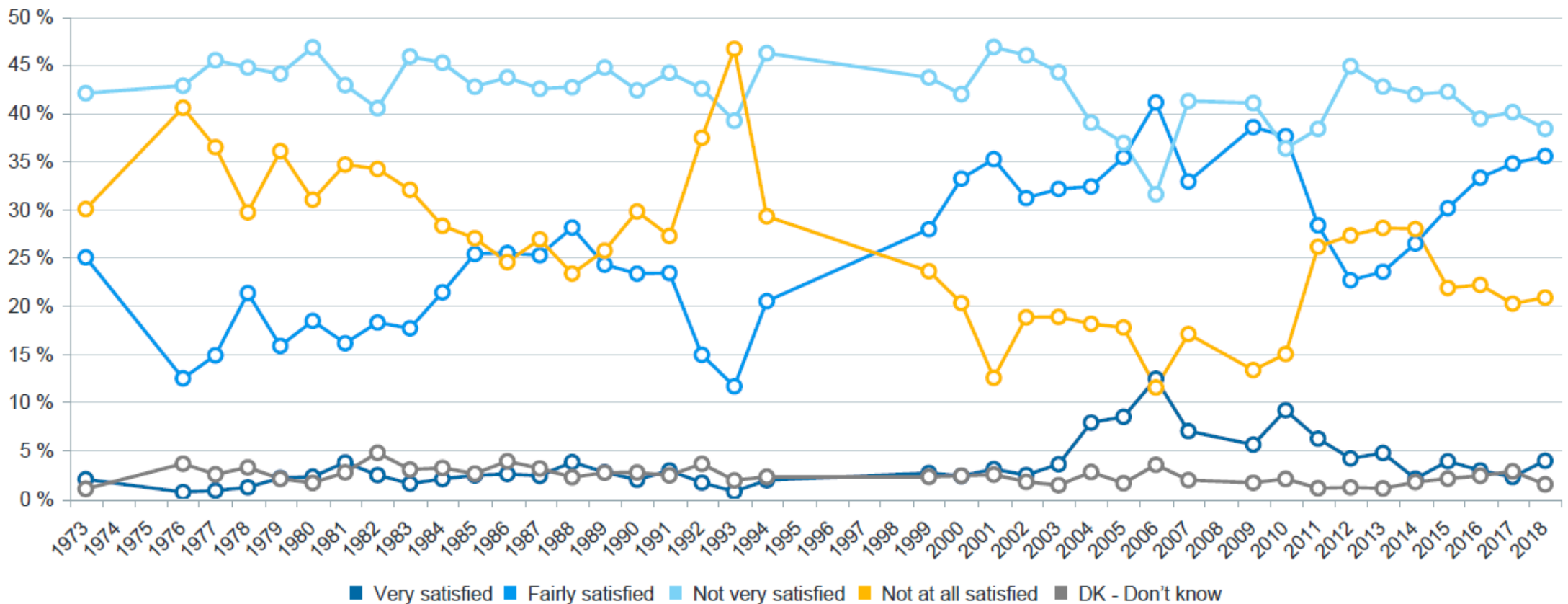■ Very satisfied ■ Fairly satisfied ■ Not very satisfied ■ Not at all satisfied ■ DK - Don't know

Italy (Eurobarometer)

On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in (your country)? Would you say you are ,,, ?
How about the way democracy works in your country ?
Italy (from 09/1973 to 03/2018)

■ Very satisfied ■ Fairly satisfied ■ Not very satisfied ■ Not at all satisfied ■ DK - Don't know

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Identity Politics: Extreme Polarization and the Loss of Capacity to Compromise in Turkey

Professor Yilmaz Esmer

Bahcesehir University Istanbul

Turkey

- one observation: <u>increased and increasing polarization in many new as well as established democracies</u>

- and one hypothesis: <u>high levels of polarization is detrimental to the healthy functioning of a democracy</u>.
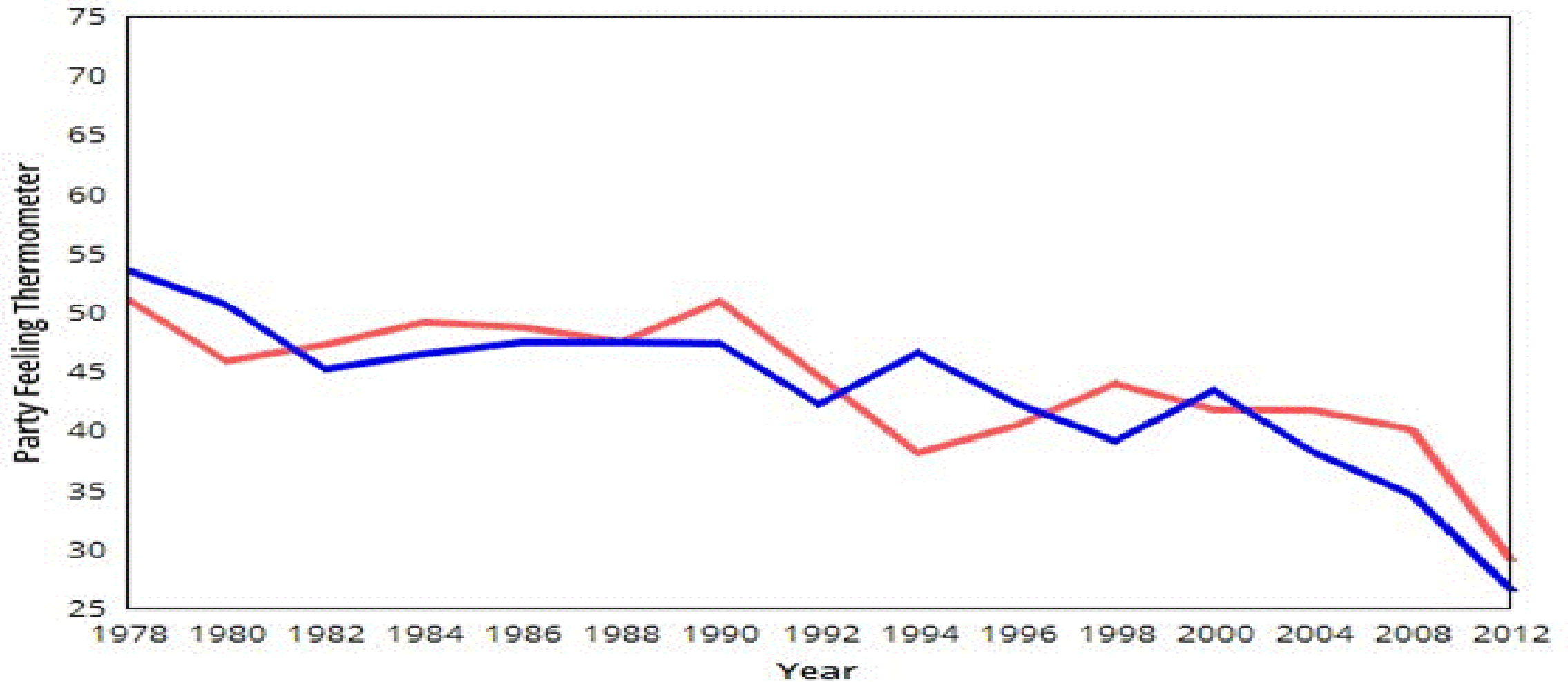
I claim:

there is a negative correlation between the degree of polarization in a country and the viability of democratic institutions.

Berg-Schlosser and Hoffmann-Lange concur with this hypothesis when they write in Chapter 3 of this volume that **"Democracy may flourish even in societies with a low level of socioeconomic development (as in India or Botswana), or it may break down in highly developed societies. This was the case during the first half of the 20th century in Germany and Italy, due to the failure of the political parties to implement effective political institutions, *a high degree of political polarization and irreconcilable conflicts among the major political parties*, as well as an unwillingness on the part of the crucial actors to accept each others' mutual legitimacy."**

As Berg-Schlosser and Hoffmann-Lange point out and as history has taught us only too well, **<u>increased value fragmentation can ring alarm bells for even non-democratic regimes but is especially worrisome for democracies.</u>**

We observe a deepening polarization in many countries and this, I believe, is a serious threat to the well-functioning of democratic regimes.

Citizen Opinion of Opposite Party, 1978-2012

■ Democrats' opinion of Republican Party
■ Republicans' opinion of Democratic Party

American National Election Studies

US Presidential elections: 1960-2016
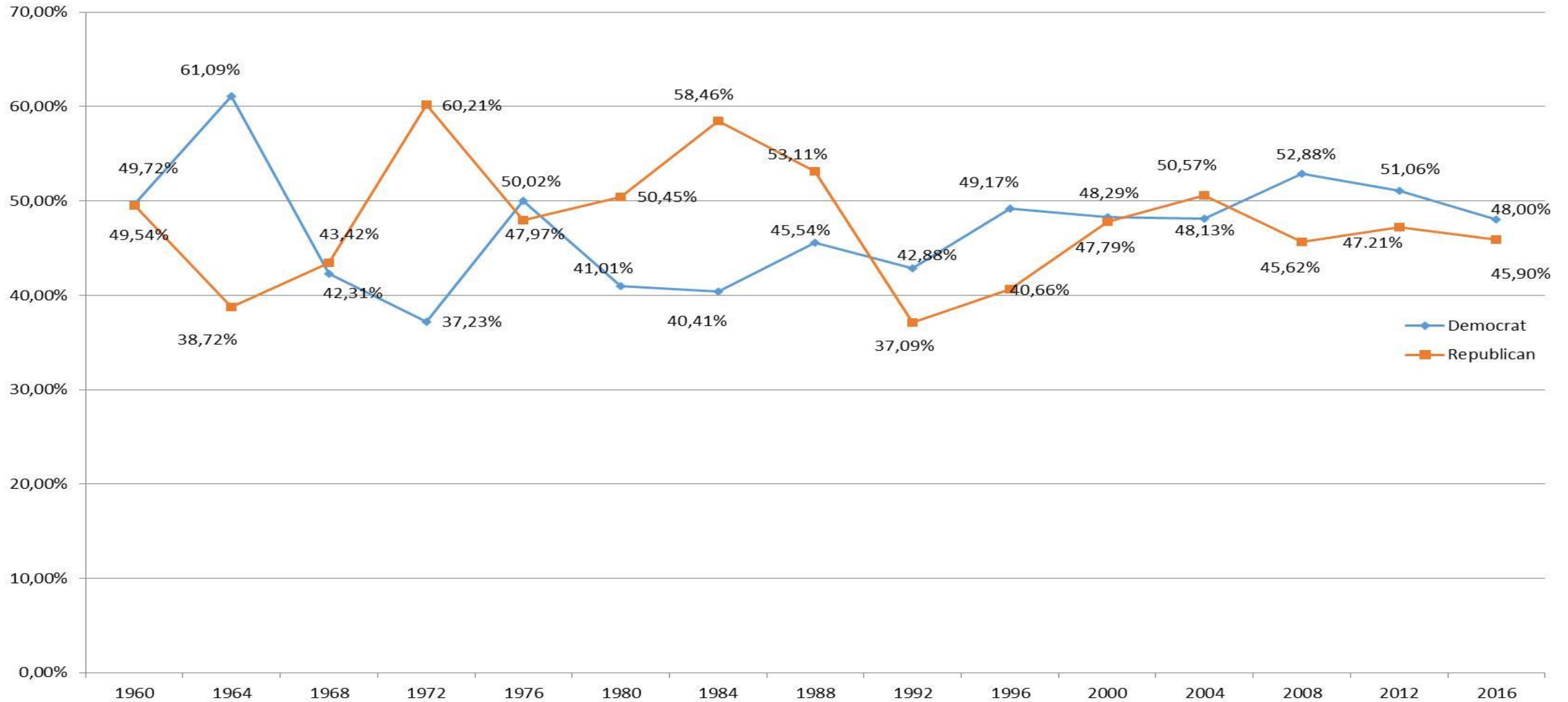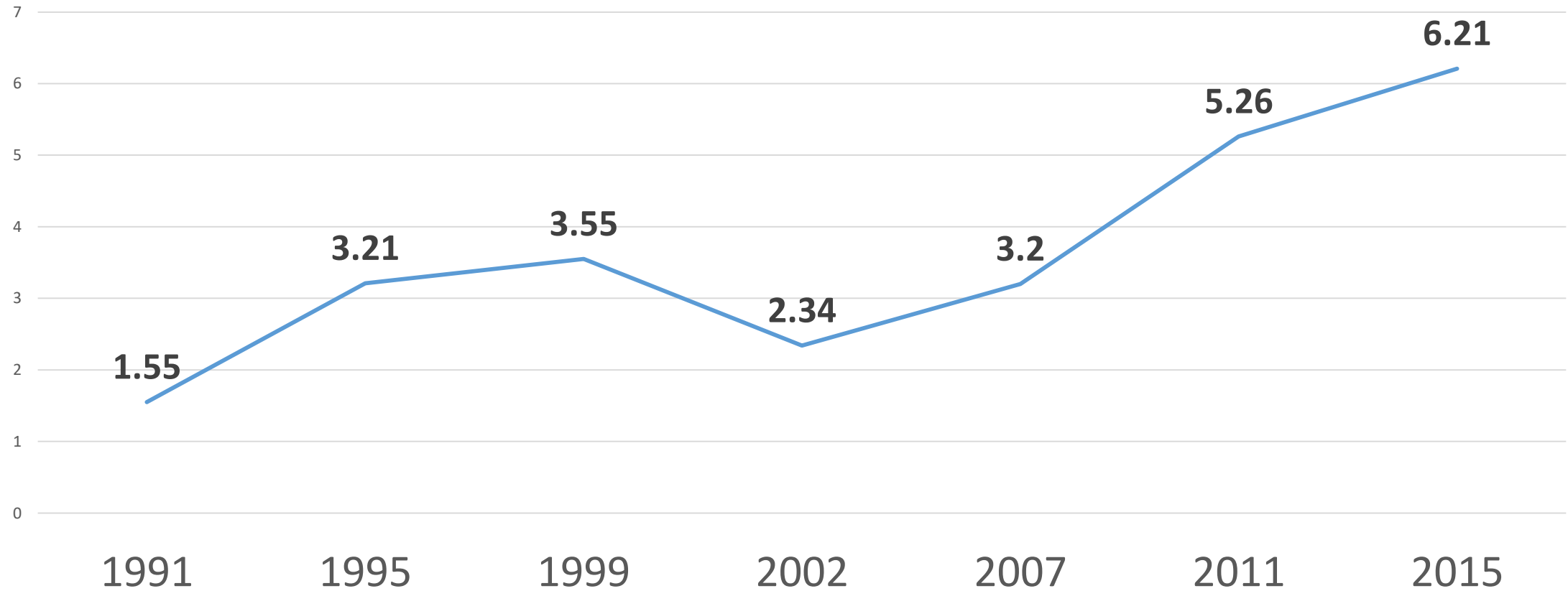Source: https://ropercenter.cornell.edu/polls/us-elections/popular-vote/

Chart taken from Erdoğan and Uyan-Semerci, *Fanus'ta Diyaloglar: Türkiye'de Kutuplaşmanın Boyutları*, İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2018, s. 39

Political Polarization in Turkey (R. Dalton index)

POLARIZATION AT ITS HIKE

- a recent survey (2015-16) commissioned by the German Marshall Fund of the United States
- "the survey […] highlighted that **83 percent** of the respondents do not want their daughter to marry someone voting for the party they feel distant to; **78 percent** reject the idea of doing business with someone voting for the "other" party; and perhaps most dramatically, **74 percent** reject the idea of his or her children playing with the children of someone who votes for the other party." (Erdogan 2016, gmfus/org/publications/turkey-divided-we-stand, accessed March 27,'16)
- It is reported that the fieldwork for the face-to-face survey was conducted in the week of 3 December 2015 and the sample size (number of completed interviews) was 1,024. (*Hurriyet,* 1 February 2016).

- The backsliding of Turkish democracy in recent years confirmed by all major and well-regarded indices of democracy

- such as the Economist Intelligence Unit,

- Freedom House,

- Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem),

- the World Justice Project Rule of Law Index, or

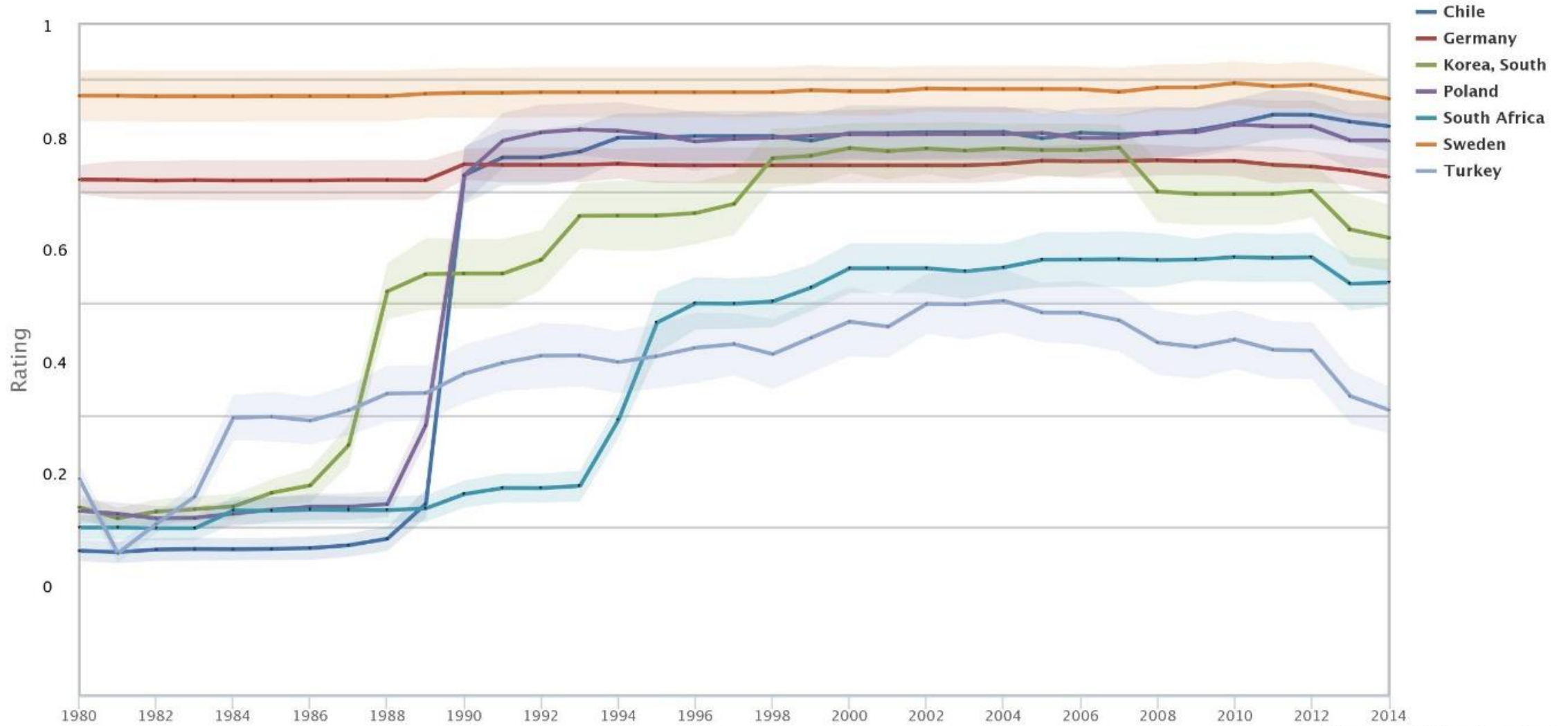- the Global Democracy Ranking, Vienna.

Democratic Quality and Legitimacy in the TRU Countries
Dirk Berg-Schlosser and Ursula Hoffmann-Lange

Research Questions

- How has democracy developed in the five new and the two old democracies studied by the TRU project since 1989?

- Development at the macro level (nation state) of quality of democracy, human development and the impact of the global economic crisis on the national economies (V-Dem, UNDP etc.)

- Development at the micro level of using data from surveys of citizens and MPs on democratic value orientations and political legitimacy.
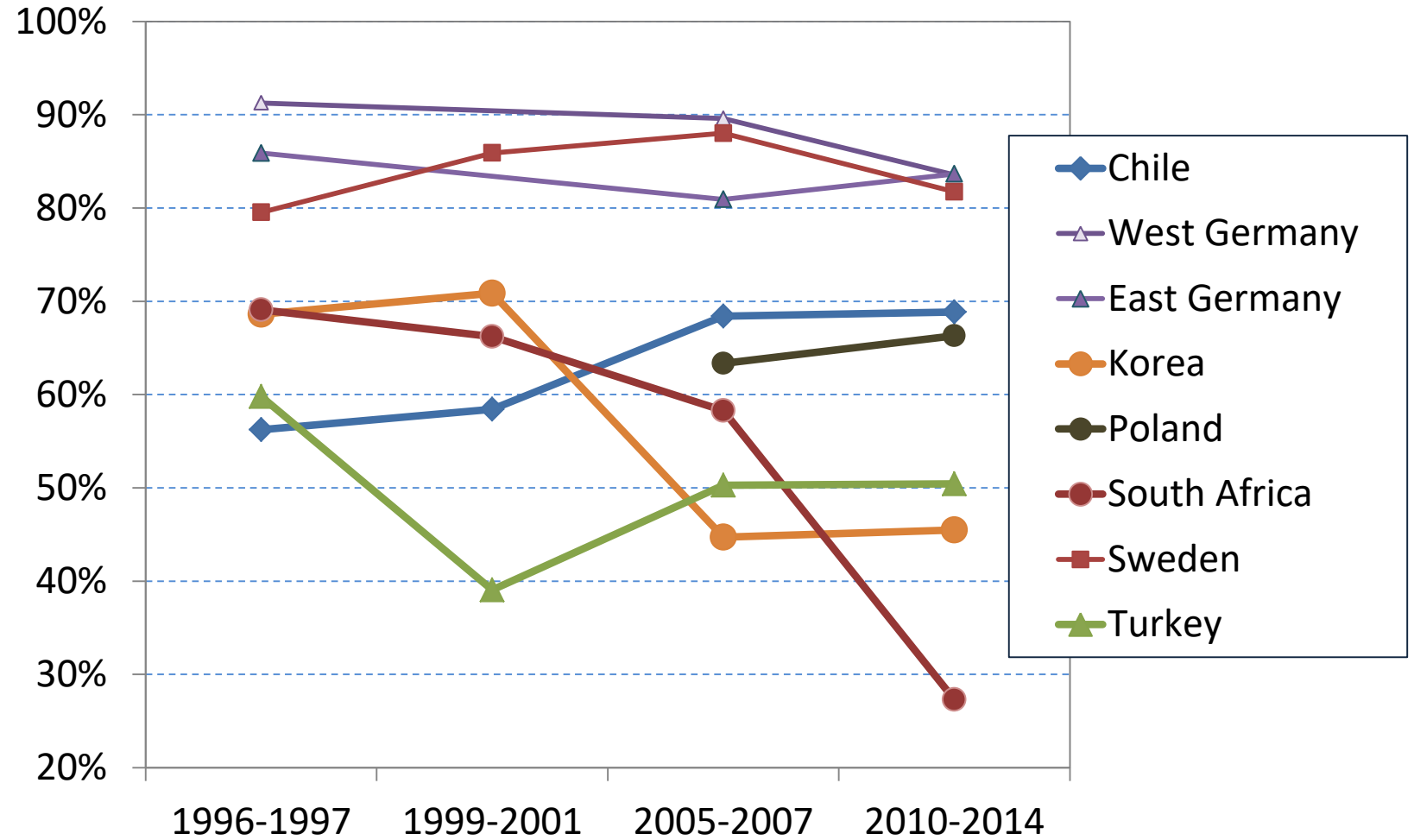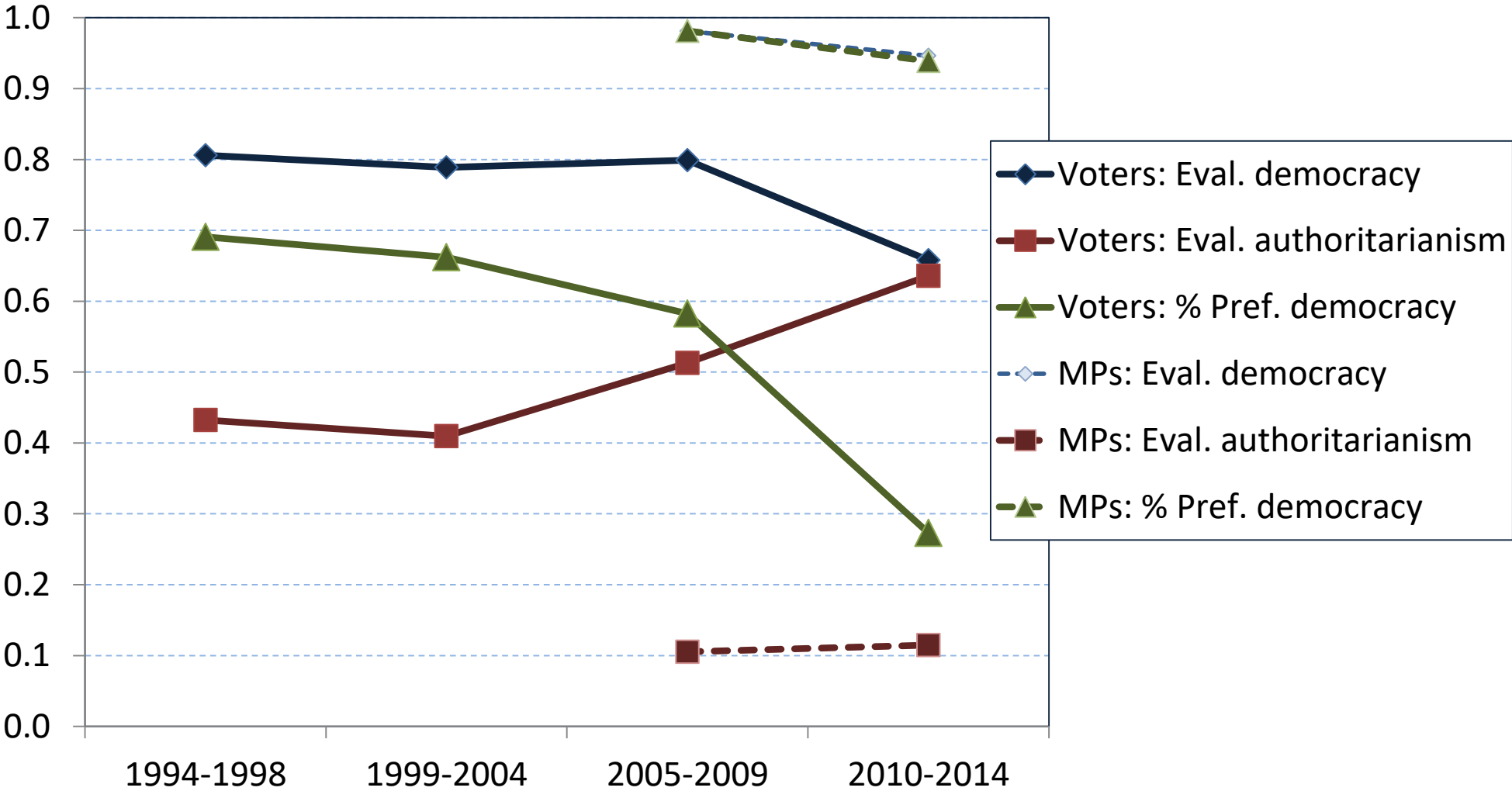
Liberal Democracy Index

Source: V-Dem

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Support for Democracy Among Citizens Since 1990

Percentage of respondents with a preference for democracy over an authoritarian system

South Africa: Evaluation of Democracy, Evaluation of Authoritarian Systems and Support for Democracy by Parliamentarians and Citizens

Conclusions

- The liberal democracy index indicates that the two older democracies, Sweden and Chile show high and stable levels of liberal democracy over time. None of the other five democracies has been able to catch up with the two, not even Chile that is the only one among our new democracies that shows the most promising results.

- Turkey has shown considerable democratic deficits from the beginning of the period under observation and a steep decline of its Liberal Democracy Index score from .53 in 2007 to only .12 in 2017.

- Although the results for the legitimacy of democracy in the five new democracies show some progress, they are not as promising as one should wish.

- In all seven countries, MPs show higher support for democracy than citizens, the difference being lowest in Sweden and Germany and highest in South Africa.

- South Africa stands out because support for democracy has shown a conspicuous decline among citizens, accompanied by a rise in support for authoritarian rule that is even more pronounced.

What do the Data Tell us?

- Unfortunately, political culture research does not support the assumption that even very high levels of support for democratic values among citizens can immunize democracies against the rise of anti-democratic political movements and parties. This is true even in our benchmark countries Sweden and Germany.

- As we can currently observe in many countries, democratic backsliding proceeds in innumerable small steps so that citizens and even many politicians may initially not be aware of their long-term implications.

- A democratic political culture is still helpful in slowing down this process because it can serve as a bulwark against attempts of autocratic leaders to curb democratic rights. It ensures that such attempts face stiffer opposition by civil society.

- The Turkish data confirm that a governing party commanding a high and stable electoral support cannot be trusted to prevent democratic backsliding even if its rank-and-file MPs predominantly support democratic values.

- Thus, a strong parliamentary opposition is the only force capable of thwarting authoritarian tendencies of democratically elected governments.