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West European Politics

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713395181>

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To cite this Article Geissel, Brigitte(2008) 'Do Critical Citizens Foster Better Governance? A Comparative Study', West European Politics, 31: 5, 855 — 873

To link to this Article: DOI: 10.1080/01402380802234516

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01402380802234516>

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Do Critical Citizens Foster Better Governance? A Comparative Study

BRIGITTE GEISSEL

Both critical citizens and governance are attracting increasing interest in political science. Strangely enough, however, the two strands of research are rarely combined. This article sheds light on the relation between governance and political criticism by focusing on Europe. The article discusses and examines whether the level of political criticism expressed by a state's citizenry correlates with or even affects the quality of governance. In contrast to the conventional 'translation' of criticism as discontentment, this article scrutinises 'normative critical attentiveness', which is explained in detail (data: International Social Survey Program 2004, module: Citizenship). Legitimate and effective governance, as measured by the World Bank indices, correlates positively with critical attentiveness: states with citizenries that regard attentiveness as a civic duty provide more legitimate and effective governance than states with less attentive citizenries. These correlations remain significant when controlled for economic development. The cause of direction is not uniform, but must be differentiated for different characteristics.

Both critical citizens and governance have been attracting increasing interest in political science since the 1990s (e.g., Norris 1999; Berg-Schlosser 2004: 28ff.). Strangely enough, the two strands of research are rarely combined, although an interrelation would appear to be more than plausible and a matter of common sense. This article sheds light on this interrelation and tests whether and how political criticism interrelates to the quality of governance. In contrast to the conventional 'translation' of criticism as discontentment, this article scrutinises 'normative critical attentiveness', which is explained in detail in the next section.

No theories have been developed on the interrelation between this dimension of criticism and the quality of governance. However, contiguous conceptual approaches exist, in particular on the interdependence between citizens' attitudes and democratic development. Given that they touch on a similar theoretical question, i.e. the question as to whether and how mass attitudes correlate with or even affect the characteristics of a democratic

system, these concepts provide a good basis for the derivation of hypotheses on the relation between governance and critical attentiveness.

In general, it is possible to derive four arguments here which are discussed in greater detail in the course of this article: 1) Following Schumpeter (1976), it may be expected that critical attentiveness correlates negatively with the quality of governance since a citizenry, which regards critical attentiveness as a civic duty, hampers decision-making by the political elite. 2) According to an argument put forward by Dahl (1994), legitimate governance is fostered by citizens' attentiveness, but effective governance will be impeded. 3) With reference to authors advocating a participatory approach and some students of emancipative political culture research (e.g. Inglehart and Welzel 2005), the quality of governance and political criticism correlate positively; a strong normative disposition of attentiveness goes hand in hand with legitimate, effective governance. 4) Finally, it is also possible that there is no interconnectedness at all, or that relations are spurious and relate to other explanatory variables, in particular economic development.

Authoritarian systems, semi-democratic systems or defective democracies can not be considered for the empirical research because liberties, e.g. freedom of the press, are not guaranteed under these systems and the normative disposition of critical attentiveness can hardly be developed without these liberties. The study focuses on *European democracies*. Legitimate and effective governance is a constitutional standard in most European states, although the empirical levels vary considerably. The idea of starting with a comparison of similar yet diverse enough cases, such as the European democracies, promised to provide insights that can be extended to non-European democracies in further research.

In the first section on the conceptual background, I describe what is meant by 'the normative disposition of critical attentiveness' and discuss the aforementioned hypotheses. In the second section I outline the distribution of political criticism and the level of legitimate and effective governance in Europe. In the third section I examine empirically whether the quality of governance correlates with critical attentiveness and, finally, discuss the findings in the conclusion.

Conceptual Background

The Normative Disposition of Critical Attentiveness

According to the traditional research on political culture carried out in the 1960s, the mass attitude of *political support* is the crucial element for any system, especially for democracies. Nevertheless, the idea of criticism as an indicator of healthy democracy has become more widely accepted since the 1990s. In this debate most authors use the term 'critical' synonymously with discontent (Norris 1999; Dalton 2002; 2004: 13; Axtmann 2001; Klingemann

1999; Foweraker and Landman 1997: 243; Westle 1997: 100ff; Budge 1996: 190).¹ Accordingly, hopes are pinned on political discontent and far-reaching conclusions are drawn about *discontented* citizens. Klingemann (1999: 32), for example, assumes that 'dissatisfied democrats can be viewed as...a force for reform and improvement of democratic processes and structures'.² Hofferbert and Klingemann (2000: 11) are convinced that discontented citizens are politically attentive citizens: 'So, the fact that half of the respondents are dissatisfied with the performance of their democracy may indicate nothing more than the reasonable, healthy wariness of attentive democratic citizens.'

Yet are these hopes realistic? Can political discontent not also be interpreted as a reaction to dysfunctional and untrustworthy political actors, or as a rational evaluation of political processes which do not meet the needs of citizens (Hardin 1999: 22ff.; 2002; Parry 1976)? From this perspective, the presence of a large number of discontented citizens may be taken as proof of a poorly functioning political system and not as proof of a particularly democratic and attentive polity.

It is clearly not enough to define political criticism exclusively as discontent. Almond and Verba (1963: 18, 341ff.) adumbrated whether critical attentiveness – as a civic duty – could be significant for democracies as far back as the 1960s. However, this dimension of political criticism has remained a scientific blind spot up to now. In general, the normative dimensions of citizenship are currently experiencing a renaissance. Whereas in the wake of Marshall and Bottomore (1992) citizenship was mostly discussed in the framework of rights and liberties, normative aspects and the duties of citizens were reintroduced to the debate from the late 1990s (e.g., Heater 2004: 141). Yet the normative aspect is surprisingly neglected in the context of political criticism. This article sheds light on this dimension of political criticism, defining critical attentiveness as the duty to be politically attentive. There may be other reasons for citizens to monitor politics, for example peer pressure or interest in a specific policy. But these motives are not of interest in this article. Of interest here is whether citizens consider the monitoring of politics as an integral component of their concept of good citizenship.

Normative attentiveness is not identical to the concept of the 'politically active citizen'. Citizens who are convinced that critical attentiveness is a civic duty may be active, but public activity is not an essential aspect of normative attentiveness. There is a distinctive line between the normatively attentive public and the active public (see also Rosenau 1974). The normative disposition of attentiveness also differs from the concept of political interest. Political interest can focus on certain topics and policies, but it does not necessarily include the conviction that attentiveness is a civic duty.

It is also impossible to subsume the concept of normative critical attentiveness under Inglehart and Welzel's (2005) 'self-expression values'. Normative attentiveness does not represent an aspect of self-expression.

It could be assumed that a self-expressive public might consider public attentiveness a citizen's duty. However, critical attentiveness focuses on duties, the concept of self-expression is more concerned with liberties and rights. Thus, while it may be the other side of the coin, it is the *other* side and not the *same* one. Furthermore, in contrast to Welzel and Inglehart, my intention is not to find out which mass attitudes are conducive to democracy, but whether one attitude, i.e. the normative disposition of critical attentiveness, correlates with legitimate and effective *governance*.

Is the attentive citizen the same as the 'monitorial citizen', who is defined as showing interest in politics and turning to action if needed, but being scarcely involved in traditional forms of political organisation (Schudson 1999; Hooghe and Dejaeghere 2007)?³ On the theoretical level the concept of the monitorial citizen is similar to the concept of the normative attentive citizen. However, there are three basic differences: first, the concept of the monitorial citizen is an ideal type. Although Schudson (1999) insists that that he does 'not recommend the model of the monitorial citizens as THE appropriate model of the time', some of his followers describe the 'monitorial citizen' using phrases such as s/he 'should be informed enough and alert enough' or s/he 'should have the resources' (see Hooghe and Dejaeghere 2007: 254). In contrast, this article does not propagate an ideal type of a citizen, but examines empirically the aforementioned interrelation. Second, I do not focus on the form of participation a citizen might get involved in or have already been involved in. I am solely interested in the question as to whether legitimate and effective governance is more likely in states with citizenries who regard critical political attentiveness as a characteristic of a good citizen. Finally, in my concept the citizen is not only interested in politics, but considers attentiveness a *civic duty* which goes beyond mere political interest (*normative disposition*).

The Interrelation between Normative Attentiveness and the Quality of Governance: Hypotheses

No theory has been developed on the interrelation between the normative disposition of critical attentiveness of the citizenry and the quality of governance. Although the idea that mass attitudes affect *governance* is not new, the discussion on the effects of mass attitudes on *democracy* is more established. The question as to whether and how citizens' political attitudes and the quality of democracy interact is as old as democracy itself (e.g., Schmitz 2000), and underwent a renaissance in the research on political culture, starting with Almond and Verba (1963) and in reference to Easton (1965). Although the authors cited in the following discussion mostly used terminologies such as 'democracy', 'democratic development', and 'citizens' involvement', I use their arguments to develop hypotheses on the interrelation between critical attentiveness and governance within consolidated democracies. Four different approaches can be identified based on this

literature. These approaches apply only to established democracies – the case for emerging democracies is not the topic of this paper (for a detailed discussion of this issue, see Welzel 2007).

1. Based on the assumption of authors like Schumpeter (1976) we can expect a negative correlation between critical attentiveness and the quality of governance. Schumpeter (1976: 295f.) argued: ‘The voters outside of parliament must respect the division of labour between themselves and the politicians they elected . . . [They] must understand that, once they have elected an individual, political action is his business and not theirs.’ From this point of view governance is most successful when citizens never interfere with the work of their political representatives. A citizenry that regards critical attentiveness as a civic duty impinges on the political elites, binds their hands, hinders their decision-making, and prevents them from governing – to the detriment of good governance (see also Sartori 1992: 181). Furthermore, average citizens do not have the necessary skills and knowledge to understand complex political issues and thus have no understanding of governance (e.g., Sabatier 1991: 149). In summary: an attentive citizenry goes hand in hand with low quality of governance.

2. Hitherto, legitimacy and effectiveness were mentioned in the same breath, although there is extensive debate as to whether they include or exclude each other. According to an argument stressed by Dahl (1994), citizen involvement fosters legitimacy but impedes effective governance. He emphasised what he calls the ‘democratic dilemma’, i.e. the conflict between effectiveness *versus* citizen involvement. From this point of view, citizens’ involvement – and following on from this also critical attentiveness in its normative dimension – implies legitimacy, yet it is at odds with effectiveness. Thus, I develop the hypotheses that a citizenry with the normative disposition of critical attentiveness prevents effective governance but supports legitimacy, whereas a non-attentive citizenry enables effectiveness but decreases legitimacy.

3. According to proponents of participatory democracy and to the authors of research on emancipative political culture, mass attitudes and the quality of democracy correlate positively. The quality of democracy will increase the more citizens become involved mentally and effectively (e.g. Schmalz-Bruns 2002). Various arguments refer to the positive effect of involvement, however I will only mention one here. Authors such as Lindblom (1965) and Fischer (2000) developed an argument that is centred around the knowledge of the people; citizens have special knowledge that is indispensable for political agenda-setting and the development of legitimate, effective policies (for further arguments, see Geissel 2004).

Drawing on a similar impetus, yet from a different angle, researchers working on emancipative political culture tried to substantiate the influence

of emancipative mass attitudes on the quality of democracy. Based on an international comparison, Inglehart, a strong advocate of this hypothesis, concluded that the persistence of democratic institutions depends strongly on specific mass attitudes (Inglehart 1988: 46ff.). In the 1970s he had identified postmaterialism as a significant democracy-promoting attitude. He has been proposing this argument together with Welzel for several years now, shifting from postmaterialist values to 'self-expression values' as the mass attitude most conducive to democracy (Inglehart and Welzel 2005; Welzel 2007). Their concept of self-expression values combines 'attitudes that share an emancipative thrust in pursuing the freedom of ordinary people, involving an emphasis on people power, tolerance of nonconforming people, and trust in people' (Welzel 2007: 397f.). Inglehart and Welzel (2005: 246ff.) showed that self-expression values significantly foster the development of democracy (critical comments: Berg-Schlosser 2000: 303ff.; Seligson 2000).

Although the aforementioned authors had mainly democracy in mind, their arguments can easily be applied to the quality of governance. Based on the arguments and findings it may be assumed with some plausibility that the normative disposition of political attentiveness goes hand in hand with legitimate, effective governance. Legitimate and effective governance correlates positively with a citizenry which regards critical attentiveness as a civic duty.

4. However, it is also possible that there is no interconnectedness at all between mass attitudes and the quality of governance, or that relations are spurious and relate to other explanatory variables, in particular economic development. Several students of political transformation, in particular, stress the point that citizens' attitudes are irrelevant for the consolidation and stability of a democracy. The history of Germany, Austria, and Japan are frequently cited as examples in support of this hypothesis (Merkel 1999; Barnes and Simon 1998: viii; Tarrow 1995: 204ff.). In these states, the population was a mere 'onlooker' during the implementation of democratic institutions. Nevertheless, stable democracies developed in these states surprisingly quickly. In contrast, democratisation proceeded slowly in Italy where the majority of the population had played a more active role in the removal of the dictatorship. These historical examples appear to prove that mass attitudes and the quality of democracy are scarcely interrelated. Similarly, Lijphart and Waisman (1996) emphasised that the success and failure of democracies depend essentially on 'institutional engineering' and not necessarily on mass attitudes.

Once again, although these debates and arguments do not explicitly focus on the relation between the normative disposition of critical attentiveness and the quality of *governance*, they can be employed in the development of hypotheses on this relation. According to these findings, there is scarcely any interrelation between the quality of governance and mass attitudes.

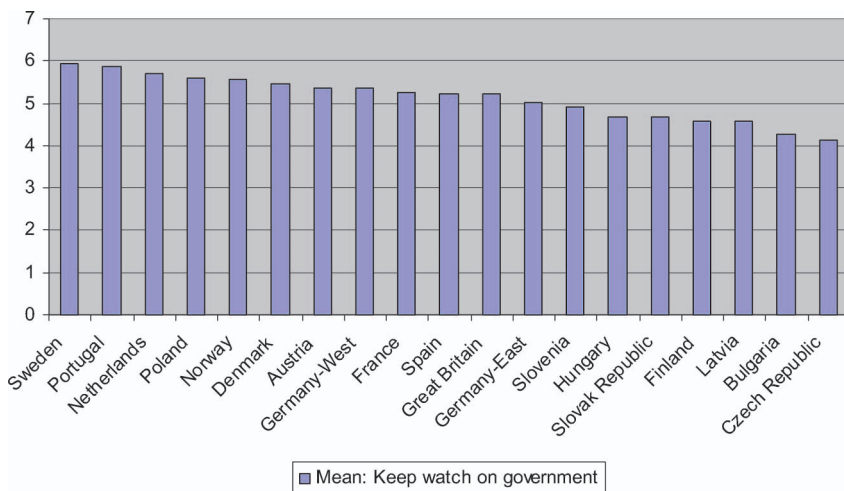
Critical Attentiveness and Governance: Operationalisation and Distribution

The data from the 'Citizenship' module of the International Social Survey Program (ISSP, 2004) provides excellent material for the issue under examination as it provides information about normative critical attentiveness. As part of this programme over 20,000 participants in 19 European states were interviewed. Over 1,000 interviewees in each state were asked whether they consider 'keeping watch in the actions of government' as a part of their concept of a 'good citizen'.⁴ This question informs about whether a citizen or, on the aggregate level, a society considers critical attentiveness as a citizens' duty or not, i.e. about their *normative disposition*.

Figure 1 demonstrates the mean of the normative disposition of critical attentiveness within the citizenries in the states under examination. Working with aggregated attitudes clearly has its disadvantages because the aggregated data could distort the underlying distribution of the data set. If, for example, a state is divided into an extremely attentive and an extremely inattentive half, the calculation of the 'average normative attentiveness' would provide a completely distorted picture. However, this is not the case in any of the states under examination. Most interviews cluster in the middle of the range with relatively few outliers at the margins.

The number of citizens who regard normative attentiveness as at least somewhat important outweighed those citizens who do consider attentiveness at all as a civic duty – in both the pooled dataset and in all states.

FIGURE 1
THE DISTRIBUTION OF NORMATIVE CRITICAL ATTENTIVENESS IN EUROPEAN DEMOCRACIES



Source: International Social Survey Program, module 'Citizenship' (ISSP 2004, available at: http://www.gesis.org/en/data_service/issp/data/2004_Citizenship.htm).

The citizens of Sweden, Portugal and the Netherlands display a strong normative disposition of critical attentiveness; the citizens in the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, and Latvia display a relatively weak disposition. Most post-socialist nations can be found in the group of states with less attentive citizenries. In contrast, most established democracies belong to the cluster containing the citizenries with strong normative convictions that attentiveness is a crucial component of good citizenship. Nevertheless, there are several exceptions. The Finns, for example, display a relatively low level of normative attentiveness as compared with other established democracies and, contrary to expectation, Polish citizens are convinced with astonishing frequency that critical attentiveness is a civic duty.⁵

Citizens with a strong normative disposition of critical attentiveness not only regard monitoring the government as a civic duty, their conviction also affects their actions. They participate significantly more than citizens with a weak normative disposition of attentiveness. For example, the former attended political meetings more often than their less attentive counterparts, took part in demonstrations, are members of political parties and signed petitions.⁶ Citizens who regard attentiveness as a civic duty describe themselves significantly more often as politically interested⁷ and are also more active in the discussion of political matters (for more details, see Geissel 2008a). Normative attentiveness and contentment correlate weakly in the pooled data (.08).⁸ Citizens can be content and still regard critical attentiveness as a duty. Conversely, actual political discontent does not presuppose the normative disposition of critical attentiveness (for details on a comparative perspective, see Geissel 2008a; for Germany, see Geissel 2008b). Critical attentiveness as the normative dimension of political criticism can neither explain nor be explained by the actual level of political contentment.

Legitimate and Effective Governance

Legitimacy and effectiveness are contentious, complex concepts and need further explanation. The term legitimacy is applied in political science in three different ways. In research on public opinion and political culture, legitimacy refers to citizens' support of political objects, for example the political system or political representatives (*'perceived legitimacy'*). From the perspective of (constitutional) law, legitimacy is generated through compliance with existing rules and laws (*legality*). In representative democracies *legal legitimacy* is generally produced through the selection of political representatives by free and fair ballot. Neither perceived legitimacy nor legal legitimacy are appropriate dimensions of legitimacy to be considered in this context. Legality is guaranteed in almost all consolidated democracies and perceived legitimacy is measured by the level of political contentment already discussed in the previous section. New concepts of legitimacy based on general democratic principles are, however, suitable.

These concepts refer to *input-legitimacy* and *effectiveness* as output-legitimacy (Scharpf 1999).

Input-legitimacy means access to the political process and the involvement, participation and representation of all stakeholders, including marginalised groups. Political effectiveness refers to the capacity of a political system to solve collective problems. It basically means that performance is delivered in accordance with the preferences of the citizens.⁹ In the current research, a distinction is made between output (public spending, policies) and outcome (actual resolution of the problem). For example, studies on output ask about public spending involving public service provision or policies for the prevention of corruption, whereas studies on outcome look at the actual achievement, e.g. the quality of public service provision or the actual control of corruption.

Several indicators can be found in the literature for measuring legitimate and effective governance (e.g. UNDP/Eurostat 2006; Berg-Schlosser 2004).¹⁰ However, one problem complicates the assessment within consolidated democracies: most indices do not differentiate sufficiently between European states. Freedom House, for example, rates the Czech Republic, Germany, Slovakia, and Sweden with the best score. These indices usually assign consolidated European democracies to the highest category, which hampers the comparison of European nations.

The World Bank's Governance Indices provide a good solution to this problem. The indices are very detailed with scores ranging between + 2.5 for the best and - 2.5 for the worst grading with a fine-grained assessment. Furthermore, they are based on almost 40 different resources, for example statistics and expert opinions, and combine several evaluations as 'indices of indices' (for details, see Kaufman *et al.* 2005).¹¹

From the six World Bank Governance Indices,¹² I chose the three related to legitimate and effective governance. The Voice and Accountability Index, an index concerning the access of citizens to the processes of democratic decision-making, enables the measurement of the input-legitimacy of governance. It evaluates, for example, the extent to which citizens are able to participate in the selection of the government, the independence of the media, and the possibilities for citizens to influence government decisions.

To measure the effectiveness of governance I applied the Control of Corruption Index (which measures indicators such as the extent of the abuse of power) and the Government Effectiveness Index. The Government Effectiveness Index compiles several indicators on the ability of a government to solve collective problems by policy-decisions and its capacity to implement them. It measures whether a government is able to produce and implement good policies and deliver public goods. The indicators include, for example, the quality of public service provision or the independence of the government from political pressures to be able to provide common welfare.¹³ These indices provide substantial information about the capacity of a political system and its institutions, especially the

government, to solve collective problems and to deliver publicly desired objectives. As a control variable I added the economic development, measured in terms of per capita gross national product (GNP, 2005) and adjusted for purchasing power parity (PPP).¹⁴ Table 1 shows the scores and distribution of the states under examination. Most governance indices rank low for the post-socialist nations and high for the established democracies.

Do Critical Attentiveness and Governance Correlate? Empirical Findings

The normative critical attentiveness of the individual citizen correlates positively and significantly in the pooled dataset with the input-legitimacy and the effectiveness of governance (r for Voice and Accountability = .201, Sig. = .000; r for Control of Corruption = .166, Sig. = .000; r for Effective Government = .153, Sig. = .000).

To test the hypotheses, however, it is necessary to check the correlation between the aggregated average normative attentiveness within a state and its quality of governance. Figure 2 demonstrates the descriptive synopsis of all variables under examination and reveals clear tendencies.

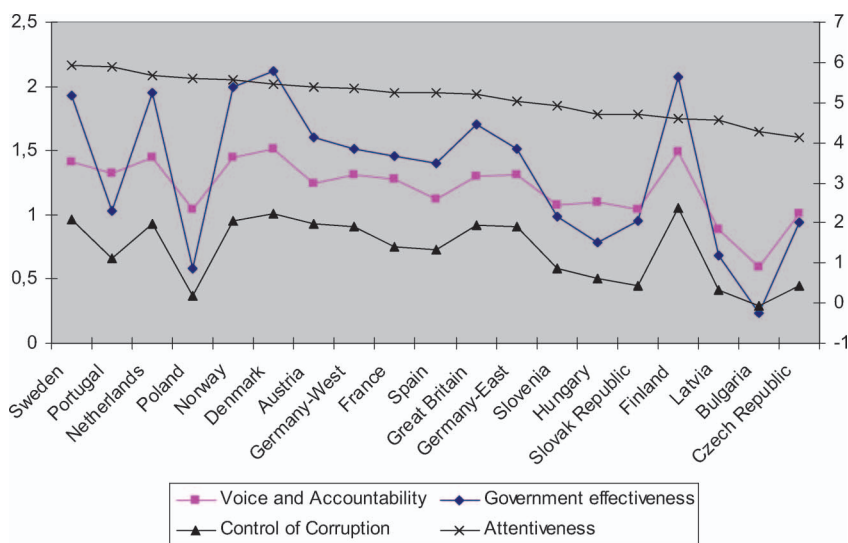
Figures 3–5 show that all correlations between the scores for governance and the aggregated national level of normative critical attentiveness are

TABLE 1
SCORES FOR THE INDICES OF FORMAL AND INFORMAL GOVERNANCE

State	Voice and Accountability	Control of Corruption	Effective Government	GNP_PPP (international dollars)
Norway	1.45	2.04	1.99	40,420
Denmark	1.51	2.23	2.12	33,570
Austria	1.24	1.99	1.60	33,140
Great Britain	1.30	1.94	1.70	32,690
Netherlands	1.45	1.99	1.95	32,480
Sweden	1.41	2.10	1.93	31,420
Finland	1.49	2.39	2.07	31,170
France	1.28	1.40	1.46	30,540
Germany-West	1.31	1.92	1.51	29,000
Spain	1.12	1.34	1.40	25,820
Slovenia	1.08	.88	.99	22,160
Czech Republic	1.01	.42	.94	20,140
Germany-East	1.31	1.92	1.51	20,000
Portugal	1.32	1.13	1.03	19,730
Hungary	1.10	.63	.79	16,940
Slovak Republic	1.04	.43	.95	15,760
Latvia	.89	.33	.68	14,220
Poland	1.04	.19	.58	13,490
Bulgaria	.59	-.05	.23	8,630

Source: http://info.worldbank.org/governance/kkz2005/mc_indicator.asp, accessed Nov. 2006; <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DATASTATISTICS/Resources/GNIPC.pdf> accessed Nov. 2006; Statistische Ämter der Länder: Volkswirtschaftliche Gesamtrechnung der Länder. Vorabversion zu Band 1, Berechnungsstand des Statistischen Bundesamtes: Aug. 2006, Stuttgart, 2007.

FIGURE 2
GOVERNANCE AND NORMATIVE CRITICAL ATTENTIVENESS IN EUROPEAN STATES



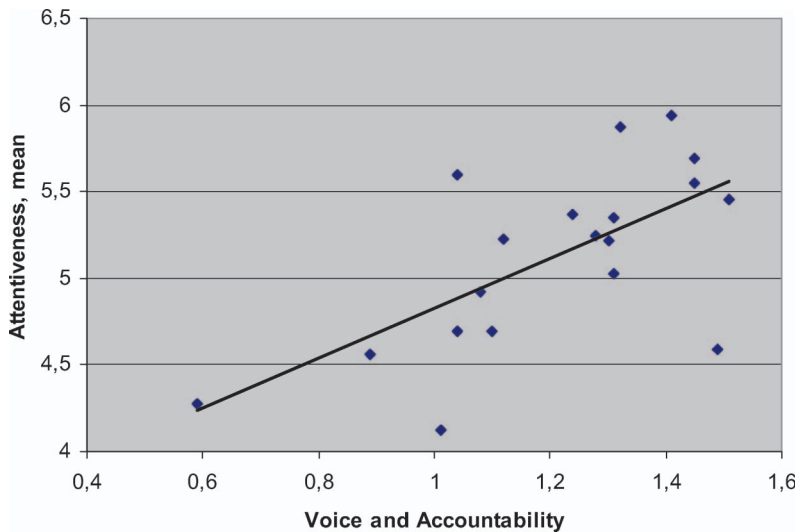
Sources: International Social Survey Program, module 'Citizenship' (ISSP 2004); http://info.worldbank.org/governance/kkz2005/mc_indicator.asp, accessed Nov. 2006; <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DATASTATISTICS/Resources/GNIPC.pdf>, accessed Nov. 2006; Statistische Ämter der Länder: Volkswirtschaftliche Gesamtrechnung der Länder. Vorabversion zu Band 1, Berechnungsstand des Statistischen Bundesamtes: August 2006, Stuttgart, 2007.

significant and positive. Good scores for input-legitimacy, i.e. access to political decision-making processes, and effective governance, measured by the control of corruption and the Government Effectiveness Index, go hand in hand with a high national level of normative critical attentiveness. States with citizenries which are strongly convinced that critical attentiveness is a civic duty provide extraordinary qualities of governance, whereas states with citizenries with a weak normative disposition of critical attentiveness score lower.

The bivariate analyses appear to prove the third hypothesis: normative critical attentiveness goes hand in hand with legitimate and effective governance. However, the positive correlations may be spurious, as the fourth hypotheses suggested. Most post-socialist democracies score low for all variables and they are also the poorest nations. Thus, the question arises as to whether the significant correlations disappear when gross national product, which, in this sample, can also be regarded as a proxy for years of continuous democracy, is introduced. A regression analysis was conducted to clarify this question, the result of which is shown in Table 2.¹⁵

The correlations between all governance indicators and the state averages for normative critical attentiveness remain significant, even when the GDP_PPP (2005) is added. Thus GDP does not explain away the positive

FIGURE 3
CORRELATION BETWEEN NORMATIVE CRITICAL ATTENTIVENESS AND THE
VOICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY-INDEX



$r = .629$, $\text{Sig.} = .000$

Sources: International Social Survey Program, module 'Citizenship' (ISSP 2004); http://info.worldbank.org/governance/kkz2005/mc_indicator.asp, accessed Nov. 2006.

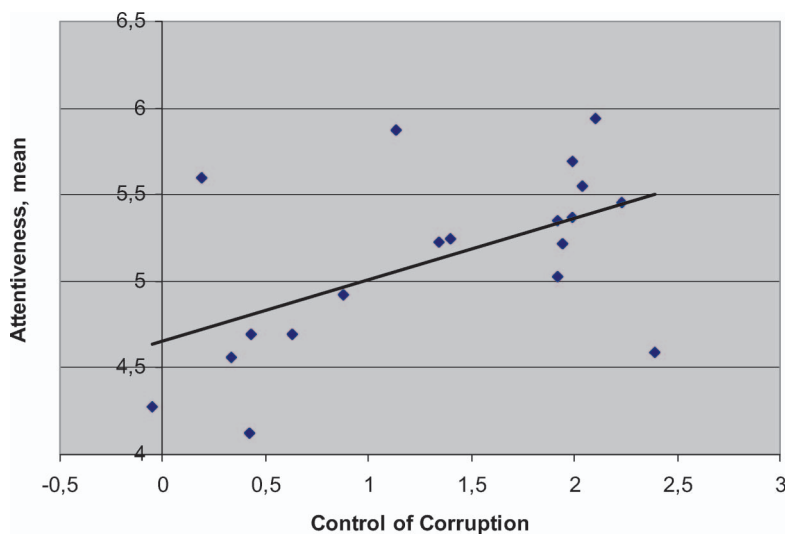
TABLE 2
MULTIPLE REGRESSION SHOWING THE INFLUENCE OF NORMATIVE CRITICAL
ATTENTIVENESS AND GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT PER CAPITA (2005) ON
GOVERNANCE

	Voice and Accountability		Control of Corruption		Effective Government	
	B	Beta	B	Beta	B	Beta
Constant	.096*		1.329*		-.273*	
Normative attentiveness, state average	.123*	.284*	.128*	.088*	.020*	.019*
GNP_PPP	.019*	.705*	.079*	.870*	.060*	.931*
Adj. R ²	.774		.840		.885	

Significance levels: * $p < .005$.

Sources: International Social Survey Program, module, 'Citizenship' (ISSP 2004); http://info.worldbank.org/governance/kkz2005/mc_indicator.asp, accessed Nov. 2006; <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DATASTATISTICS/Resources/GNIPC.pdf>, accessed Nov. 2006; Statistische Ämter der Länder: Volkswirtschaftliche Gesamtrechnung der Länder. Vorabversion zu Band 1, Berechnungsstand des Statistischen Bundesamtes: August 2006, Stuttgart, 2007.

FIGURE 4
CORRELATION BETWEEN NORMATIVE CRITICAL ATTENTIVENESS AND THE
CONTROL OF CORRUPTION INDEX



$r = .514$, Sig. = .000

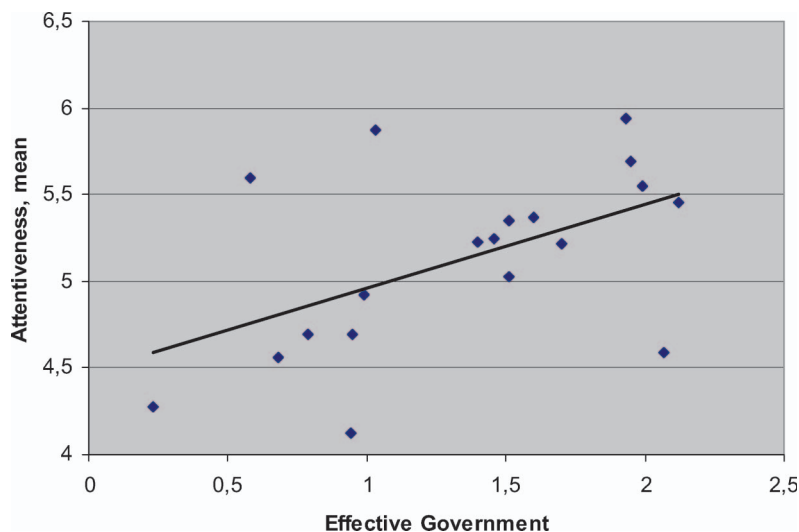
Sources: International Social Survey Program, module 'Citizenship' (ISSP 2004); http://info.worldbank.org/governance/kkz2005/mc_indicator.asp, accessed Nov. 2006.

correlation between normative critical attentiveness and the quality of governance.

Although the empirical analyses do not allow the identification of any direct causal direction, I argue that the potential effects must be identified on a differentiated basis. This argument touches on a well-known debate concerning the micro–macro link between system characteristics and (the aggregation of) micro-level attitudes in political science. Most studies imply that there is a one-sided, univocal direction of cause, either defining individual attitudes as dependent variables and system characteristics as an independent variable, or, conversely, regarding system characteristics as variable depending on political attitudes.

In the context of the question examined by this article I argue that, on the one hand, some characteristics of governance shape normative critical attentiveness and, on the other, normative critical attentiveness shapes some characteristics of governance. It can not be plausibly argued that the strong control of corruption will lead to a citizenry which regards attentiveness as a civic duty. The converse is more conceivable: a citizenry with a strong normative disposition of critical attentiveness prompts the rigorous control of corruption. In contrast, in the case of political access – as an indicator of legitimate governance – it may be just as likely that an attentive citizenry

FIGURE 5
CORRELATION BETWEEN NORMATIVE CRITICAL ATTENTIVENESS AND THE
GOVERNMENT EFFECTIVENESS INDEX



$r = .475$, Sig. = .000

Sources: International Social Survey Program, module 'Citizenship' (ISSP 2004); http://info.worldbank.org/governance/kkz2005/mc_indicator.asp, accessed Nov. 2006.

pushes for comprehensive access to political decision-making processes as the converse of this argument. Comprehensive political opportunities are likely to generate a strong normative disposition of critical attentiveness and an attentive citizenry. The same may be true for effective governance. Governments may function particularly effectively in states because of a citizenry which regards attentiveness as an important civic duty, and especially ineffectively in states in which critical attentiveness is underdeveloped. Nevertheless, critical attentiveness may not only support effective governance, effective governance may also enhance critical attentiveness. Effective governance often goes hand in hand with a successful economy and wealth, followed by a good educational system involving the increase of critical attentiveness.

Summary and Outlook

The starting point of this article was the question as to whether the normative disposition of critical attentiveness correlates with legitimate and effective governance in Europe. The empirical data reveals that normative critical attentiveness and legitimate, effective governance are closely interrelated and the interrelation is not spurious. States with citizenries which regard critical attentiveness as a civic duty display superior qualities of governance to states with less attentive citizenries.

Accordingly, three of the four discussed hypotheses must be rejected: critical attentiveness does not impede high quality of governance, as could be suspected following Schumpeter (1976). Respect for the division of labour between citizens and politicians, as demanded by Schumpeter, is counter-productive to the quality of governance. Instead, all of the indicators of good governance examined demonstrate compelling results in countries with citizenries which display a strong conviction that attentiveness is a crucial civic duty. Similarly, the hypotheses derived on the basis of 'Dahl's democratic dilemma' (1994) can not be corroborated – at least for the indicators and indices used in this study. Not only legitimate, but also effective governance correlates with normative critical attentiveness. A low level of normative critical attentiveness entails ineffective governance; the strong normative attentiveness of a citizenry is accompanied by effective governance. The hypothesis on spurious or non-existent correlations is also disproved. The correlation between governance and normative critical attentiveness remains significant when a control variable for economic development is introduced. Only hypotheses developed from theories on participatory democracy can be confirmed: the normative disposition of critical attentiveness goes hand in hand with effective and legitimate governance.

Whether these results can be generalised and also hold for defective democracies or democracies outside of Europe is questionable. Many authors argued convincingly that findings that apply to the post-industrial democracies of the West cannot always be confirmed for other states (e.g. Seligson and Carion 2002). This may also be the case for normative critical attentiveness and its correlation with governance. Critical attentiveness may well trigger different effects in unstable or defective democracies or in non-European cultural traditions than it does in stable democracies. It could be argued, for example, that a citizenry in a defective democracy with a strong disposition of critical attentiveness might endorse *undemocratic* principles that impede legitimate and effective governance. However, this scenario appears illogical because proponents of undemocratic principles will not regard the critical attentiveness of citizens as an important civic duty. The conviction that a good citizen must monitor politics is a deeply democratic attitude that the supporters of regimes such as dictatorships or military governments are unlikely to support. Further empirical research on this topic is desirable to understand the interrelation between normative critical attentiveness and the quality of governance in different contexts.

What are the implications for the research on the link between mass attitudes, in particular political criticism, and governance? First, the findings reveal that normative critical attentiveness is a crucial mass attitude in relation to the understanding and explanation of the quality of governance. The shift in the debates on citizenship from rights to duties is also instructive for research on political criticism. An advanced concept of political criticism that goes beyond mere discontent and includes the duty of attentiveness enables new insight into the prerequisites and consequences of governance.

Second, there are indications that the question as to whether mass attitudes cause the quality of governance or whether the quality of governance causes mass attitudes must be discussed in a differentiated way: the control of corruption as an indicator for effective governance, for example, is probably more influenced by an attentive citizenry than the other way round. It is more plausible that the control of corruption increases if the citizenry regards attentiveness as a civic duty. The suggestion that critical attentiveness increases when the control of corruption is intensified would appear to be less logical. In contrast, access to the political process as indicator for legitimate governance may be affected by an attentive citizenry, because a citizenry which regards attentiveness as a civic duty pushes for the provision of information to the public and for comprehensive access to political decision-making processes. At the same time comprehensive access, i.e. options to monitor politics and to intervene, may generate and inspire critical attentiveness. Both directions are plausible and the direction of cause is probably reciprocal and two-sided. However, although cause and effect are closely intertwined and the cause of direction is ambiguous, it can be summarised that in European democracies critical attentiveness goes hand in hand with legitimate and effective governance.

Notes

1. According to most definitions, content democrats support the idea of democracy ('democracy may have its problems, but it is better than any other form of government') and are content with the performance of the democracy in their states ('the way democracy works').
2. Some studies provide evidence for a certain affinity of critical citizens for democratic principles (for Peru Seligson and Carrion 2002: 58 ff.; for Germany Westle 1997; for the USA Sniderman 1981).
3. In fact, the concept of the 'monitorial citizen' does not fit with the empirical findings – at least not in the North European context (Hooge and Dejaeghere 2007).
4. Question: 'There are different opinions as to what it takes to be a good citizen. As far as you are concerned personally on a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 is not at all important and 7 is very important, how important is it: ... to keep watch on the actions of government?'
5. The influence of gender and years of education is negligible ($r = .03$). In contrast, age influences the level of attentiveness significantly ($r = .14$). Young people regard political attentiveness as less important than older people.
6. 'Here are different forms of political and social action that people can take. Please indicate for each one whether you have done any of these things in the past year, whether you have done it in the more distant past, whether you have not done it but might do it or have not done it and would never, at any circumstances, do it ... attended a political meeting or rally, took part in demonstrations, are members of political parties and signed petitions.'
7. 'How interested would you say you personally are in politics?' (very interested, very interested, not very interested, not at all interested).
8. Political contentment was measured by the question: How well does democracy work in (COUNTRY) today?' (0 = very poorly to 10 = very well).
9. In contrast, analysis of efficiency focuses on the cost–benefit principle. A procedure is considered efficient when high returns are achieved at little expense.

10. Some indices for measuring the quality of democracy would also be applicable, e.g. Diamond and Morlino 2005; Inglehart and Welzel 2005; Lauth 2004: 238ff; Dalton *et al.* 2003; Jagers and Gurr 1995; <http://www.bertelsmann-transformation-index.de/11.0.html> (accessed Jan. 2007).
11. As Berg-Schlosser (2004: 39) demonstrated, the indices correlate significantly and strongly with all other well-known indices of democracy.
12. Voice and accountability, government effectiveness, control of corruption, political stability, regulatory quality, rule of law.
13. For details on the data and methodology used to construct the indicator see Kaufmann *et al.* (2005); the data used is available in World Bank Governance Indicators 1996–2004.
14. According to the World Bank, the ‘purchasing power parity’ (PPP) conversion factors take differences in the relative prices of – particularly non-tradable – goods and services into account and therefore provide a better overall measure of the real value of output produced by an economy as compared with other economies. PPP GNP is measured in current international dollars which, in principle, have the same purchasing power as a dollar spent on GNP in the US economy. See <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/DATASTATISTICS/0,,contentMDK:20399244~menuPK:1504474~pagePK:64133150~piPK:64133175~theSitePK:239419,00.html> (accessed Sept. 2006), and <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DATASTATISTICS/Resources/GNIPC.pdf> (accessed Feb. 2007). For the 2005 GNP data for East and West Germany, see: Statistische Ämter der Länder, *Volkswirtschaftliche Gesamtrechnung der Länder. Bruttoinlandsprodukt, Bruttowertschöpfung in den Ländern und Ost-West-Großraumregionen Deutschlands 1991 bis 2005*, vol. 1 (preliminary draft), Aug. 2006.
15. National political attentiveness and the GNP_PPP correlate significantly and positively ($r = .490$; sig.: .000).

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