

Getting the balance right: Understanding the upsurge of extreme right parties in Europe

Scientific abstract

The success of radical-right parties has sparked a vibrant debate in political scholarship, which has so far focused mainly either on short-term factors that affect and catalyze the phenomenon, such as economic and migration crises, or on individual-level factors such as authoritarianism, national identity, and economic hardships. A crucial question that has not yet been fully explored in this discussion is whether and how the existing mainstream parties contribute to the success of radical-right parties. The present proposal addresses this important gap through a comprehensively planned empirical study.

This project explores the political factors that underlie the increase in political support for radical-right parties observed in the last several decades. The investigative focus is on the links between the spread of extremism and long-term developments in electoral politics. Specifically, rather than examining radical right parties as such, based on their discourses, constituencies, or mobilization discourse strategies, this project studies these entities as part of the political system as a whole. On this rationale, I contend that European political systems have been destabilized by a series of long-term changes, and that the resulting voids are being occupied by radical-right parties. More generally, I argue that when a party system does not adequately represent citizens' preferences, the radical right grows and prospers. I claim that this representational vacuum, stemming from a mismatch between the needs of the populace and political parties' positions, has been evolving for more than 40 years now, and has been recently occupied by radical right populist parties. These conjectures will be tested with a focus on mainstream parties, by analyzing patterns of congruencies and gaps between parties' stated positions and voters' policy preferences. To the extent that politics is conveyed to the public by the media, the project also examines the discrepancies that have developed with time between voters' preferences and the public sphere operationalized as mass media output. The empirical testing of the data on party positions and of that obtained from public-opinion surveys and media coverage will be carried out for 18 West European countries for the period of 45 years.

The project will have two phases: the goal of the first phase is to map congruence between voters and parties and between voters and mass media. It includes three different sets of data, generated through public opinion surveys, textual analysis, and the coding of party platforms, respectively. To study the "demand" side of the political landscape, we will utilize data from the Eurobarometer (1970-2000, overall 64 points in time), the European Social Survey (2002-2014, 7 points in time) and the World Value Survey (1981-2014, 6 points in time) for a set of 18 European democracies. Based on these, I will trace citizens' political attitudes, left-right self-placement and policy preferences. I will gauge the "supply" side through shifts and dynamics in the party positions, relying on the Comparative Party Manifesto (1945-2017) and textual sources such as parliamentary records. The second phase builds on the findings of the first phase, but its objective is to go beyond mapping, towards understanding the roots of radical-right support and the political preferences and priorities of its electorate. It will combine an original data collection on political preferences and priorities among citizens, and content analysis to identify the factors that foster support for right populist parties.

Briefly stated, this project develops and tests a complex theoretical argument which combines premises involving ideological, social, political, and institutional elements. Such a multi-dimensional, systematic approach will further our understanding of the historical processes and developments in the various European party systems and their role in the upsurge of right populist parties – a topic of crucial importance

for the study of democracy, its strengths, its weakness, and its putative erosion (at least in the form as we know it).

Getting the Balance Right: Explaining the Success of Radical Right Parties in Western Europe

Detailed description of the research program

A. Scientific background

Much has been written about radicalism *per se* and the reasons for its upsurge and growing acceptance. Early analyses of the support bases for far-right parties have yielded two major conclusions. On the one hand, research has suggested that individual-level factors play a significant role in the spread of political radicalism, including a tendency toward authoritarianism, prejudice, national identity, concerns about immigration, and economic hardships. Other analyses have focused on demographic correlates, arguing that radical-right parties are stronger in countries/regions with low education levels and rapid increases in immigrant population, as well as in those whose economy has been undermined by globalization and international trade. In this vein, scholars have contended that, in Europe, right-wing populism gained ground as a result of two gigantic shocks: the 2008 economic crisis and the recent influx of immigrants from the Middle East. Event-driven explanation of this kind, however, give rise to more questions, such as, Why do radical-right parties flourish even after the economic crisis has subsided? or Why do these particular events do set off support for radical-right parties and others don't? Clearly, the importance of shocks as potential factors in electoral changes cannot be discounted – yet, we see them more as catalysts in deeper, more fundamental processes that incrementally change the political system. Accordingly, this project investigates the recent rise in right-wing populism from a very different perspective, namely, as a slow-moving phenomenon that has been unfolding and gaining momentum over a long-term due to the shifts that have taken place in economy and the democratic order.

Theoretically, the proposed research is grounded in two bodies of literature: one is concerned with the evolvment and spread of the extreme right in Western democracies, while the other focuses on democratic representation. While these two fields of study have developed largely independently, their conclusions are strikingly similar and mutually complementary. The former contends that right-wing populist parties are supported disproportionately by low-skilled, working-class men, while the latter highlights anomalies in the representation of poor, working-class, mainly white male voters. Both these literatures focus on voting behavior, yet profoundly diverge in explaining its preconditions. Integrating the above two theoretical approaches allows a more comprehensive cross-sectional as well as longitudinal examination of the complex and multifaceted topic addressed here – namely, tracing, mapping and analyzing implications of the crisis of European democracy over the course of several decades and the concomitant rise of right-wing populism.

Class Politics

Empirical studies in the field of political representation have repeatedly found that working-class white men have been underrepresented in the party systems of advanced democracies (e.g., Lupu & Warner, unpublished manuscript). Explanations in this regard vary. According to some studies, lower-income individuals tend to think of themselves more as members of the nation as a whole than as belonging to its low-status stratum. This is mainly seen as a face-saving strategy, since the nation state as a group is placed

higher than the working-class. Concerned more with status than with income redistribution, working-class individuals vote for right-wing parties, and thereby against their economic interest (Shayo 2009). Furthermore, as Shayo (2009) shows, working-class voters are less likely to identify with their class in situations of high inequality, a propensity which is likewise fraught with consequences for voting behavior. This latter finding goes hand in hand with the literature on the decline of class voting (e.g., Evans and Tilley 2012; Kedar et al., unpublished manuscript).

The literature on class politics accounts for the weakening of the alignment between class cleavages and vote choices through two independent mechanisms (e.g., Elff 2007). The first relates to structural changes, notably the disappearance of manual routine occupations due to progress in automation technologies and to the outsourcing/offshoring of manual jobs to developing countries. Today, the manual working class is drastically smaller than in the 1960s and 1970s, and the service sector outnumbers manufacturing in all European countries (Gingrich and Hausermann 2015; Oesch 2006). This, together with the rise of average education levels, has blurred the differences between social classes and diminished the relevance of such divisions in all areas of life. The second explanation for the decline of class voting appeals to the ideological convergence among mainstream political parties. On this rationale, voters respond to parties' programmatic positions only if the parties diverge on issues that are relevant to different social classes – otherwise, electoral behavior cross-cuts class cleavages. My claim in this respect is that, not only have mainstream left- and right-wing parties become ideologically closer, but also left-wing parties have shifted rightward, embracing the neoliberal discourse, policies and ideology. As a consequence, the composition of the left has changed as well – first, to include middle-class voters (Gingrich 2017), and second, through attracting fewer and fewer members of the working class.

Be it as it may, whether for individual-level reasons (the putative irrationality of the working-class voter) or the structural/political reasons outlined above, scholars concur that the working-class in Western democracies find themselves politically underrepresented. In these circumstances, one may ask, Where, then, did the working-class go? If they are underrepresented among their traditional home-base (i.e., left-leaning parties), which parties do they vote for? With these questions in mind, I turn to a somewhat different literature -- that on the radical right.

The populist radical right

Analyses of the radical right have repeatedly shown that it is supported disproportionately by working-class, mainly male voters (Arzheimer 2009; Emmenegger et al 2015; Hartevelde 2016; Kedar et al forthcoming; see also my findings in Figure 1). The empirical spotlight is usually put on the anti-immigrant sentiment of radical right parties, which is argued to appeal to those who lose out as a result of globalization, usually blue-collar male workers who believe their jobs to be jeopardized by the influx of immigrants (Givens 2004, Inglehart & Norris 2017). Hartevelde (2016) finds that radical right parties that adopt a center-left economic platform attract more voters of lower socio-economic background than their other counterparts. Similarly, Schain's (2000) analysis of the electoral success of the National Front in France shows that its supporters are concerned primarily about unemployment, as opposed to those who vote for mainstream right parties.

Recent work on the electoral support for radical right – found that working-class voters’ preferences for radical right parties is attributable to both cultural and economic factors. Although recent work tends to discount the explanatory power of economic factors relative to cultural ones (Inglehart and Norris 2017), researchers concur that some of the economic factors are indeed at play. For example, and Slaughter (2001) link voters’ position in the labour market to their stand on immigration policy, arguing that low-skilled Americans support restrictions on immigration with more vigour than their high-skilled compatriots (although see Hainmueller et al. 2015, who found no such evidence). In the European context, Ortega and Polavieja (2012) show that the skill intensity required in the occupation of native manual workers is positively correlated with anti-immigrant attitudes. Put differently, these researchers find that the lower strata of the population tend to be more hostile in their attitudes to immigrants; and that conversely, holding a high-skilled job – which usually entails a higher social status – is positively correlated with pro-immigrant attitudes (Polavieja 2016).¹ The second group of factors that lead the working-class to support radical-right parties is essentially cultural, including values and identity. The success of right-wing populist parties, on this rationale, is rooted in a revolt against the cultural changes associated with the growing prominence of more universalistic or post-materialist values. In their review article, Hainmueller and Hopkins (2014) contend that attitudes on immigration can be systematically explained by cultural sentiments alone. Sides and Citrin (2007) also find that individuals’ attitudes on immigration policy are influenced by their national identity, and in particular their preferences for cultural homogeneity. A new line of research endeavors to reconcile the above two explanations for the upsurge of populism, maintaining that, in the modern world, economic interests and cultural frameworks may intersect, reflecting a so-called “class politics” in which people in similar socioeconomic positions may also share a cultural outlook (see Gidron and Hall, unpublished manuscript).

Figure 1 presents support rate for the radical right overtime. It shows the rate of support among working class men (black). For comparison, it also presents the rate of support in the general population measured here as the overall sample (in red). Consistent with common knowledge, the overall trend is an increase in the vote-share of the radical right between 1970 and 2000 with the trend flattening at that point. The trend for working class men, however, is steeper: they turn to the radical right at a rate higher than the general population and continue to do so in the twenty-first century.

[Figure 1 about here]

The above findings regarding the tendency of the working class to vote against their economic interests, to desert left-leaning parties, and to support the radical right all focus on only one side the political map – the electorate and changes therein. But do these changes take place in a void? And is it possible at all that the electorate has changed while the political parties have remained unaffected? This research proposal endeavors to fuse these two paths to account for the success of the radical right. The hypotheses set forth in the next sections shift the analytical focus from the demand-side to a conjoint dynamic of demand- and

¹ At the same time, it was found that the presence of immigrants in routine and manual jobs impels native workers to take on occupations that require more communicational skills, entailing a better salary and an improved position in the labour market (see D’Amuri and Peri 2014).

supply-side factors. The proposed study aims to explore three cornerstones of a democracy that are crucial to its health and stability: the people, the party system and the public sphere. It will gauge and trace longitudinally the evolvement of ideological discrepancies between these three fundamental elements.

B. Research objectives & expected significance

As already stated, support for right-wing populism is especially strong among working-class, economically disadvantaged, white men. A question arises, in this connection, as to possible reasons that the many Europeans who likewise experience economic hardships do not vote for left-wing parties, which have traditionally invested greater efforts to resolve their plight. Furthermore, one might also wonder why this shift is occurring today.

One way to attempt to resolve this puzzle is by studying the “supply side” in the political-party competition. Following this approach, I suggest that the populist right has attracted a large number of voters due to changes in the positions of mainstream parties. I propose to test empirically the three main premises that underlie this contention: (1) The past four decades have been marked by an expansion of representational vacuum, wherein the political party system as a whole has shifted economically rightward (mostly through market liberalization policies, tax cuts, privatization and maximization of entrepreneurial freedoms), and culturally leftward (primarily through secularization, social and cultural diversity, gender equality, and other such trends). As a result of this twofold development, large segments of the European population have come to hold economically left and socio-culturally right policy positions. As an upshot, these people no longer have adequate political representation and feel profoundly frustrated at having no one to speak for them. (2) Based on the economic logics of supply and demand, I contend that radical right populist parties (RRPP) were naturally drawn to fill this representational vacuum, professing to be able to restore the balance between what people want and what political parties have to offer. Put differently, I suggest that the political success of radical right parties is, to a large extent, the result of the mismatch between the populace’s needs and the meager return people feel they are getting from the current political system. (3) I also maintain that, in the face of deepening globalization and increasing uncertainty, identity issues are becoming more and more salient in both voting behavior and party portfolios. This development clearly accords with the growing support for populist parties, whose principal tenets resonate with ethno-nationalist, anti-immigrant and anti-European feelings, thus foregrounding identity and downplaying other, mostly economic, interests.

Systematically delineating and scrutinizing the long-term processes that both shape and are shaped by the increasing prevalence and influence of populist parties in Europe is an empirically challenging task. The first phase of the project will combine three different sets of data, generated through public opinion surveys, textual analysis, and the coding of party platforms, respectively. To study the “demand” side of the political landscape, I will utilize data from the Eurobarometer (1970-2000, overall 64 points in time), the European Social Survey (2002-2014, 7 points in time) and the World Value Survey (1981-2014, 6 points in time) for a set of 18 European democracies. Based on these, I will trace citizens’ political attitudes, left-right self-placement and policy preferences. I will gauge the “supply” side through shifts and dynamics in the party positions, relying on the Comparative Party Manifesto (1945-2017). These indices, but with a more nuanced grid of issues and values, will also be checked through the analysis of textual sources such as parliamentary

records, leadership's speeches, and the ParlSpeech data². Such a systematic, longitudinal analysis of political texts could reveal the implicit and explicit party positions regarding specific political events and help quantify the salience of discourse on different issues that pertain to the main premises stated above.

After mapping the distribution of voters' political preferences and the policy space of the various political parties, I will estimate the distances between these two parameters. To the best of my knowledge, this project will be the first to address this challenge based on an extensive aggregate-level analysis, in an attempt to locate the intersections of supply- and demand-side factors that account for the success of RRPP in Europe. Methodologically, in order to systematically analyse data on both public opinion and political party positions, this project will employ a multi-method approach. Combining statistical analysis with automatic text analysis will allow me to examine the representational gap, that is, the discrepancy between what mainstream political parties offer in terms of representation and people's needs in this regard. Additionally, case-study and qualitative analyses will be carried out to substantiate the main findings.

The second phase of the project focuses on mapping preferences and political priorities of voters for radical right parties. Through the use of conjoint experiment embedded into original surveys in two countries (Germany and France), it will identify the importance RRPP voters attribute to different dimensions of politics and will compare these voters' preference to the general population who do not vote for RRPP.

The project's contribution to the study of comparative European populism and democracy is threefold. First, it sets out to account for the success of right-wing populist parties by investigating not only these bodies or their constituencies, but also mainstream parties and gaps between voters' needs and what these parties have to offer. Second, it broadens the scope of the existing analysis by investigating the phenomenon in question longitudinally and encompassing three different elements – the people, the parties and the public sphere. Inasmuch as we conceive of radical populism as multidimensional in nature, studying its manifestations and implications in these three interconnected arenas is expected to provide a more accurate perspective on, and a more comprehensive and nuanced conceptualization of, the phenomenon itself. Finally, to analyze the public sphere, as well as voters' and parties' preferences, ideological positions and the changes thereof across time, this project employs a variety of methodological tools, including statistical tools, conjoint experiments, automatic content analysis and discourse analysis, as well as an extensive dataset comprising public opinion surveys, parliamentary discourse, the manifesto project, and media communications.

C. Detailed description of the proposed research

C.1. Working hypothesis

Capitalism and value change

It is well documented that, when nations adopt free market policies, their values change in predictable ways. The most detailed longitudinal research on these changes comes from the World Values Survey (WVS) and the European Value Study (EVS), in both of which representative samples of people in each country are

² The ParlSpeech contains more than 3.9 million plenary speeches in the key European legislative systems, covering periods between 22 and 28 years. See

<https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.7910/DVN/E4RSP9>

asked about their attitudes, political preferences and values. Hitherto, these surveys have involved six waves of data collection starting in the early 1980s (the data from the seventh wave is to be released shortly). Nearly all of the countries sampled are now considerably wealthier than in the 1980s, and in the interim many have made a transition from communism to capitalism or from dictatorship to democracy. How have these historical changes affected their values?

The broad picture emerging from these surveys is that, from the 1980s onwards, countries appear to have followed two trajectories. First, with increased industrialisation, they tend to move away from ‘traditional values’ that put emphasis on religion and deference to authority toward ‘secular rational’ values that are more open to change and progress. Second, with increased wealth and the growth of the service sector, nations move away from ‘survival’ values emphasizing physical and economic security, as well as the tribe and other parochial groups, toward ‘self-expression’ or ‘emancipative’ values that underscore individual rights and protections – not just for oneself, but as a matter of principle, for everyone (Welzel 2013). For many decades now, in developed democracies, capitalism has been steadily improving the standard of living. As societies become more prosperous and safe, they generally become more open and tolerant (Haidt 2016). Such openness to other cultures is also brought about by the internet and globalisation. Thus, capitalism leads almost inevitably to the rise of liberal cosmopolitan attitudes, which are usually most apparent in the young urban elites. People begin to think of their fellow human beings as fellow ‘citizens of the world,’ embrace diversity and welcome immigration. It is no wonder, then, that the European Union and some of its member states have welcomed immigrants into the heart of Europe, and then demanded that countries accept and resettle a large number of refugees.

At this point, it is necessary to highlight two points of interest regarding the changes in values outlined above. First, the new liberal emancipative values are not embraced by the entire population in every country. In fact, as a counter-reaction to these developments, some groups have reverted to nationalist values of exclusion and discrimination, combating the globalists and their universalistic projects. If, as we hypothesize here, the political party map has also shifted leftward in cultural values, then citizens holding nationalist views face a double-edged sword: Not only do they see their fellow citizens distance themselves from their worldviews, but their ideology and interests have also been left politically underrepresented. In addition, I posit – and intend to test empirically – that left-leaning parties, which have always constituted a home-base for the working class, have shifted to the right economically. The working people thus feel that they have been deserted and that their economic interests are unprotected: “There is no one who speaks for us!” as it were. Second, these transformations in values have generated a new cultural conflict between post-materialist and materialist values (Inglehart & Welzel 2005) or between universalism and particularism (Gingrich et al. 2015). This newly-evolved frontline might cut across the traditional economic left-right dimension, generating new cleavages and consequently a new politics: one of right-wing populism (Hooghe and Marks 2017).

Two-dimensional politics in Europe

My analysis of the West European political landscape follows other works (e.g., Hillen & Steiner 2017; Lupton et al. 2015; van der Brug and van Spanje 2009) whereby political ideologies in this part of the world, of parties and voters alike, can be located within an ideological space formed by two orthogonal coordinates: economic and socio-cultural left-right. These axes, it is argued (e.g., Kriesi et al. 2008), largely

determine the divisions within political conflict. In Figure 2, the horizontal axis represents the economic left-right continuum, while the vertical – the cultural one. The space is divided into four quadrants, each representing a major sector in ideology, partisan affiliation, and electoral demographics. The three squares (henceforth, panels) representing these categories are shown in the figure separately for clarity, but as our pilot study conclusively shows, in reality they overlap. The ideational panel in Figure 2 (positioned on the left-hand side) displays the ideological configuration according to the economic and cultural indices for each quadrant. As elaborated in what follows, for most parties, culturally right-wing ideology goes hand-in-hand with economically right-wing attitudes (“traditional right”), and culturally libertarian ideology coincides with left-wing economic attitudes (“liberalism”). However, as regards the so-called “new left,” libertarian socio-cultural values are aligned with right-wing economic ideology. I set forth – and propose to test empirically – a claim that, over the course of time, the political system as a whole has been shifting in that direction. Furthermore, I will argue that these party-system tectonics have generated a representational vacuum, mainly in the “left authoritarians” quadrant which encompasses a large number of voters but offers relatively few policy packages. The right-hand panel in Figure 2 displays the traditional divisions within the electorate, corresponding to the support bases for parties located in each quadrant. For example, it is a stylized fact that property owners and wealthy individuals usually vote for liberal parties. At the same time, while five decades ago, women used to vote disproportionately for conservative parties, today they support left-leaning and progressive parties at higher rates than men (the so-called “modern gender gap”). A shift has also occurred in the voting choices of working-class men, who have moved away from left-leaning parties and now disproportionately support radical right parties. To recap, given the above discussion I hypothesize the following:

HYPOTHESIS 1: European mainstream parties had shifted culturally leftward in their portfolios and discourse.

HYPOTHESIS 2: European mainstream parties had shifted economically rightward in their portfolios and discourse.

HYPOTHESIS 3: The cultural dimension has become more and more salient in party portfolios over time.

HYPOTHESES 4: the greater is the gap between peoples’ preferences and the political party system, the higher is the chance to have a successful radical right party.

[Figure 2 is here]

C.2. Research design & methods

First phase of research:

As stated above, the main empirical challenge will be to measure the overtime gap between voters and the political party system. I also wish to measure potential gaps between voters’ position and public sphere. As detailed in Fig. 2, the project rests upon the attempt to position voters and parties on the two-dimensional scale (culture and economy) and then measure gaps, and mainly *overtime changes* of gaps between voters and parties. Data will include 18 Western European countries. Depending on resource and data availability I will add several east-European states as reference points for the overtime changes.

Parties’ position: To study ideological changes in mainstream as well as RRPP parties I draw on two sorts of data sources, the Comparative Party Manifesto and ParlSpeech. The Manifesto Project offers data on

party preferences on specific issues and overarching policy scales for parties from 1945 until today in over fifty countries. The project codes the parties' electoral statements into policy categories, from which scholars infer positions of political parties using different methods (e.g., Benoit et al. 2012; Lowe et al. 2011). Thus, data provided by the Manifesto Project allows estimating parties' positions across time and space. Based on earlier works we will build economic and cultural dimensions of left-right scales on which we shall locate parties across time and place (see description in pilot). The ParlSpeech is a new untapped online dataset containing more than 3.9 million plenary speeches in the key legislative chambers of the Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom, covering periods between 22 and 28 years. I plan to conduct content analysis on parliamentary debates with the aim to capture the cultural and economic left and right dimensions discussed above. Capturing these dimensions can be done in different ways, such as cosine dictionaries, human coding (based on samples) and topic modelling. I will employ the best method for this purpose and validate it manually (by the use of human coders). Results shall be aggregated to the party level, both for mainstream and right-wing populist parties

Voters' position: Voters' political preferences will be measured using public opinion surveys. These surveys are the European Social Survey (2002-2014), the World Value Survey (1980-2014) and the Eurobarometer longitudinal trend file (1970-2002). Voters' cultural and economic preferences shall be examined by their responses to multiple items in the surveys (see description in pilot).

Public sphere: Utilizing news archives (e.g. LexisNexis) we plan to evaluate public sphere at least in two main directions. A straightforward direction will be to evaluate the position of partisan actors in the media on the base of the economic and cultural framework, in a similar manner to the parliamentary discourse. A second, and somewhat more challenging direction is to evaluate overtime trends of main news outlet in the general mood vis-à-vis the two dimensions.

Second phase of research:

To evaluate political preferences and priorities of RRPP voters I will embed conjoint experiments into original surveys in Germany and France. Conjoint experiments are an emergent tool in experimental survey research that allows scholars to explore the multidimensional nature of political choice. Long used by marketing researchers for product development, conjoint experiments have recently been employed by political scientists. In these planned experiments survey respondents will have to decide between pairs of profiles that correspond to hypothetical political parties and are asked to choose which party they prefer. Because the attributes that appear in each hypothetical party-profile will be randomly assigned, the relative importance of these attributes to a respondent's choice can be "identified" non-parametrically.

there are several advantages of conjoint experiments over traditional survey. First, conjoint experiments can allow the estimation of causal effects (in this case – why do radical right voters vote for these parties?) non-parametrically, that is, without requiring that a behavioral model underlies regression estimates. This "model free" property is the lynchpin of the experimental turn in political science. Second, conjoint experiments also reduce concerns about "social desirability bias" which arises when respondents are embarrassed to admit to having preferences that are socially undesirable, such as preferring strong and authoritarian leader. Social desirability bias is reduced because so many characteristics will be varied across party profiles, allowing a respondent to justify their choice with reference to other attributes.

C.3. Preliminary results

In preparation for the proposed project and to test its potential, I have conducted an exploratory study of a limited scope. The countries sampled include Germany, France and Switzerland – three Western European states that differ in their status with respect to the EU membership (Switzerland is not a member while the other two are full members of long standing) as well as in their electoral systems. More importantly, they differ in the level of success of their respective extant radical right parties: While in Germany the Alternative für Deutschland party entered the Bundestag only in the recent election, for the first time since WWII, the radical right party in Switzerland has been the strongest and most stable extreme-right party in Europe; in France, mainly due to the nature of the country's electoral system, the National Front's representation in public office has been limited despite its significant share of votes.

The overall aim of the pilot study was to examine the party-voter linkage. To this end, I utilized the European Social Survey, which includes items tapping respondents' positions on a variety of cultural and economic issues preferences. I mapped the representative samples of the national populace for the above-listed countries in a two-dimensional ideological space described in the preceding section (Panel 1 in Fig. 2). Using exploratory factor analysis, I constructed two factors measuring individuals' economic and cultural attitudes, respectively (see Table 1 for item wording and loadings on the two factors). Items loaded on the economic factor focus on government responsibility to reduce differences in income levels, to take care for the sick and the elderly, and to supply jobs for everyone. The cultural dimension gauges attitudes regarding immigration, women's and gay rights, law and order, and further European integration. Figure 3 is a scatterplot of citizens' position in Germany, Switzerland and France generated for a single point in time (2008). It shows that the distribution of attitudes within the two coordinates differs among the three countries. For example, while in Germany and France the left-authoritarian quadrant (top left) is the most crowded, in Switzerland it is less so than the right-authoritarian quadrant (top right).

Next, I proceeded to probe the supply side of the political map (Panel 2 in Fig. 2), which involved examining party positions and locating the parties within the coordinates. Utilizing the Comparative Manifesto Project, which provides data for a large number of countries over an extended period of time, I constructed measures for parties' stance on a number of economic and cultural issues. Specifically, for each country, I converted different discrete categories pertaining to "left" and "right" to a continuous scale by subtracting the sum of left-associated categories from that of right-associated categories. Figures 4–6 show the location of parties in Germany, France and Switzerland, respectively, on the economic and cultural scales thus constructed, at different election times since the 1950s until today. It is evident from Figure 3 that, from the 1980s until the beginning of 2000s, the left-authoritarian quadrant remained completely empty in Germany. It is also apparent that, culturally, the CDU party in Germany is today positioned more to the left than in 1960s and 1970s. Economically, this party shifted rightwards during the 1980s and 1990s, but later on reverted to the center. All in all, considering the individual-level findings in conjunction with those at the party level, one can clearly perceive a representational gap in the left-authoritarian quadrant. In Switzerland, the voter-party gap emerges in the right-authoritarian quadrant, precisely where the radical right party enters, assuming a strong right-wing economic stance and an authoritarian cultural ideology.

The results of the small-scale pilot elaborated above are encouraging indeed, providing an incentive to expand the study to other Western European countries. The pilot also prompted new ideas that were not

part of my hypotheses at the outset but are well worth examining. For example, could it be that, at some point, mainstream parties realized that they had moved too far from their traditional constituencies? And if so, have they since intentionally attempted to correct their ideological trajectory to appeal to left-authoritarian voters?³ Or possibly such a move would not have been wise strategically, as it would have entailed losing constituencies at the center for the sake of gaining those at the margins. The project will set out to address its initial hypotheses, but will also examine these and other possible electoral dynamics in due course, as its objectives are essentially exploratory.

C.4. Conditions for the Conduct of Research

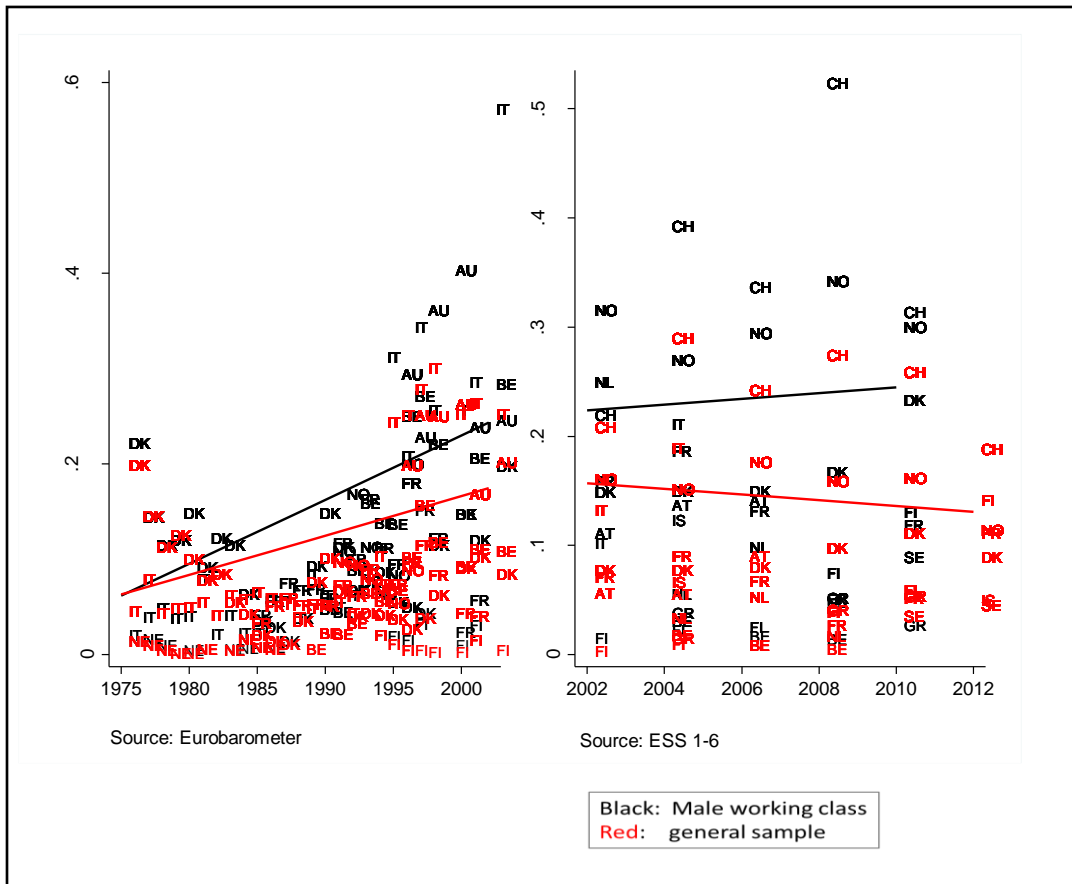
I plan to conduct this research within the framework of four years. In addition to Dr. Oshri as Principal Investigator, there will be a team of up to three graduate/Ph.D. students who will work as research assistants. It should be mentioned that the two students that were already recruited for this project (Neta Kahner and Alon Zoizner) have a strong theoretical background and interest on populism and in the broad field of comparative politics. Alon Zoizner writes a dissertation project that examines the effects of election campaign rhetoric on citizens and the media. Neta Kahner is a graduate student with a keen interest in identity politics and discourse analysis. In addition, there will be two BA or MA students who will assist in reading and analyzing texts written in German and Frances.

The six months prior to the beginning of the funding are slated for preparatory work, including textual and observational data collection. During the first year we will be training the team and be collecting data and carrying out preliminary work for the analyses. Among the initial tasks is the writing of a dictionary (bag-of-words) for recognizing left and right ideology in parliamentary discourse. In a more specific layout, the first year of the project will start with the training of one PhD and one MA student to code parliamentary discourse data and conduct initial tests to ensure the inter-coder reliability of the dictionary being compiled. Simultaneously, samples of public-opinion and parliamentary discourse, as well as data from other relevant sources, will be collected and prepared for analyses. The second year will be devoted to data analysis, conference presentations; we will also be working intensively on papers for publication. I also to start working on the second phase of the project. I will run an original survey in two countries (Germany and France) and will employ the “paired conjoint” design which forces respondents to choose between two options of parties rather than solely rank preferences.

³ For an elaborated discussion on this point see SB Hobolt, C de Vries “challenging the mainstream”. Unpublished manuscript.

Figures

Figure 1. Support for the radical right: Working class and the general population



Note. Rate of support for radical right populist parties among working class men (black) and the general population (red). Working class are those who work in sectors 7 (craft and related trades), 8 (plant and machine operators and assemblers) and 9 (elementary occupations), as is coded in the Eurobarometer and ESS surveys.

Figure 2. The location of parties and segments of the electorate within the cultural and economic ideological dimensions

Cultural dimension

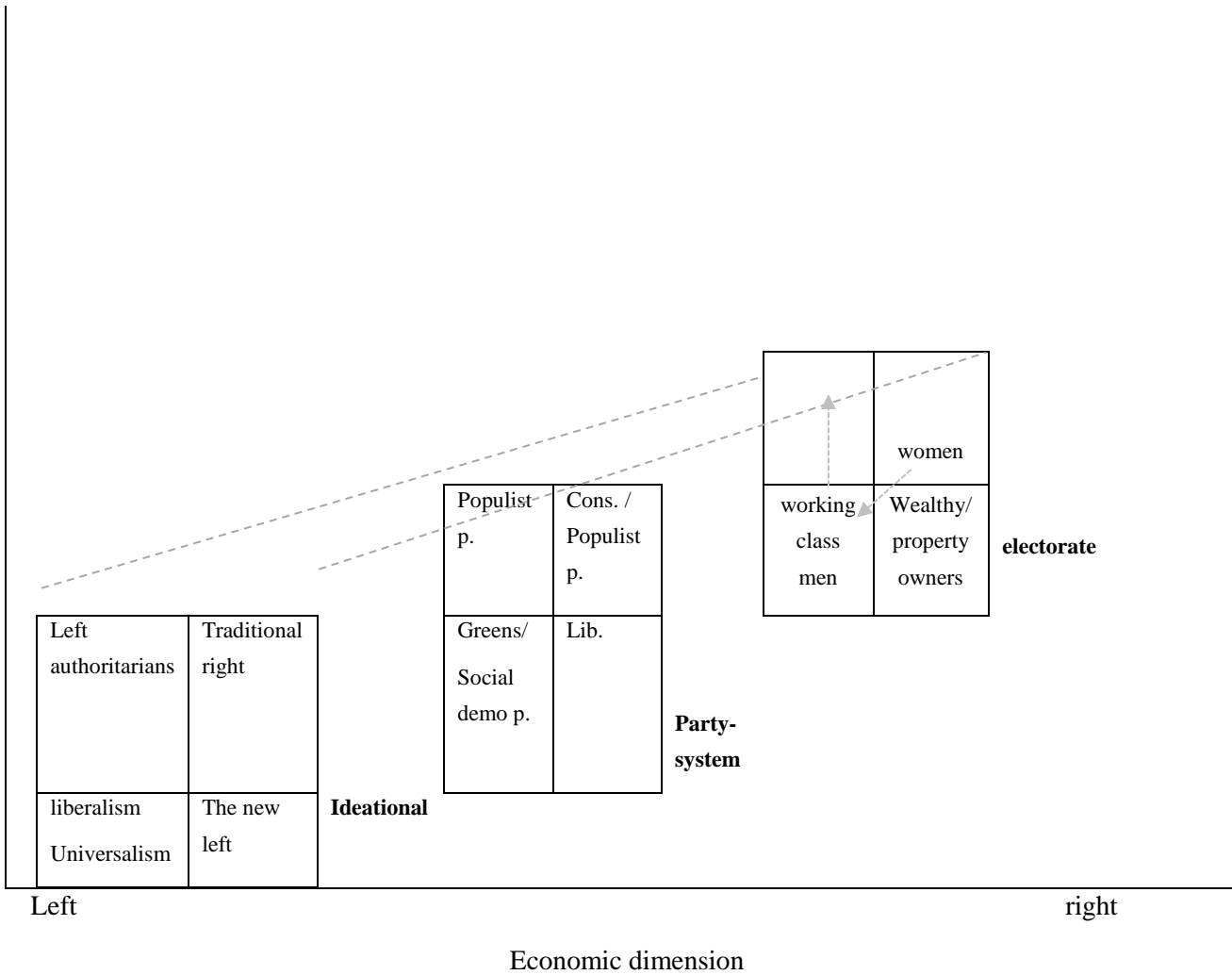
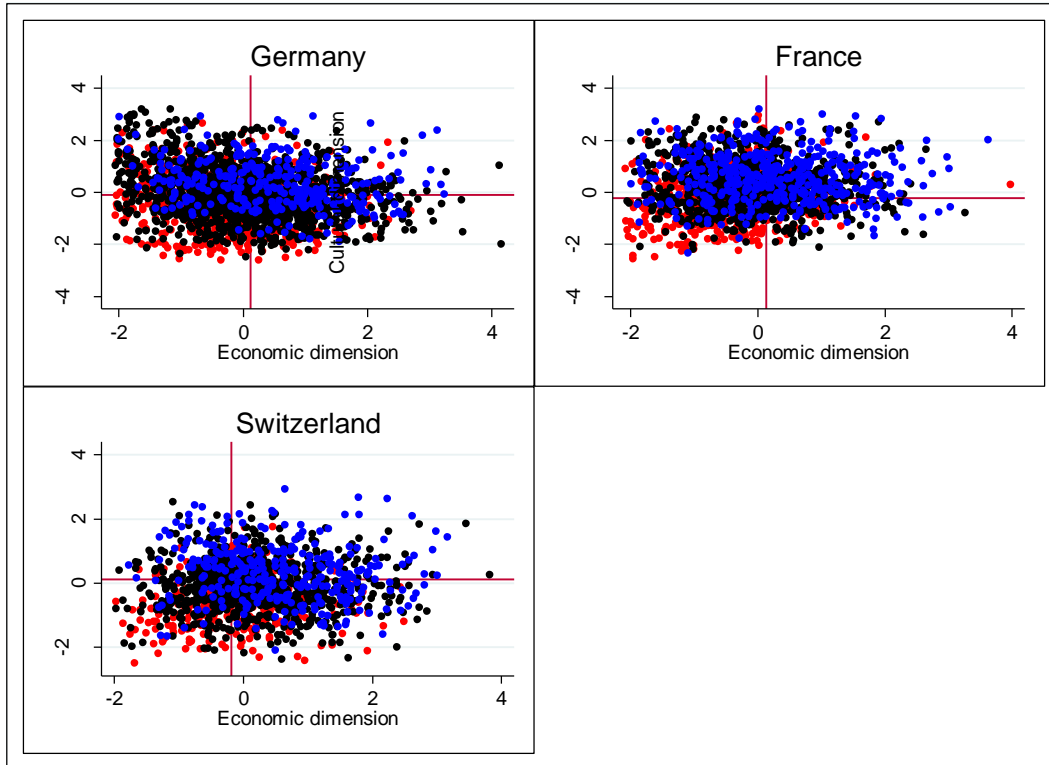


Figure 3. Scatterplot of citizens' positions on a two-dimensional left-right scale



Note. Citizens' positions on economic and cultural issues are presented in different colors, according to their self-placement on a general left-right scale (in red: citizens who professed to be on the left side of the political map, 1–3; black 4–6; blue 7–10). Quadrants are set according to each country's 50 percentile on each dimension.

Figure 4. Germany's party system on a left-right two-dimensional scale

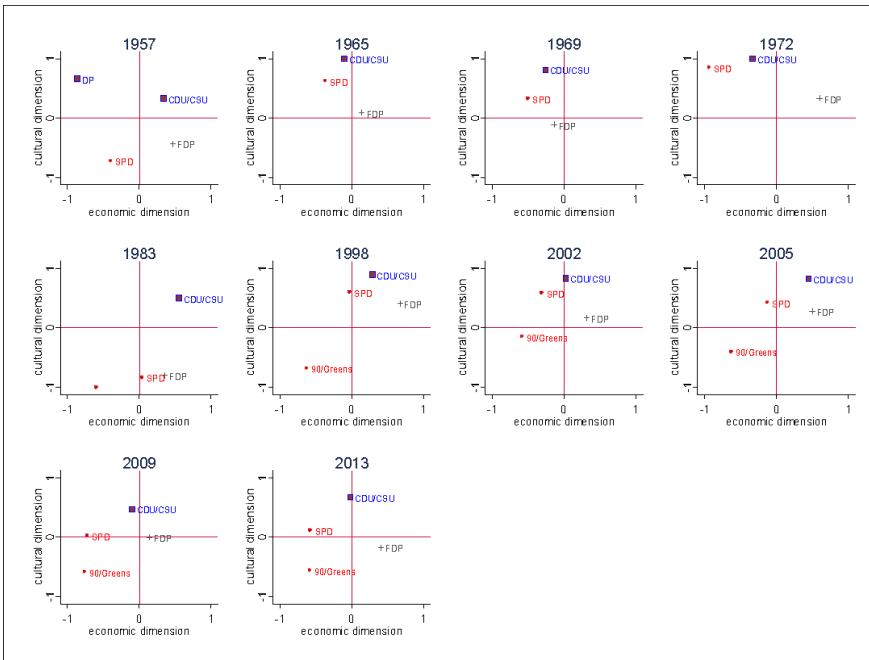


Figure 5. France's party system on a left-right two-dimensional scale

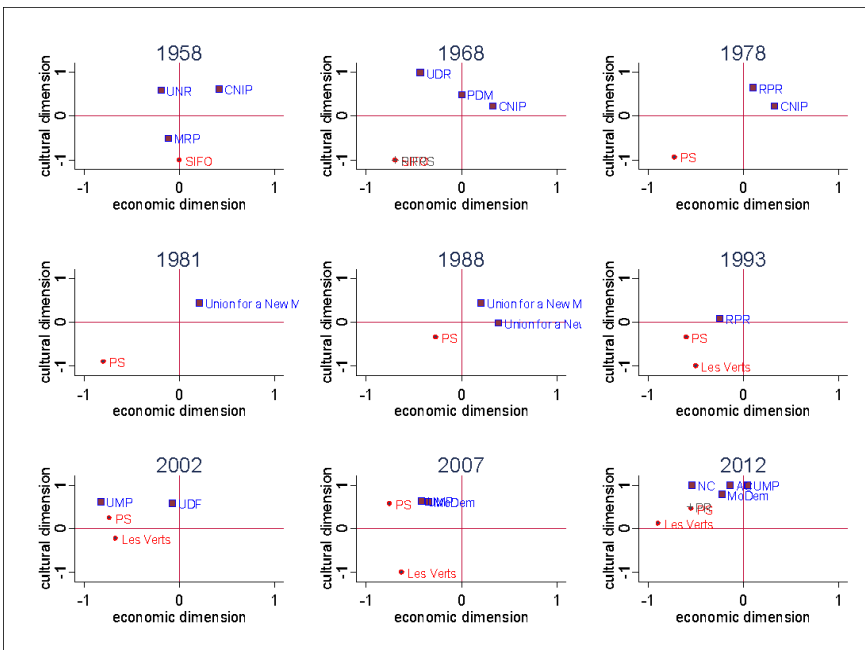
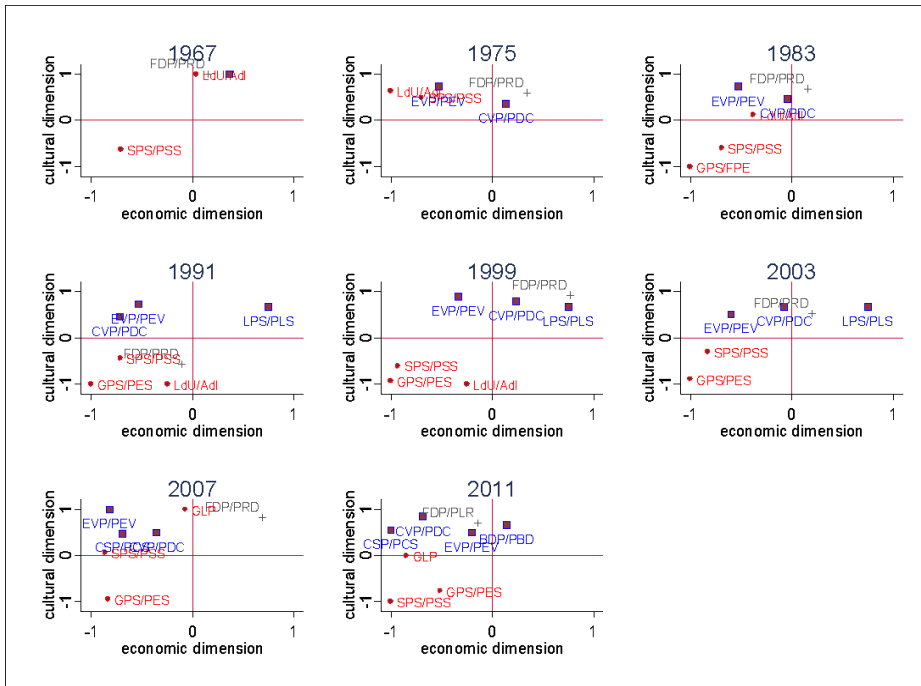


Figure 6. Switzerland's party system on a left-right two-dimensional scale



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