The Macro Polity Revisited:

The interplay between public opinion, policy and economics in European democracies

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences,

Leuphana Universität Lüneburg

Submitted as a requirement for the award of the title of

Doctor of Political Science - Dr. rer. pol -.

Approved thesis by Xavier Romero Vidal,

born on 17 March 1986 in Sabadell.

The individual contributions of the cumulative dissertation project are or will be published as follows:

Chapter 2: Romero-Vidal, Xavier and Van Hauwaert, Steven. "Polarisation between the rich and the poor? The dynamics and structure of redistributive preferences in a comparative perspective"

Revise and Resubmit: *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*

Chapter 3: Romero-Vidal, Xavier and Van Hauwaert, Steven. "Responding to inequality: Income groups and their support for redistribution in advanced democracies"

Manuscript.

Chapter 4: Romero-Vidal, Xavier and Van Hauwaert, Steven. "Responsive to whom? Party ideology and income-group preferences on redistributive policies"

Manuscript.

Chapter 5: Romero-Vidal, Xavier. "Measuring objective and subjective class: The effects of survey questionnaires on the study of class voting"

Revise and Resubmit: *Political Research Exchange*

Chapter 6: Romero-Vidal, Xavier (2019). "Two temperatures for one thermostat: The evolution of policy attitudes and support for independence in Catalonia (1991-2018)"

Published article: *Nations and Nationalism*. https://doi.org/10.1111/nana.12559

Chapter 7: Dellepiane-Avellaneda, S., McGann, Anthony, Romero-Vidal, X. "Austerity and Independence: A Paired Comparison of Catalonia and Scotland."

Manuscript.

Year of publication: 2021.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

Acknowledgements

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1. The comeback of redistributive and territorial politics

The Great Recession of 2008–9 and the debt crisis and austerity measures that followed put European democracies under stress and initiated a decade of political turbulences. In most of Europe, the policy response by mainstream parties from both the left and right focused on tackling debt rather than reducing unemployment (Hobolt and Tilley, 2016). This led to political discontent and protest, particularly in the Southern European periphery that suffered the major consequences of the recession (Della Porta and Portos, 2020). While challenger parties enjoyed electoral gains in most European countries (Hobolt and Tilley, 2016), anti-austerity parties grew rapidly and ended up in power in the European South: first *Syriza* in Greece in 2015, then the *Movimento 5 Stelle* in Italy in 2018 and in 2020 *Podemos* entered the Spanish government. The less successful *Bloco de Esquerda* managed to become a necessary party for a left-wing coalition in Portugal after the 2015 elections. These parties not only criticised austerity measures for their economic or distributional consequences, but they were also condemned because they did not respond to the 'will of the people'. Thus, the debate about the degree of necessary congruence between mass preferences and governmental action gained renewed salience in the public debate. In turn, a non-negligible share of citizens perceived European integration as a constraint that limited the ability of democratic politics to deal with the challenges of global capitalism, which contributed to rising social inequality (Scharpf, 2015).

Calls of 'taking back control' converged with the re-emergence of a territorialised concept of popular sovereignty, behind or inside the borders of the existing nation-states (Kallis, 2018). In order to recover sovereignty, important parts of the electorate started to support the extraordinary territorial exit option (Caramani, 2004; Hirschman, 1970). Pro-independence movements surged in Catalonia (around 2010-2012) and Scotland (around 2012-2014), and the United Kingdom voted in favour of leaving the European Union in 2016, in every case challenging long-term territorial equilibrium.

All in all, economic inequality and territorial politics have been crucial stress factors for European democracies, and have consequently received ample attention from both the public and policymakers. Understandably, social scientists have also paid a great deal of attention to these political phenomena. Countless studies have focused on the adaption of public opinion to a wide range of economic and political contexts (Hakhverdian, 2012; O'Grady, 2019; Wlezien and Soroka, 2019), on the ability of governments to deliver what the public demands (Ezrow et al., 2020; Rosset and Stecker, 2019) or on the rise of support for independence (Balcells, 2013; della Porta et al., 2019; Rodon and Guinjoan, 2018).

This dissertation aims to bring together these somewhat disconnected bodies of literature by providing an overarching view of the dynamics of aggregate public opinion in Europe and its interplay with policy output and economic circumstances.

Motivated by the challenges that European democracies have faced through the last decade, I aim to take a step back and study more generally the evolution of European publics and the representation of their preferences in these two domains: social and territorial politics. As Béland and Lecours (2005: 676) note, the resurgence of sub-state nationalism and the development of the welfare state are among the most remarkable political developments of the second half of the twentieth century. By the end of the century, the retrenchment of the welfare state (Pierson, 1994) and the nationalisation of politics (Caramani, 2004) seemed to signal a decline of their respective relevance. However, the events of the last decade demonstrate that they still are crucial in contemporary politics.

The growth of inequality following the neo-liberal turn in advanced countries (Piketty and Saez, 2006) led to a new economic distribution that Bartels (2008) famously labelled as a "new Gilded Age". The American Political Science Association Task Force on Inequality and American Democracy contributed to the revitalisation of the study of economic and social inequality (Kelly and Enns, 2010). As a result, scholars like Martin Gilens and Benjamin I. Page (Gilens, 2005, 2012; Page and Shapiro, 1992) alerted that economic inequalities generate political inequities that are detrimental to democracy. In turn, scholars started to provide new insights on the political consequences of economic inequality for European democracies like Switzerland (Rosset, 2013) or Germany (Elsässer et al., 2017). Of particular interest here is the degree to which the public demands that the state reduces inequality and protects the most vulnerable, and whether increasing inequality has any effect on these demands. Given the questioning of the ability of states to do so, it is important to assess whether social policy reflects mass preferences.

Similarly, the study of sub-state nationalism has remained a salient issue, probably as a result of a global trend towards the decentralisation of governmental functions and responsibilities to regional governments (Hooghe et al., 2010). It has been argued that the development of decentralised states responds to the existence of subnational community identities or, differently put, sub-state nations (Requejo, 2001), which tend to be stable over time. However, pro-independence movements have continued to emerge in already decentralised countries, and in the Scottish and Catalan case, they have done so in a sudden manner in the aftermath of an economic crisis. Thus, we need new theoretical and empirical insights that can account for such a rapid change on the demand side.

This dissertation is inspired by Erickson et al.'s (2002) seminal study *The Macro Polity*, which puts forward a model of the American political system borrowing the perspective of macroeconomics. Their approach integrates in a single model hitherto isolated areas of research: public opinion, electoral behaviour and partisanship, policymaking and economic conditions. I apply a similar approach to study two domains that are particularly salient in European politics: social policy and decentralisation/secession. In particular, the main focus is on (a) the examination of the driving forces of change in mass preferences and (b) the extent to which these are represented.

In the remaining of this introductory chapter, I lay out the foundations and leading research questions addressed in my dissertation. Section 1.2 provides an overview of the thesis. Section 1.3 introduces the core theoretical concepts regarding the study of macro politics. In particular, in section 1.3.1, I briefly review the evolution of the concept of public opinion, from its origins to its role in the Macro Polity model. Section 1.3.2 discusses the causes of change in public opinion and the research gaps my research addresses. In section 1.3.3, I review the theoretical arguments about policy responsiveness and the research questions drawn from them. To complete the theoretical foundations of the dissertation, section 1.4 discusses the extent to which class politics might still be relevant in current politics. Sections 1.5 and 1.6 summarise the aims of the dissertation and the data and methods used in this dissertation respectively.

1.2. Overview of the thesis

The present dissertation includes six research articles, three of which deal with the inequality-redistribution puzzle and the role of income in it. In a joint effort with Steven M. Van Hauwaert, we scrutinise the evolution of support for redistribution across income groups in seven European countries (1980s-2017) to study three key aspects of redistributive preferences in three corresponding articles. First, we study the preference differences across income groups, both in levels and in changes over time (Chapter 2). By doing so, we can better understand the extent to which income stratifies redistributive preferences in contemporary Europe. Second, we assess the effect of income inequality on support for redistribution, and whether this effect differs across income groups (Chapter 3). This study constitutes an empirical test classic models of political economy on the relationship between inequality and redistribution (Bénabou, 2000; Meltzer and Richard, 1981). Third, we measure the extent to which these preferences translate into actual redistributive policies. In particular, the study focusses on potential imbalances in the influence that different income groups might exert on social policy (Chapter 4). Complementing these aggregate-level studies, in Chapter 5 I explore the extent to which social class still stratifies political preferences and electoral behaviour at the individual level, focusing on the interplay between objective and subjective indicators.

As regards the study of support for independence, I assess the extent to which the Great Recession and the concomitant political discontent are associated with the surge of pro-independence sentiment. In a single in-depth case study of the Catalan case (Chapter 6), I estimate both the policy mood and a new measure of policy preferences, which I label *national* mood. In addition, I estimate separately support for independence. Taking into account both the economic environment and the cohabitation of incumbents at the national and regional level, I aim to understand the patterns behind the evolution of mass preferences in Catalonia. This article, together with a study on the Scottish case (McGann et al., 2019), is one of the first ones to use the macro polity approach at the subnational level. Building on them, and complementing the predominantly quantitative methodological approach of this dissertation, a comparative study of Catalonia and Scotland intends to account for the multifaceted phenomenon of the rise in support for independence. In collaboration with Sebastian Dellepiane-Avellaneda and Anthony McGann, we approach the causal complexity of the phenomenon by focusing on three mechanisms: social preferences, a crisis of representation and party-system dynamics (Chapter 7).

In Chapter 8, I summarise the main findings and discuss their implications, limitations and outline avenues for future research.

1.3. The comparative Macro Polity

This section establishes the theoretical foundation of my study. I present a broad overview of the evolution of public opinion research, from its initial conception to its present operationalisation within the context of *dynamic responsiveness*. I then summarise the state of the art of public responsiveness and policy responsiveness, the two mechanisms at the core of this dissertation. By doing so, I introduce the leading research questions and the articles addressing each of these questions.

1.3.1. The notion of Public Opinion: from the Public Sphere to the Macro Polity

> "People in and around government sense a national mood. They are comfortable discussing its content, and believe that they know when the mood shifts. The idea goes by different names-the national mood, the climate in the country, changes in public opinion, or broad social movements. But common to all of these labels is the notion that a rather large number of people out in the country are thinking along certain common lines, that this national mood changes from one time to another in discernible ways, and that these changes in mood or climate have important impacts on policy agendas and policy outcomes."
>
> John Kingdon (1984: 153)

The dramatic political, social and intellectual changes of the Enlightenment inspired the emergence of the concept public opinion as a collective voice of the popular will in the eighteenth century (Glasser and Salmon, 1995: 9). At the time, the preeminent institution for public discussion –*publicity*- was the press, where the "bourgeois public sphere" resulted from the tensions between state and society (Habermas 1991 [1962]). As Figure 1.1 illustrates, after the sudden emergence of the concept of public opinion in the first half of the eighteenth century, its use stagnated until the first half of the twentieth century, when technical and technological developments allowed the measurement of the hitherto intangible public opinion.[1]

Through the past century, mass polling transformed the way in which the public, politicians and researchers think of public opinion. Although the acceptance of polling results was not immediate, the importance that public opinion data gained was partially due to the credence that politicians finally gave to it (Converse, 1987: 16), not the least as a means of election forecasting. Despite initial criticism to the sampling methods, question biases and house effects, surveys became a key source of data for both public debates and social sciences, which boosted the number of publications focusing on public opinion.

---

[1] A word of caution is in order regarding Figure 1.1. Google Books corpus suffers from a number of limitations that prevents drawing conclusions from it. Its use here is for illustrative purposes only.
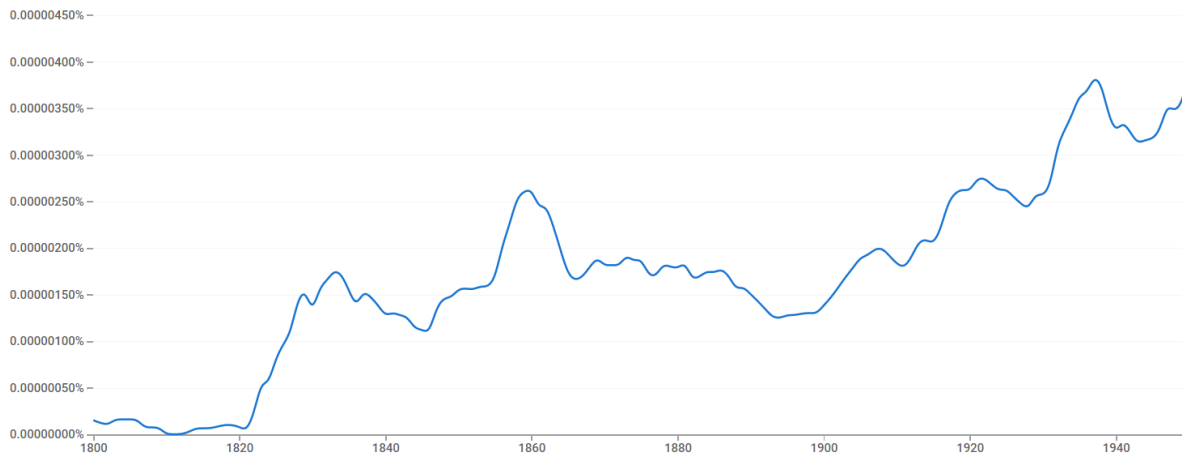
Figure 1.1. The frequentist evolution of the concept public opinion

Note: Normalised frequency of the term "Public Opinion" in a sample of books predominantly in the English language published in any country between 1800 and 1950. Source: Google N-grams.

However, the initial insights brought by representative polls suggested that the democratic ideal of informed and attentive citizens debating in the public sphere did not match the reality of the average coeval American citizen (Campbell et al., 1960). Converse's (1964) analysis of panel survey data revealed that respondents changed their answers in a seemingly random manner when asked more than once the same question. In addition, most respondents seemed unable to place the two American parties in the left-right ("liberal–conservative") axis accurately, suggesting an apparent lack of understanding of ideology altogether. Converse concluded that individuals who change their position over time lack a true belief system and instead express random responses or *non-attitudes* (Converse, 1974). Michigan scholars provided further evidence that ideological inconsistencies were much more common than expected and that citizens had a limited understanding of the meaning of ideological messages. These somewhat disappointing results echoed the concerns of elitist democratic theorists, who had a minimalist view of democracy. In particular, these results seemed to back the idea that political participation had to be limited, given the low level of political sophistication of citizens (Schumpeter, 1946). As Huntington (1968) phrased it in one of his earlier publications, effective democratic governance depends on the "stabilizing apathy of the masses" and should abstain from experimenting with "participatory democracy".

This pessimistic view on the ability of the average citizen to think in an ideologically consistent manner about public matters and to respond to survey questions accordingly triggered concerns among both pollsters and scholars. Why should governments respond to mass preferences if citizens do not hold defined attitudes? Moreover, if citizens changed their preferences randomly, the accountability of representatives was also called in question. Even the continuity of public opinion polls could be under threat: to the extent that they mostly capture non-attitudes, there is little sense in investing resources to measure them.

Fortunately, polling continued to provide new insights into individual-level preferences. Some researchers developed theories that attempted to reconcile the expectations of informed citizens with the disappointing results of the Michigan school. Zaller and Feldman (1992) and Zaller

(1992) offered a more nuanced theory of the survey response, which aims to explain the alleged instability of citizens' attitudes. Rather than stable attitudes, citizens would have propensities to respond one way or another. However, the expressed answer depends on the consideration that comes to mind when a question is asked. Because any particular question primes the respondent in one direction, measurement error was at least partially associated with the specific phrasing of particular survey items. What is more, despite the apparent lack of stable attitudes, badly informed voters were found able to emulate the behaviour of relatively well informed voters using informational shortcuts (Lupia, 1994). After all, the individual-level inconsistencies did not imply that the data were not a source of valuable insight.

Indeed, a striking new insight consisted in the observation that puzzling inconsistencies in survey response at the individual level contrast with an astounding stability in given publics' survey response in the aggregate. When all responses were averaged, the public as a whole appeared to hold stable and ideologically consistent demands —and if they changed, they did as a rather rational response to objective changes in societal conditions (Page and Shapiro, 1992). Given the apparent unpredictability of individual responses, the orderly manner in which aggregate level preferences evolved was puzzling.

The explanation behind these apparently contradicting results is the "miracle of aggregation" (Converse and Pierce, 1992), a collective phenomenon by which the combination of individual responses forms a macro-level opinion. In this process, it is assumed that only a part of the electorate is truly informed and consequently expresses consistent attitudes. Meanwhile, some less informed individuals follow the lead of informed citizens. Crucially, ill-informed citizens respond at random. Thus, the challenge is to discern between the two types of answers: those with a rationale and those that merely express non-attitudes. When asking an individual the same question in two different points in time, we cannot know whether differences in their responses suggest a true opinion change over time or randomness. However, since random responses will balance each other out, the aggregate level values allow us to identify the stable views of informed citizens as well as their evolution over time —therefore recognising the signal amongst the noise (Stimson, 2004: 19). By contrast, variation in aggregate opinion indicate non-random systematic changes.

This "miracle of aggregation" can resolve individual-level inconsistencies, but it cannot eliminate measurement error by itself. The estimation of latent attitudes relying on several survey items on the same issue eliminates a large amount of measurement error and reveals issue preferences that are better structured and more stable (Ansolabehere, Rodden, and Snyder 2008). The resulting estimated preferences have greater explanatory power, suggesting that latent attitudes exist and are stable over time.

Building on the aggregation of individual responses to different survey questions to reduce measurement error, Stimson developed the *policy mood* (Stimson, 1991) —a seminal operationalisation of public opinion that accounts for the central tendency of the public and its evolution over time. The notion is inspired by Lippman's idea that above apparent incoherence, "a collective soul, a national mind, a spirit of the age which imposes order upon random opinion" (Lippmann, 1922: 127)—what is sometimes called the *zeitgeist*. The estimation of *mood* starts with the assumption that citizens do not necessarily have a clear idea of how much

needs to be spent in a certain area or how a given field ought to be regulated. Whereas policy options are quasi-infinite, in contemporary democracies they tend to be limited to dichotomous choices. Citizens formulate preferences relative to current policies, demanding more liberal or more conservative polices. Thus, we expect citizens to take sides, and the resulting dichotomous individual choices become a matter of proportions at the aggregate level. Thus, by aggregating liberal and conservative responses across survey questions dealing with a number of specific issues, we can measure the central tendency of public opinion. To do so, Stimson (1991, 2018) developed a dyad-ration algorithm that estimated the latent dimensions, the first of which can usually be interpreted as left-right dimension, which commonly summarises preferences and party positions in all modern democracies (Budge et al., 2001). The policy mood thus provided a quantifiable measure of the once abstract concept of public opinion.

In their influential book *The Macro Polity*, Erikson, MacKuen, and Stimson (2002) rely on the policy mood and aggregate measures of partisanship ("macropartisanship") to present a fully integrated model of the political system. Connecting these time-series with aggregate measures of legislative and judicial output, their work puts forward the framework to study how policy preferences are formed, evolve over time and are eventually represented by incumbents. The authors articulate a macro approach to politics borrowing from macroeconomics the notion that movements of aggregates influence each other. Whereas in economics markets are the main aggregate actor, in politics the main macro actor is the public, in terms of its aggregate opinion.

Wlezien (1995) reinforced the development of a framework of dynamic representation by putting forward the thermostatic model. In this model, the public acts like a thermostat that sends signals to increase or decrease spending in a given field, depending on the current level of public spending. In contrast to Stimson's (1991) approach, public opinion is measured relying on independent single-question series, asking whether current spending in a policy area is too high, about right, or too low in a policy domain (such as healthcare or defence). In their later work, Soroka and Wlezien (2010) build on the thermostatic model to present a framework in which public opinion shapes public spending even between elections, as a result of the constant relationship between public preferences and governmental activity.

The Macro Polity model synthesises the interplay of voters and parties over time in the US, but it has been used to study British politics too (Bartle et al., 2011, 2018; McGann et al., 2019). In addition, a number of studies have adapted the macro polity model to multiparty systems, indicating that dynamic representation is not limited to majoritarian systems. Thus far, this research has focused not only on European democracies like Germany (Weiss, 2012), France (Stimson et al., 2012), Italy (Bellucci and Pellegata, 2017), and Spain (Bartle et al., 2020), but also on Mexico (Baker, 2015), Russia (Matovski, 2018) and Japan (Ohmura, 2018), attesting the growing interest for an encompassing understanding of the contemporary politics. Despite the increasing complexity of governance, this body of literature has provided us with a parsimonious understanding of the process of dynamic representation in which the public and policy-makers are in constant dialogue.

Building on this body of literature, this dissertation aims to apply some of the core mechanisms of the Macro Polity to the study of two salient domains in European politics: social policy and

secession. To do so, I estimate the latent preferences in these domains using the policy mood methodology. My goal is to advance our understanding of (a) the driving forces behind the fluctuation of mass preferences and (b) the extent to which policy responds to public opinion. As illustrated in Figure 1.2, I expect that the economic environment –including income distribution- is simultaneously an outcome of and a constraint for governmental action. At the same time, economic factors will influence citizens' demands. Crucially, I expect public opinion and governmental action to react to one another, via policy and public responsiveness.
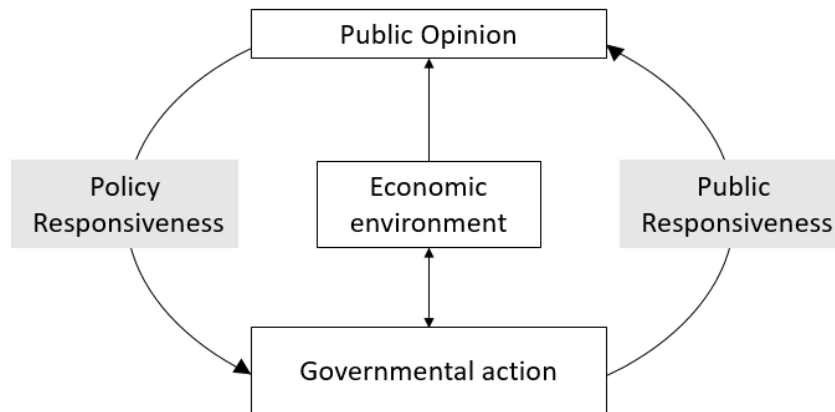
Figure 1.2. Dynamic responsiveness framework

The next two sections review the state of the art of the study of both policy responsiveness and public responsiveness with the intention to carve out the most important unresolved questions in the literature. I also present how each article included in this dissertation addresses the respective research questions.

1.3.2. Public responsiveness

Although the measurement of public preferences at the aggregate level tends to stable results, they are in constant flux. What are forces behind these constant movements? When it comes to the short-term evolution of policy preferences, the literature mainly posits two complementary explanations: economics and politics. In what follows, I present some of the core works in the field that set the main expectations as regards why mass preferences change over time.

Adapting preferences to the economic context

The large body of literature devoted to economic voting has shown that people's decisions are conditioned by economic factors such as unemployment, inflation or economic growth (Lewis-Beck et al., 2008). For the economic environment to change electoral behaviour, it needs to first change the demands of the citizens. One of the first attempts to show that the central tendency of public opinion responds to changing economic expectations was Durr's (1993) article "What moves policy sentiment?". His results suggest that a strong economy fosters support for liberal policies, whereas declining economic conditions move the mood to the right. However, later research finds that the public demands more government intervention as unemployment rises, therefore moving the policy mood to the left (Erikson et al., 2002; Bartle et al., 2010; Weiss, 2012). Thus, the negative effects of unemployment diminish those of economic prosperity (Wlezien and Soroka, 2019).

Scholars pay ample attention to the causes and possible corrections of increasing economic inequality (Atkinson, 2015; Piketty, 2014). Specifically, rising income inequality among advanced post-industrialised democracies and the impact of the growing economic gaps on public opinion are at the heart of scholarly debate across social sciences (see Piketty 2020). Numerous studies focus on the influence of economic inequality on support for redistribution, which constitutes a flourishing field of research to this day (Breznau and Hommerich, 2019b; Kevins et al., 2018; Schmidt-Catran, 2016). Although rising income inequality concerns political scientists as much as sociologists and economists, the literature has only produced contradicting results so far. The results of this vast literature group into three categories depending on the effect that inequality is claimed to have on support for redistribution:

a) *Positive effect*: In line with the classic political economy model by Allan Meltzer and Scott Richard (1981), a number of studies have found that growing inequality tends to increase support for redistribution among middle-incomers or throughout the entire electorate (Andersen and Curtis, 2015; Franko, 2016; Kevins et al., 2018).

b) *Negative effect*: In line with Bénabou's (2000) alternative model, evidence coming mostly from the US shows that income inequality decreases support for redistribution across all income groups (Kelly and Enns, 2010; Luttig, 2013).

c) *Null effect:* In opposition to those who find an association between inequality and redistributive preferences, some studies suggest that there is no generalizable effect of actual inequality on support for redistribution across countries (Breznau and Hommerich, 2019a; Gimpelson and Treisman, 2018).

In addition to these inconclusive results about the effect of inequality on public opinion as a whole, some studies suggest that this effect might also vary across groups within countries. Since income stratifies the possible gains or losses of redistributive policies, scholars have explored whether different income groups react to inequality in different ways. Here again, scholars have provided divergent results. Some authors find homogeneous effects across income groups, either positive (Franko, 2016) or negative (Kelly and Enns, 2010). In contrast, some studies suggest that the effect of inequality indeed differs across income groups (Andersen and Curtis, 2015; Rueda and Stegmueller, 2016).

All in all, scholarship remains largely inconclusive about the influence of inequality on support for redistribution. We thus need more evidence that can account both for aggregate level effects and within-country heterogeneity. Chapter 3 aims to do so by using a unique data set of estimates of support for redistribution across income groups in seven European democracies. The aim is to advance our understanding on how economic inequality influences support for redistribution, if at all, and how this effect is moderated by income.

Economics might also shape mass preferences beyond economic policy domains. The study of economic and sovereignty preferences in this dissertation provides the opportunity to assess the similarity of their evolution and the relationship between them. Nonmaterial accounts have dominated the study of secession politics in the literature of comparative politics (Hierro and Queralt, 2020), focusing on national identity over economic factors (Serrano, 2013). Nevertheless, scholars have proposed different links between economics and support for independence. Cuadras-Morató and Rodon (2019) summarise the three ways in which

economic factors might influence support for independence. First, some authors argue that economic hardship has contributed to the rise of secessionism in Catalonia (Muñoz and Tormos, 2015; Rico and Liñeira, 2014) and Scotland (McKendrick et al., 2014): people suffering economic deprivation become dissatisfied with central institutions and become more willing to accept the creation of a new state. Second, people will support independence if they expect it will benefit the economy of the region (Boylan, 2015). Third, regionalist politicians might strategically use economic recessions to blame the central government and activate secessionist demands (Barrio and Rodríguez-Teruel, 2017). In short, economic factors not only shape economic policy preferences but also sovereignty ones.

Studies using left-right scales have shown that independence supporters concentrate on the left side of the ideological spectrum (Guinjoan and Rodon, 2016; Hierro and Queralt, 2020). However, the correlation between economic and sovereignty preferences at the aggregate level has not been studied. In addition to the micro-level mechanisms to explain support for independence, it is important to account for societal transformations parallel to the rise of support for secession to better understand how public opinion as a whole evolves in other dimensions when pro-independence movements surge. The lack of empirical evidence of any association between objective economic indicators and sovereignty preferences at the societal level is a critical gap because the interplay between economic and sovereignty preferences is an intriguing case of interaction between economy-related (materialist) voter interests, on the one hand, and identity-related (cultural) voter orientations, on the other—indeed an interaction that remains largely under-theorized to date.

In Chapter 6, I examine the degree of parallelism between the Catalan policy mood (accounting for left-right mass preferences) and sovereignty preferences. In addition, relying on an unconstrained version of Stimson's (1991) dyadic ration algorithm, I discuss whether both series of preferences can be better thought as different political dimensions or a single one. The results have implications for scholars interested in the dimensionality of mass preferences and its evolution over time. Chapter 7 contrasts the Catalan case with the Scottish one. Together, both articles explore the causes behind the shift towards increasingly pro-independence public opinions and provide new insights into the roots of change in public opinion at the subnational level, which remains an understudied area of research despite its importance in "plurinational democracies" (Keating, 2001).

Adjusting preferences to policy output and outcomes

As illustrated in Figure 1.2, public opinion is expected to react simultaneously to the economic environment and to what the government is doing. Mass preferences can, thus, be thought to be relative to what government is doing recently (Stimson, 2004: 31), demanding more of the same policy or a change in the policy trajectory. These relative opinions behave like a thermostat in Christopher Wlezien's (1995, 2004) influential account of public opinion, in which preferences and policy react to one another. Simply put, the thermostatic model posits that citizens adjust their preferences for policy change based in part on current policy, favouring less (more) policy when policy increases (decreases) all other things being equal. Importantly, *thermostatic* responses do not require that all citizens hold absolute policy preferences; it only needs that (some) citizens know the direction in which policy is changing. As with a thermostat,

we might not know how warm an apartment needs to be, but it suffices to sense that it is too cold to activate the signal for the heating system. As the apartment gets warmer, one might feel that the temperature has risen enough, and so the demand for heating stops. Even more, if the heating warms the apartment above the desired level, the signal will be reversed, and we might demand not only to stop the heating but to turn the A/C on. This simple procedure ensures that we get the desired temperature. Likewise, political preferences can also be expressed in relative terms demanding to continue or change the policy *direction* of the government, rather than to fix at a pre-defined absolute level.

Wlezien's work has mostly focused on public spending, showing that the support for domain-specific spending decreases when such spending increases, i.e. the public reduces its support for healthcare expenses when government increases spending in that area (Wlezien, 1995, 2004; Wlezien and Soroka, 2019). In *The Macro Polity*, Erikson et al. (2002) show similar dynamics taking a more comprehensive approach. Instead of focusing on spending, the authors show that public opinion shifts in the left-right dimension respond in an orderly manner to aggregated government activity and economic performance. Thus, when government activity is liberal, the public shifts into a conservative direction, and vice versa.

While the thermostatic model provides a parsimonious account of the bidirectional process between policy and public opinion, a number of factors seem to moderate this relationship. Popular incumbents seem to be able to push public opinion in the same direction as policy, while unpopular incumbents trigger a countermovement effect (Hakhverdian, 2012). In addition, the public can also demand a change in the policy trajectory as a result of unforeseen or negative consequences (Fernández and Jaime-Castillo, 2013; Weaver, 2010).

Crucially, institutional design might affect the way in which the public reacts to what the government is doing. In particular, territorial decentralisation –federalism- seems to lessen publics' ability to react to governmental activity (Soroka and Wlezien, 2010). One of the main reasons is the difficulty of citizens to appropriately attribute responsibility for policy outcomes to the appropriate level of government (Cutler, 2008). The interdependence between national and regional budgets thus limits public responsiveness when it comes to spending preferences (Wlezien and Soroka, 2011, 2012). In order to further assess the extent to which decentralisation limits the ability of the public to react to different levels of governments in a thermostatic way, I take Catalonia as a case in point. Since Catalan politics have been widely assumed to be bidimensional (left-right and sovereignty dimension), it provides the opportunity to assess how both left-right preferences and support for decentralisation evolve in a decentralised setting as a function of regional and national level incumbents (Chapter 5).

The study of support for decentralisation and independence is a new avenue to study thermostatic responses. Innovative research has tested whether the thermostatic model can explain immigration attitudes (Van Hauwaert and English, 2019), attitudes towards homosexuality (Abou-Chadi and Finnigan, 2019) and support for democracy (Claassen, 2020), bridging different specific literatures with that of macro-opinion. Following this line of inquiry, this dissertation explores public responsiveness in different ways. At the subnational level, it studies how the classic policy mood and an equivalent measure for sovereignty preferences (the *national mood*) evolve over time (Chapter 5). In addition, and from comparative

perspective between European states, this dissertation tests the degree to which support for redistribution responds in a thermostatic way to government activity (Chapter 2).

1.3.3. Policy responsiveness: the public opinion – policy link

I have thus far stressed two causes of public opinion change, namely economics and policy output. Let us now turn to the influence of public opinion on policy. The degree to which public policy reflects the wishes of the public is an essential question for political science (Mansbridge, 2003; Sabl, 2015). Classic works on democratic representation highlight the importance of a systematic opinion–policy link (Dahl 1971; May 1978; Pitkin 1967), suggesting that the public should influence government action in a democracy. Admittedly, different notions of democracy imply different levels of congruence between mass preferences and policy output.[2] Still, the mainstream of contemporary democratic theory requires a close correspondence between the laws of a nation and the preferences of citizens who are ruled by them. For that reason, cases in which law deviates from citizen preferences need justification, whereas cases in which law conforms to the preferences of the governed do not (Rehfeld, 2009: 214).

Political elites have their own agenda and interests. Therefore, we could expect them to resist to change legislation in response to changes in public opinion. At the same time, if the mismatch between public opinion and their positions is too evident, they might be electorally punished. This means that incumbents have to be responsive to the public to the extent that they seek re-election, assuming that voters are aware of deviations in public policies from their own policy preference. Thus, incumbents have incentives to update policy in line with a public opinion that is in constant flux. If public opinion changes and then public policy responds, this is a dynamic representation process (Stimson et al., 1995).

A large body of literature has provided evidence that policy output reflects national public opinion, using a variety of approaches and operationalisations (Erikson et al., 2002; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Soroka and Wlezien, 2010). A stream of research has focused on government spending, showing that the allocation of funds across policy areas reflects mass preferences in the US, Canada and the UK (Soroka and Wlezien 2004, 2005, 2010). Again, Erikson et al. (2002) take a more comprehensive approach. Moving beyond sheer spending, they average different policy indicators to provide a general answer to the rough question "Does public opinion influence public policy?" (Erikson et al., 2002: 314). Their results also suggest that elected leaders tend to respond to shifts in public opinion.

Questioning this rosy picture of responsive government among mature democracies, a rapidly growing body of works suggests a negative or conditional link between public opinion and policy. The two major caveats seem to be differences across policy fields and between citizens. Regarding the former, policy representation seems to function to different extents across policy domains (Rasmussen et al., 2019). Thus, responsiveness in average policy activity might be covering representation deficits in specific domains. Regarding differences between citizens,

---

[2] For example, Schumpeter (1946) puts forward a minimalist notion of democracy in which the congruence between public opinion and policy is neither required nor desirable.

an increasing number of studies suggest that governments are more responsive to the preferences of the rich than to those of the poor (Bartels, 2008; Elsässer et al., 2017; Giger et al., 2012; Gilens, 2015). In particular, income-group representation biases seem to be present in European democracies (Giger et al., 2012; Peters and Ensink, 2015; Rosset and Stecker, 2019). Roughly put, these studies suggest that the poor are poorly represented in policy, whereas the rich tend to get their way. A systematic literature review of unequal representation patterns shows that most empirical evidence finds different levels of policy responsiveness between high- vs low-income citizens (Elkjær and Klitgaard, forthcoming). Contrariwise, some scholars argue that similarities across groups limits the extent to which inequalities in representation can exist (Enns and Wlezien, 2011; Soroka and Wlezien, 2008a). Thus, in order to assess policy responsiveness, we first need to ensure that income groups really have different policy preferences, which in the case of redistribution is analysed in Chapter 2.

In sum, despite the apparent dynamic representation of public preferences in broad terms, when we disaggregate mass preferences across groups and issues, imbalances might emerge. In particular, Rosset and Stecker show that the relatively poor are particularly underrepresented on redistribution (2019). Yet, their results are based on party positions and not actual policy outputs. Therefore, while we have enough reasons to suspect that group representation in the field of redistribution might be prone to imbalances, comparative empirical evidence remains scarce.

Chapter 4 aims to fill this research gap by measuring the influence of income-group preferences on redistribution and economic inequality on actual social policy across seven European democracies. The unprecedented yearly estimates of redistributive preferences across income groups not only enable a new approach to the study of the public opinion-policy link in the field of social policy, but it also will shed light on the extent to which all group opinions are represented equally.

1.4. Why bother studying income groups? A renewed approach to class politics

As previously mentioned, representation imbalances require that group preferences differ and shift differently over time. This dissertation explores the level of heterogeneity in redistributive preferences across income groups and whether we find increasing polarisation over time (Chapter 2 and 3). The focus on income differences stems from the main economic models of redistribution (Bénabou, 2000; Meltzer and Richard, 1981), in which income would be the basis for the estimation of gains and losses from redistribution. Scholars have used different approaches to measure income-group preferences and to then test empirically these models (Finseraas, 2009; Kelly and Enns, 2010; Kevins et al., 2018). Nevertheless, Stuart Soroka and Christopher Wlezien (2008) and Page and Jacobs (2009) argue that policy preferences across income groups are often similar. An alternative approach to within-country heterogeneity is that of Fernández and Jaime-Castillo (2018), who use occupational groups to study pro-redistribution attitudes across social classes. Both income and occupation seem to be the main factors shaping redistributive preferences (Guillaud, 2013).

Yet, the notion that material conditions stratify the public has been increasingly contested. The substantial changes and ever-growing instability of Western electorates since the 1970s calls

into question the idea that the structuring effects of social cleavages can predict party choice. Whereas Lipset and Rokkan's (1967) freezing hypothesis provided an explanation for the stability of party systems in the post-war world, the increasing volatility of electorates and the consequent instability of party systems have called for new explanations. Perceptions on competence, issue voting, and many other factors have come to complement the classic cleavages identified by Lipset and Rokkan (1967): religion, class, language-communalism and regionalism. Under the light of this evolution, some scholars claim that social class, in its classical sense, has lost its vote-predicting power. Dalton (2019[1996], 186) goes even so far to suggest that the decline in the class basis of politics was the "new 'conventional wisdom'" of comparative electoral research.

Nevertheless, the rise of economic inequality in advanced democracies in the last decades has prompted a sort of comeback of class politics research, both in terms of political inequality and class voting differences. As a matter of fact, despite the decline of the magnitude of differences between different strata, social class still stratifies the left or right–wing vote (Jansen et al., 2013). Class would thus still be relevant for voting behaviour in many societies, or at least the evolution of the class structure might explain vote choice, or the decision of whether to vote at all (Evans, 2017: 181). Given the importance of issue voting and the renewed vigour of moral politics, class voting might result from different value orientations. Recent evidence shows that despite the shared movement moving from illiberal to liberal values across all social classes, the speed with which they move varies significantly, increasing the ideological distance between social classes (Alexander and Welzel, 2017). Thus, social class still seems to play a relevant role in contemporary politics.

Despite the longstanding interest in social class research, there remains a great deal of ambiguity concerning the conceptualisation and operationalisation of social class (Loignon and Woehr, 2018). Scholars have alternatively used income, occupation, education, or subjective ratings to measure people's social class (see Loignon and Woehr 2018 for a review of its operationalisation). Others have focused on the link between different components of class, paying particular attention to the correspondence between objective measures and class identification (Evans, 2017; Hout, 2008). Given that these do not always coincide, a new line of research focuses on the causes and consequences of this *class discordance* -the mismatch between objective and subjective class- in the US (Sosnaud et al., 2013) and Europe (D'Hooge et al., 2018). However, their studies rely on different measurements of subjective social class, which is a common issue making the comparison of results across studies on social class more difficult. Hout (2008: 28–29) shows that responses regarding one's social class depend on the categories offered in survey questions. As a result, class discordance is by definition dependent to the categories of subjective class included in the survey questionnaire.

Chapter 5 studies the extent to which different measurements of social class influence the study of class voting patterns in Europe. The first aim is to study the mismatches between subjective identification and objective measures like income, occupation and education. The second aim is to examine whether these mismatches exert an influence on voting behaviour. By doing so, I provide a renewed account of class voting patterns controlling for both objective and subjective class. To assess the way in which results can vary depending on the subjective class

categories used in survey questionnaires, I rely on data from a survey experiment in which respondents were randomly assigned alternative questions with different class schemes. These data allow me to consider the effects of different survey questions on the study of social class.

In addition to these self-standing research questions, this chapter makes two additional contributions that are particularly relevant in the context of this dissertation. First, it provides an account of the relationship between income, which is the main variable stratifying preferences in this project, and other class indicators. In line with previous studies, I expect that income will contribute to class identification and that this influences electoral behaviour in turn. Whereas this association has been found in the US (Sosnaud et al., 2013), the role of income has not yet been taken into account in similar European studies (D'Hooge et al., 2018).

Second, this article relies on data from Catalan respondents. As explained in Chapters 6 and 7, the political debate in Catalonia is decisively modelled by the independence issue, a polarizing topic with supporters and opponents across the left-right spectrum. As a consequence, Catalonia constitutes a paradigmatic least-likely case for class voting. Evidence of class differences in such a context would have implications as regards the resilience of class politics even in advanced economies in which second dimensions are more salient than the traditional left-right divide.

1.5. Aims of the dissertation

Whereas each individual paper addresses some research questions and engages in different academic debates, all of them contribute to a systematic and comprehensive account of the societal-level dynamics of European politics. This section presents a summary of the main aims of this dissertation and what are the most relevant innovations or potential contributions.

As regards the aims of this project, the main goals are:

1) To build new measures of public opinion that accurately track the evolution of European publics and *subpublics*. Thus, I do not limit the study of public opinion to national level accounts but also address internal heterogeneity, focusing on income and regional differences.

2) To study how mass preferences (in the domains of redistribution and sovereignty) react to political and economic factors. Specifically, I want to uncover the effects of inequality on support for redistribution and explore the grounds for sudden changes in sovereignty preferences, i.e. an increase in support for secession.

3) To explore how subnational publics more generally react to national and regional governments simultaneously.

4) To analyse and reflect on the differences in support for redistribution across income groups. By doing so, I want to explore whether group preferences converge or diverge over time and in relation to societal factors.

5) To measure the extent to which European governments respond to changes in public opinion in a systematic manner in the field of redistribution. In addition, I will explore whether there are biases in the influence that income groups have on governments, leading to potential representation inequalities.

6) To provide an updated account of the stratifying power of social class on preferences and to critically reflect on the shortcomings of different class operationalisations.

These goals are shared with many scholars working on different subfields of social sciences, and therefore a great deal has been said and published about the issues I will study. Yet, this dissertation contributes with new insights to the existent literature in at least four ways:

a) **A comparative approach**. While most of the macro-politics research is based on single-case studies, this dissertation exploits the leverage of comparative research. On the one hand, three of the articles study the common dynamics across seven European democracies. These countries share similar levels of democratic development and face similar challenges as regards their economic inequality levels, granting their comparability. Yet, by going beyond single case-studies, the results presented here aim to have a higher degree of generalisability than previous research. At the same time, this dissertation embarks in two studies taking Catalonia as the least-likely case for both public responsiveness in the left-right scale and for class voting, given the salience of the pro-independence debate. Nevertheless, the Catalan case is also put into perspective through a "paired comparison" (Tarrow, 2010) with Scotland.

b) **Subnational macro perspective**. By studying the Catalan and Scottish cases, this research project moves our field forward into disaggregating national public opinion into subnational units. Despite the pressing challenges of "plurinational democracies" (Keating, 2001), researchers tend to overlook within-country regional heterogeneity when studying public opinion or, to a lesser extent, value orientations (but see Welzel 2013, 95–103). By taking subnational territories as cases of study, we might gain a deeper understanding of the forces behind aggregate level changes driving policy-change and, in some cases, pro-independence movements.

c) **Unbundled mood.** One of the key concepts of the Macro Polity research is the policy mood, which aggregates a wide range of issues into a single main dimension. However, while representation seems to work in this doubly aggregated level (individuals and topics), some evidence indicates that policy representation varies across policy domains (Rasmussen et al., 2019), highlighting the importance of disaggregating both public opinion and policy measures. Recent efforts have started to *unbundle* this general mood into field-specific opinion measures on domains such as climate change (Brulle et al., 2012) or immigration (Van Hauwaert and English, 2019). In a similar vein, I combine the study of the classic policy mood with the estimation of more specific measures, such as the "national mood", combining territorial preferences and identities or estimates of redistributive preferences. These new measures of public opinion benefit from the aggregation of variables insofar they eradicate measurement errors or house effects, yet provide more specific insights into how macro-politics function beyond a single left-right dimension.

d) *Meso*-**politics**. In addition to disaggregating the policy mood into thematic measures and at the subnational level, this project aims to advance in our understanding of dynamic representation patterns by looking at another level of internal heterogeneity. In particular, I study income-group opinions within each country. By estimating original yearly measures of mass preferences, I can track both the responses of public opinion to contextual factors and the influence of each income group on policy change. Such group mood measures are

not completely new: in the US previous research has calculated the policy mood for groups divided across partisan lines (Ura and Ellis, 2012), educational level (Enns and Kellstedt, 2008) and even income groups (Ura and Ellis, 2008). By contrast, such measures are still scarce in the European context, mostly due to the lack of data. By pooling all available survey data, this project puts forward new measures of income group preferences that scholars can use for a wide arrange of purposes.

All in all, these theoretical and empirical innovations might shed new light on the dynamics of European public opinion and its role in the political system. In addition, the data produced for this dissertation will be available for other scholars to further exploit their potential.

1.6. Remarks on data and methods

This section provides a brief overview of the main data sources used in the empirical analysis. Although each article includes the detailed information on the corresponding data base, I briefly discuss here some generic considerations regarding the benefits and limitations related to the use of such a large number of data sources.

Given the longitudinal perspective of this dissertation, the availability of standardised questionnaires among nationally representative samples of residents and repeated over time is crucial. The United States have a long tradition in public opinion research that goes back to the late forties, grating a rich array of polls that ask respondents consistently about their political preferences. By contrast, such public opinion studies are more recent and less systematic in Europe. As a result, a large share of the most prominent public opinion studies come from the US, and their results are assumed to apply elsewhere due to the lack of data to empirically replicate their results in other contexts. To make up for such shortage of longitudinal studies on European public opinion, one of the main efforts of the present project is to build new measures of public opinion that would enable such studies.

Fortunately, international surveys started to be fielded in the 1980s. The World Values Survey offers unique cross-national and longitudinal data not only for European countries but for more than a hundred countries around the globe. Among others, the International Social Survey Programme and the Comparative Study of Election Studies project have widened the assortment of available comparative data sets with regular modules, allowing the tracking of public opinion trends for several countries. Specific to the European context, the European Social Survey and the European Electoral Studies further enrich the pool of data sources to track public opinion trends. All these sources provide unique insights to track the evolution of European publics, yet their questions are only fielded every few years, and therefore cannot be used separately to track annual changes. Tracking such short-term variation is crucial to understand the constant interplay between governmental action and public opinion.

At the national level, there is a large degree of variation among European countries regarding their public opinion data tradition. Some countries like Spain have a single main source of publicly available public opinion data, others like Germany have a number of them. Some countries have surveys starting in the forties like the United Kingdom, while for younger democracies it is impossible to track public opinion before the seventies. Yet, through the second half of the second century, national surveys with consistent questionnaires became more

common and frequent. In addition to the cross-national and national survey data, surveys with subnational representative samples have increased, particularly in decentralised countries. As a result, there is a plurality of survey data sources in Europe which, if combined appropriately, can offer unprecedented analysis of European publics.

In order to build the data set required by the goals of this dissertation, I build on great efforts done by hundreds of researchers and pollsters for decades. Without all their work, the studies presented here would not be possible. On the one hand, the data for the estimation of redistributive preferences relies on the data collected by the Global Public Opinion Project, led by Steven Van Hauwaert. The project maps survey questions that are repeated through time, independent of their source, and provides a common code to homogenise the responses. Following this data selection and collection, each survey file has been treated individually to extract the distribution of responses across income groups. On the one hand, the data for the Catalan and Scottish publics has been collected *ad hoc* for this purpose. In the case of Catalonia, I gathered and mapped the data myself, while in the Scottish case, this was a joint effort of Sebastian Dellepiane-Avellaneda and Anthony McGann.

The data management of such large number of surveys (nearly 500) and data sources can be challenging and time-consuming. Incomplete data or file errors are pervasive and require ongoing dialogue with data keepers. In addition to the recoding of hundreds of survey items from different sources (and file formats), the research design required the splitting of every sample into five income groups. To do so, I had to rely on a wide variety of income scales and convert them to quintiles. After doing so, the distribution of responses for each survey question among each income quintile from each single survey file had to be extracted and saved in a new file containing all survey marginal for each country-income group. Doing that manually required months of mechanic work. After a pilot study with the first two countries, the data management plan was readjusted to maximise the automatisation of the data transformation process. To do so, I employed an R script that automatically tabulated and extracted the data for a given country. Previously, all variables needed to be recoded: preferences had to be scaled (pro- or against redistribution) and income scales had to be manually transformed into quintiles. Thus, the data management process still requires a considerable amount of manual work, and writing a custom-made script is not exempt of challenges. Yet, without the partial automation of the data extraction, the generation of such a database would had been unmanageable.

Once the datasets with the distribution of responses across groups and countries is ready, the estimation of the yearly public opinion measures is possible. To combine all series on redistributive preferences I mostly rely on the dyadic ratio algorithm put forward by Stimson (1991, 2018). However, this algorithm is built under the assumption that public change evolves slowly, and therefore tends to smooth change in the estimated series. Since the interest in chapters 2-4 and 5 is on the annual variation of preferences, I do not use the option to further smooth the series. As regards the study of pro-independence preferences, single series are characterised by a sudden surge, and thus the dyad ratio algorithm is not the best fit in this case. Thus, the estimation of support for independence in Chapter 6 is based on a simplified version

of the Item Response Theory alternative put forward by Anthony McGann (2014)[3], which does not assume a slow change in public preferences. By doing so, we expect to better capture the peculiar evolution of mass preferences in these contexts.

---

[3] In this case, the estimation relies in a linear model with a parameter for each year and a parameter that gives the difficulty for each question. One question is set to have a difficulty score of zero in the priors, and thus serves as a baseline. The algorithm scales everything relative to this question. The estimation process is done using simultaneously JAGS (program for analysis of Bayesian hierarchical models) and R code. For a more detailed account of the original IRT algorithm see McGann (2014).

Chapter 2

Polarisation between the rich and the poor? The dynamics and structure of redistributive preferences in a comparative perspective

Xavier Romero-Vidal, Leuphana Universität Lüneburg

Steven M. Van Hauwaert, University of Surrey

Abstract

Although redistribution is common and even entrenched across contemporary democracies, support for it varies largely between and within countries. An important empirical challenge in the study of support for redistribution is the scarcity of comparative data, which this study overcomes by designing a novel time-series cross-sectional dataset that spans more than three decades in seven European countries. Using nearly 300 surveys and a dyadic ratios algorithm, we estimate aggregate redistributive preferences for each country, as well as for population strata within countries based on household income. We find that European citizens are not systematically becoming either more reluctant towards or more supportive of redistribution. Our results suggest that, while the preferences of the rich and the poor do not move in parallel, there is no polarisation between the two. As a whole, the data show that both demand for redistribution and the preference gap between the rich and the poor evolve in a cyclical way.

2.1. Introduction

In his seminal work *Politics: Who gets what, when, [and] how,* Laswell (1936) addresses a series of issues that remain recurring questions in politics today. The notion of politics as the resolution of how resources will be distributed has sparked much political economy and public policy research related to inequality and redistribution. At the same time, this extensive scholarship has overlooked an important and equally necessary question, namely "who *wants* what and when". Classic political economy models tend to avoid public opinion and undermine the role that citizens play in the inequality-redistribution puzzle, in spite of the extensive macro polity literature highlighting its importance (Erikson et al., 2002). As a direct consequence, the question of what people want in this domain needs further clarification, and aggregate insights into redistributive preferences are limited due to the scarcity of available measures.

Our study sets out to fill that gap by providing unique measures of redistributive preferences. By means of a comprehensive time-series cross-sectional design, we model the extent to which these preferences evolve over time in a set of European democracies. Furthermore, we explore variation within individual countries, i.e., whether the preferences of different segments of the population move in different ways. In particular, we analyse the way income affects the structure and evolution of redistributive preferences. By distinguishing between the preferences of the rich and the poor, we assess whether they diverge or converge over time and which income stratum primarily drives the observed dynamics.

Drawing from a large number of survey data sources and using a dyadic ratios algorithm, we construct country-year measures of redistributive preferences for country populations and three different income quintiles (low, middle and high) in seven European democracies: France (1981 – 2017), Germany (1980 – 2016), Great Britain (1981 – 2017), Netherlands (1975 – 2017), Norway (1981 – 2017), Sweden (1980 – 2017) and Switzerland (1993 – 2017). The underlying dataset comprises 1,016 country-year observations and relies on 299 surveys, 1,384 item series and 8,328 administrations. Our findings provide key insights into the comparative macro polity. Although there is some shared variance, we find little evidence of a cross-national trend in redistributive preferences. Within each country, public opinion trends do not have a systematic trajectory, but are rather cyclical. In line with extant scholarship, we find that different income groups, and most notably the rich and the poor, demand different levels of redistribution. Yet, our results also indicate there is more independent movement (less parallelism) between the rich and the poor in Europe compared to what scholars find in the US. The preference gap between the rich and the poor is rather stable over time, meaning there is no clear polarisation or convergence between the two. As a whole, the preference measures and overarching dataset do not only provide an important resource for scholars studying the relationship between inequality and redistribution but also for those with an interest in public opinion, the comparative macro polity and the empirical study of democracy more generally.

2.2. Introducing redistributive preferences

Since the 1930s, public opinion scholarship has included an important conceptual debate about the nature of public opinion itself: What constitutes public opinion (and what does not)? However, contrary to most "essentially contested concepts" in political science (Gallie, 1955),

there appears to be quite some congruence in the overall conceptualisation of public opinion (see Converse, 1987). In line with much of the literature, we therefore think of public opinion as the collective or aggregate of true or long-term individual policy preferences, attitudes and beliefs regarding a harmonised or specific set of issues and questions (Key Jr., 1961; Page and Shapiro, 1992; Stimson, 1991).[4]

Such a macro-societal conception of public opinion has a number of important implications. Not only does it provide an aggregate reflection of the so-called 'breeding ground' of political phenomena, it also allows political actors to respond to societal evolutions and develop appropriate political strategies (e.g. Druckman and Jacobs, 2006; Stevenson, 2001). In turn, the matching of political supply with political demand can be seen as a core characteristic of representative democracy (Key Jr., 1961; Manin, 1995). Therefore, an accurate and comprehensive understanding of public opinion also has relevant normative implications (Erikson et al., 2002; Stimson et al., 1995).

While there have been important debates about the nature and movement of public opinion as a whole, recent academic work also examines public opinion in what may be called more disaggregated forms, tracking the preferences of different population strata within each country. Most notably, public opinion scholarship explores preferences related to inequality, wealth and income distribution, and particularly how these may differ between (income) groups (Enns and Kellstedt, 2008; Enns and Wlezien, 2011; Gilens, 2005, 2009; Kelly and Enns, 2010; Page and Jacobs, 2009; Ura and Ellis, 2012). Most such studies agree that different societal groups – whether defined by education, race or gender – have distinct demands. This highlights that heterogeneity in mass preferences exists in specific issue arenas in which groups have distinct demands (Kellstedt, 2000).

While social and cultural issues such as immigration increasingly dominate the agendas across advanced democracies, the economy – as a political issue – continues to play a prominent role in party competition (Williams et al., 2016), electoral outcomes (Singer, 2011) and policy priorities (Bevan and Jennings, 2014). This is unsurprising considering how governments have faced recurrently periods of economic and financial hardship throughout the last decades, most notably the energy crisis in the late 1970s, the global economic recession in the early 1980s, the economic downturn in the early 1990s, the financial crisis in the late 2000s and the European debt crisis in the 2010s. In light of the ensuing inequalities and polarisation, citizens – and the political arena more generally – remain attentive to economic questions and concerns regarding the role of government (Bellucci et al., 2012; Jennings and Wlezien, 2011).

The role of government remains largely a directional or spatial issue for which "reasonable people can take either side" (Stimson, 1991). Citizens position themselves alongside a continuum of dis/agreement with respect to government involvement and redistribution by demanding more or less of it. This is in line with earlier theorisations, for example, by Page

---

[4] Authors largely agree that we can measure public opinion through some form of aggregation of individual survey items (Berinsky, 1999; Miller and Stokes, 1963; Page and Shapiro, 1992; Stimson, 1991a, 1999), although the precise specifications of how to appropriately do this remains up for debate. We return later to how we propose to do this.

and Shapiro (1992), who argue that increasingly available survey data allow us to capture aggregated public demands or sentiments that concern relatively specific and highly salient societal points of contention over time. With that in mind, we understand peoples' opinions for redistribution, which we refer to as *redistributive preferences*, as a comprehensive construct that describes the evolution of a set of collective preferences or aggregated opinions regarding the levels and impact of redistribution in society.

Such domain-specific interpretations of public opinion, as opposed to more universal ones like "mood" (e.g. Erikson et al., 2002), are not uncommon. We refer, for example, to studies utilising government spending preferences (Jacoby, 2000; Shapiro and Young, 1989; Wlezien, 2004), mass preferences in policy-specific domains (Soroka and Lim, 2003; Wlezien, 1995) or policy-specific moods (Coggins and Stimson, 2019). Extant research studying preferences regarding redistribution often times remains on the individual level and singles out partial components of redistributive preferences, ranging from targeted indicators, such as the support for the introduction of a two-tier welfare system (Bay et al., 2013) to more general measures, such as attitudes towards welfare policies (Svallfors, 2012), redistribution (Gonthier, 2017) or government intervention to combat inequality (Breznau and Hommerich, 2019a; Fernández and Jaime-Castillo, 2018; Finseraas, 2009; Peters and Ensink, 2015). Alternatively, some studies rely on a group of survey items to estimate latent measures of preferences regarding redistribution. Cavaillé and Trump (2015), for example, distinguish between support for redistribution *from* the rich and support for redistribution *to* the poor, and Roosma et al. (2013) identify seven different dimensions of redistribution.

Our operationalisation of support for redistribution intends to be more comprehensive. In this regard we build on Lupu and Pontusson (2011), who study "aggregate support for redistributive policies". Yet, while they measure preferences using a single survey item, we estimate latent preferences relying on a large number of survey questions. This allow us to identify the potentially multifaceted nature of our latent measure. Additionally, Lupu and Pontusson limit their analysis to the percentage of middle-income citizens who think that government are responsible for reducing income differences, whereas we also take into consideration the preferences of the first and fifth quintiles (rich and poor, respectively)

Due to a lack of consistent data, even in countries with extensive survey traditions, previous studies often remain limited in their temporal and geographic scopes. This leaves unexplored the nature and movement of the 'the median voter' and the citizenry as a whole. With that in mind, a targeted scholarship examines a variety of macro opinions that are closely related to redistribution, such as government responsibility in social domains (Brooks and Manza, 2006), social spending (Wlezien, 1995, 2004), preferences on welfare policies (Coggins and Stimson, 2019; Margalit, 2013), social policy preferences (Iversen and Soskice, 2001) or support for government activity (Brooks and Manza, 2013). Other studies rely on more general measures of economic conservatism (Caughey et al., 2019) or 'policy mood' (Bartle et al., 2019, 2020; McGann et al., 2019).

We add to this scholarship by designing comprehensive country-year measures of redistributive preferences for seven European democracies using a dyadic ratios algorithm. In what follows, we theorise their structure and examine patterns of variance between and within countries,

comparing the aggregate opinions of different income groups. This will allow us to assess whether redistributive preferences of the rich and poor become more or less polarised in the time period under analysis.

2.3. Data specifications: estimating redistributive preference measures

We rely on a unique dataset of redistributive opinion measures from seven countries: France (1981 – 2017), Germany (1980 – 2016), Great Britain (1981 – 2017), Netherlands (1975 – 2017), Norway (1981 – 2017), Sweden (1980 – 2017) and Switzerland (1993 – 2017). With the exception of the longer series in the Netherland and the shorter series in Switzerland, the series go from the early 1980s to 2017. The dataset includes an extensive selection of thematically grouped items, which have been asked on at least two different occasions, from a wide range of high quality national and international opinion surveys. We include all questions concerning positions towards the welfare state, social benefits and public spending in fields that directly enhance redistributive policies (and therefore excluding defence, culture and environmental protection spending). We also include items dealing directly with redistribution, taxation and the role of the state in reducing inequalities. Thus, we also incorporate some items related to the desired degree of government involvement throughout economic and business functioning.[5] Table 2.1 includes an overview of the total number of questions (often across different surveys) and administrations in every country.

Table 2.1: Data sources

	Start date	End date	Time points	Item series (questions)		Survey items (administrations)	
				No.	%	No.	%
France	1981	2017	37	65	18.79	315	15.13
Germany	1980	2016	37	50	14.45	215	10.33
Great Britain	1981	2017	37	55	15.90	482	23.15
Netherlands	1975	2017	43	48	13.87	418	20.08
Norway	1981	2017	37	39	11.27	152	7.30
Sweden	1980	2017	38	55	15.90	273	13.11
Switzerland	1993	2017	25	34	9.83	227	10.90
TOTAL			254	346		2,082	

Note: A visual overview of the individual series per country are available in section 2.B of the supplementary materials.

For each survey item, we compute the percentage of citizens wanting more redistribution and divide it by the cumulative percentage of those wanting more and those wanting less redistribution, while using each survey's weight to account for design and sample biases. Higher values of the resulting "survey marginals" indicate relative preferences for more

---

[5] This corresponds to categories 120, 140, 160 and 180 of the project (see codebook). For a detailed country-by-country list of surveys, question wordings, years of measurement and degree of repetition of the included items, we refer to section 2.A in the supplementary materials.

redistribution, while lower scores indicate preferences for less redistribution.[6] It is important to note that absolute levels of redistributive preferences are less relevant here, since we seek to record and examine changes over time. Marginals from questions repeated over time form independent item series.

The diverse frequencies of item series within a country complicate the identification of comparable trends. Some survey items we include have been asked at twice, some more frequently. Yet, consistent item series that allow for comparisons through time and across space remain scarce given variations in question wordings, response categories, ordering of the survey, sampling methods or the absence of data points following survey-specific or rotating modules. Yet, some examples of longer series in our countries inquire about the size of the public sector (Sweden, 32 administrations), the balance between tax reductions and social benefits (Great Britain, 31 administrations), the desirability of income difference (Switzerland, 24 administrations; Netherlands, 22 administrations) and general state intervention (France, 15 administrations). Even if some individual series provide reasonable coverage, conclusions drawn from a single series are likely to be subject to several types of bias and measurement error. While relying on a single item can provide important insights, it is important to note that it restricts the analysis of public opinion in its classical sense, namely as a latent construct with a long-term equilibrium (Key Jr., 1961; Page and Shapiro, 1992; Stimson, 1991a).

Our starting point is a set of item series for each country. In order to group them and get a single measurement of the latent support for redistribution in each of the seven countries, we employ a dyadic ratios algorithm (Stimson, 1991, 2018). This method is conventional in macro polity research (Bartle et al., 2011, 2019; Enns and Kellstedt, 2008; Kelly and Enns, 2010; Stimson et al., 1995), but much more limited across issue-specific applications of public opinion largely due to data restrictions. Notable exceptions use the algorithm to construct measures of presidential approval (Carlin et al., 2015a, 2015b, 2018), attitudes towards immigration (Jennings, 2009; Van Hauwaert and English, 2019), support for independence (Romero-Vidal, 2019), environmental concerns (Brulle et al., 2012) and gender equality (Koch and Thomsen, 2017), amongst others.

The dyadic ratios algorithm presupposes that each single item time series can be considered a valid indicator of redistributive preferences, and therefore the change between any two values within that time series (a dyad ratio) is a relative indicator of change in redistributive preferences over time. Through an iterative process, the algorithm estimates the covariance between the dyadic ratios of each item. From this covariance, it then calculates validity measures for the different dyad ratio series and uses these to estimate the best possible latent measure. The dyad ratio series combined and adjusted according to their covariance compose redistributive preference values at each available user-defined interval (in our case, *per year*). In order to maintain accurate patterns of variance over time, we use these data-driven estimates without applying any smoothing models. In other words, we combine the independent single-

---

[6] This entails a reverse coding of the original data produced by the project. We do this to better fit our study in the existing literature.

item series and estimate a combined redistributive preference measure for each country and year.

The loadings of the item series on the underlying measure vary from high to low, as they tap different components of the construct and gauge it to various extents. On average, the first dimension of the estimation captures nearly 60 percent of the variance (see Table 2.2).[7] This supports our idea that redistributive preferences are most appropriately captured as a one-dimensional construct.[8] We standardise the measures using country-means because the absolute values are dependent on each country's individual series and we are mostly interested in change over time. We display the corresponding measures in Figure 2.1.
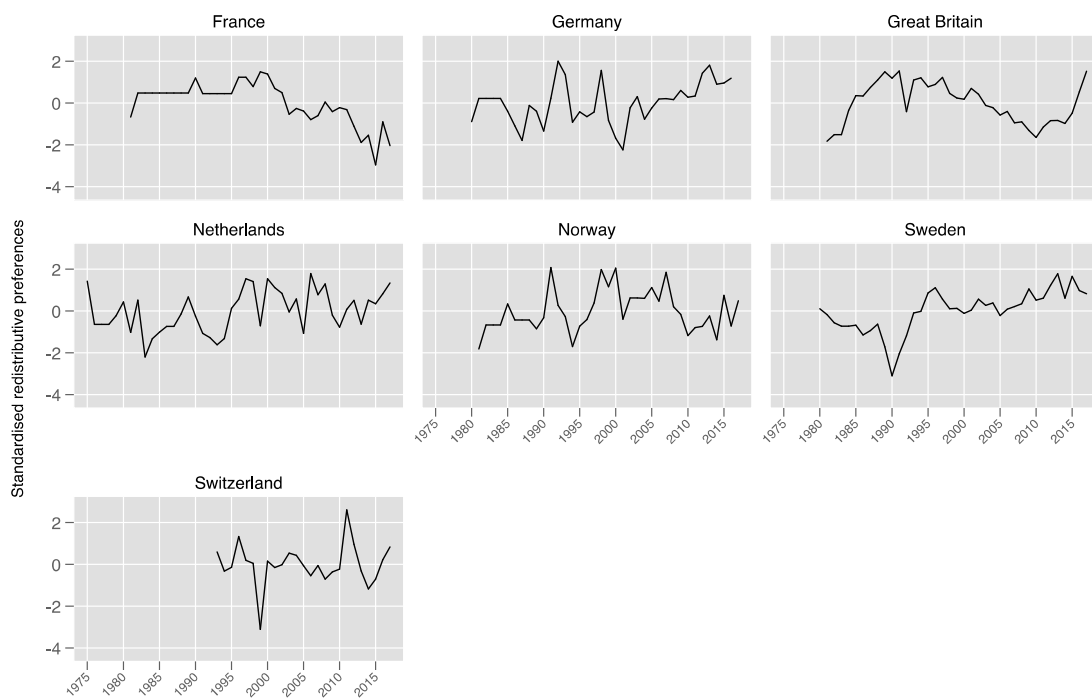
Figure 2.1 Standardised redistributive preference measures, by country

Note: All measures have been standardised using country-means. Higher values indicate support for more redistribution.

While many scholars argue there is a neo-liberal trend across advanced democracies (Schram, 2015), this is not something we see translated in the evolution of European publics, at least not to the same unambiguous extent. Rather, the defining feature of redistributive preferences is cross-country variability, without a clear-cut cross-national pattern. Redistributive preferences appear to have a cyclical character in all countries, alternating periods of higher and lesser demand for redistribution. The standard deviations of the redistributive preference measures in Table 2.2 further illustrate the cyclical nature of these preference measures. Most notably,

---

[7] See section 2.C in the supplementary materials for country-by-country factor loadings.
[8] Even when we specify a second dimension throughout the estimation procedure, it only accounts for an average of 8 percent of the variance across time and countries.

redistributive preferences remain relatively stable in France, while they move more in the Netherlands and Germany.

Table 2.2 Descriptive statistics across years, per country

	Years	Mean	Std. Dev.	Explained variance
France	37	65.803	2.559	64.33
Germany	37	69.940	4.095	53.44
Great Britain	37	67.884	3.993	52.17
Netherlands	43	65.311	5.854	41.71
Norway	37	69.702	3.764	69.52
Sweden	38	68.739	3.340	65.36
Switzerland	25	68.260	3.442	56.24
Average	36	67.875	4.362	57.54

Redistributive preferences covary – although not perfectly – over time and a trend in one country appears to be reflected in other countries. The average inter-item covariance of 0.16 between the seven measures indicates that, while most of their movement remains country-specific, they share some cross-country movement.[9] The factor analysis in Table 2.3 further illustrates that there is a shared consideration across most countries that accounts for about one third of the cross-country variance (EV = 2.08).[10] This suggests a certain degree of parallelism in redistributive preferences between countries.

Table 2.3 Summarised factor results of redistributive preferences

	Factor	Uniqueness
France	0.8418	0.2621
Germany	-0.6914	0.5017
Great Britain	0.5485	0.5904
Netherlands	0.1854	0.6738
Norway	0.3222	0.5933
Sweden	-0.6676	0.4787
Switzerland	-0.0939	0.8628
EV	2.08	

A descriptive examination of redistributive preferences indicates some common movement across European democracies, which could be referred to as a "European redistribution mood".

---

[9] See section 2.D in the supplementary materials for full tables of alpha test scales.

[10] Naturally, a factor analysis presents only a summarised analysis in this case, as it does not fully appreciate the dynamic time-dependent nature of the data. We recognise this and use the analysis only to highlight there is a hint of some shared movement across countries. See section 2.E in the supplementary materials for a more detailed factor analysis.

Yet, there is important country-specific movement of redistributive preferences as well.[11] Based on the uniqueness estimates in Table 2.3, more than half of the variance (about 57%) remains country-specific on average. This does not only indicate national particularities – and, thus, independent movement, but it also suggests that the movement and variance of citizens' redistributive preferences vary within countries, at least to a certain degree.

2.4. Redistributive preferences across income groups

2.4.1. Within-country patterns of variance

Considering the extensive country-specific variance, it is difficult to speak of a clear and homogeneous cross-national trend. The question remains, however, whether the public preference structure can be explained by patterns of variance within national publics. In and of itself, this would not be surprising, as objective group interests, such as income, are likely to shape the redistributive preference structure (Enns and Wlezien, 2011). There is extensive evidence that lower-income groups typically favour more redistribution and welfare spending, while more affluent citizens prefer more market freedom (Erikson and Tedin, 2015; Kuhn, 2012; Luttig, 2013; Peters and Ensink, 2015). However, little is known about how the observed variance between income groups evolves through time.

As regards the evolution of group opinion, the existing literature offers two contrasting views. A first perspective holds that group opinions, whether defined by income (Kelly and Enns, 2010), gender (Kellstedt et al., 2010), education (Enns and Kellstedt, 2008) or party identification (Ura and Ellis, 2012), track each other closely enough through time to speak of a uniform or parallel movement. While this is particularly prominent in the US, to the best of our knowledge comparative evidence of parallelism remains scarce. An alternative perspective argues that, in addition to *being* different, group opinions also *change* differently through time, i.e. they do not move in parallel and are rather asymmetric. From a comparative perspective, Peters and Ensink (2015) find such different evolutions in support for redistribution between income groups (see also, Brooks and Manza, 2006).[12] If group opinions are truly evolving asymmetrically, the question follows as to whether they are diverging or converging over time. The scarcity of evidence about longitudinal cross-sectional time-series dampens the study of the potential polarisation of redistributive preferences between the rich and the poor.

In order to estimate the evolution of income group opinions, we divide country populations in income quintiles and focus on the top, middle and bottom groups. For simplicity reasons, we sometimes refer to the former and latter groups as the rich and the poor, respectively. Since survey data usually offer income ranges instead of absolute values, the number of citizens in each group does not always represent an exact quintile. Usually, the group with lower income represents a higher share of the sample than the top quintile. We correct these errors by using

---

[11] This is already clear from the negative loadings returned for Germany, Sweden and Switzerland, which suggest a negative linear association between the "European redistribution mood" and the country observations. In other words, redistributive preferences in these countries do not follow the supposed overall pattern.

[12] Even those supporting the parallel publics hypothesis find asymmetric movement between some income groups (notably the poorer strata vs. others) and in certain time period (Enns and Wlezien, 2011).

the weight measure for each survey. For each income group, we repeat the estimation process detailed in section 3: we calculate the marginals of our selected items and then estimate the central tendency of redistributive mass preferences for that income group through a dyadic ratios algorithm. The result is a single redistributive measure for each income group in every country.

Figure 2.2 displays these preference series for the low-, middle- and high-income categories in each country. Since the absolute values are dependent on each country's individual series, we standardise the measures using cross-income group country-means. It is immediately evident there is a persistent preference gap between income groups. Higher-income groups generally demand less redistribution than their lower-income counterparts, which is in line with previous findings (Peters and Ensink, 2015).

Figure 2.2 Redistributive preferences, per income group and by country

Note: All measures have been standardised using cross-income group country-means. Higher values indicate support for more redistribution.

Table 2.4 validates that lower-income groups – on average – desire more redistribution (mean = 70) than middle-income groups (mean = 68) and their more affluent counterparts (mean = 62). This observation holds for all countries. A set of paired t-tests in the last two columns of Table 2.4 further suggests that – in all instances – the levels of support for redistribution between income groups differ significantly (at least, on average and through time). The t-tests also suggest that the level of redistributive support by the middle-income groups is closer to the level of the low-income groups than that of the high-income groups, with average cross-national differences of 1.431 percent and 6.613 percent, respectively. This is a similar observation to what Peters and Ensink (2015) found for a more limited time frame (2002 to 2010) in 25 European countries.

Table 2.4 Descriptive statistics across years, per income group and by country

	Years	Low-income groups		Middle-income groups		High-income groups		Δ Income groups (t-tests)	
		Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Low vs. middle	Middle vs. high
France	37	66.743	2.814	65.269	3.289	62.339	3.606	1.475* (0.512)	2.930* (0.530)
Germany	37	73.368	5.362	71.333	4.080	65.743	5.341	2.035* (0.871)	5.590* (0.869)
Great Britain	37	68.369	4.096	65.349	5.173	60.621	5.831	3.020* (0.447)	4.728* (0.399)
Netherlands	43	69.605	6.724	66.218	6.398	60.390	8.229	3.387* (0.977)	5.827* (1.023)
Norway	37	72.196	4.311	74.594	4.059	63.015	5.671	-2.397* (0.432)	11.579* (0.927)
Sweden	38	69.976	3.705	70.332	4.106	61.427	5.153	-0.344^ (0.198)	8.906* (0.500)
Switzerland	25	72.141	4.360	69.001	4.247	62.113	4.425	3.140* (1.107)	6.888* (1.230)
Average	36	70.343	4.482	68.871	4.479	62.235	5.465	1.431* (0.299)	6.613* (0.346)

Note: ^ p ≤ 0.10; * p ≤ 0.05; t-tests include standard errors in parentheses.

31

American researchers have shown that the redistributive preferences of the middle class typically approach those of the rich, diverging from what some scholars tend to refer to as a pronounced 'underclass' (Enns and Wlezien, 2011; Soroka and Wlezien, 2008). This illustrates the welfare gap in the US and provides credence to the growing levels of inequality between the poor and other socio-economic classes. At the same time, our findings illustrate that patterns from the US are not necessarily generalisable to other contexts. After all, we do not observe a similar evolution across Europe. Without exception, we find that middle-income groups across Europe tend to situate their redistributive preferences closer to the poor than to the rich. Often times, it is not even close.

Table 2.4 further indicates that low-income groups hold relatively stable redistributive preferences, whereas demands for redistribution are more volatile amongst higher-income groups. This pattern, which holds across countries, might appear counter-intuitive at first sight, seeing how Converse (1964) and Zaller (1992) imply greater stability in opinions for the more 'sophisticated' strata. Yet, because of the common overlap between income and education, we can argue that the top quintile pays most attention to political and economic changes. In turn, this is why wealthier citizens are able to update their preferences more frequently, in reaction to both political and economic events (Enns and Kellstedt, 2008; Erikson et al., 2002; Ura and Ellis, 2008). Moreover, demand for redistribution among the rich might be conditioned to external factors such as a crisis or an election, whereas lower-income groups might demand more redistribution persistently.

The movement of group opinions is not fully independent, as we observe it in Figure 2.2 and Table 2.4. When support for redistribution increases for one income group, it tends to increase for the other income groups within a country as well. The average within-country inter-item correlation of 0.60 indicates that, while redistributive preferences covary, they do not move in perfect symmetry.[13] This independent movement is nicely captured by the factor analysis of redistributive preferences across income groups presented in Table 2.5. Within each country, all series load on a single factor that accounts for an average of 54 percent of the variance across income groups. This endorses a certain degree of shared movement in redistributive preferences in line with previous public opinion findings (Stimson, 1991; Wlezien, 1995), yet to very different extents in each country.[14] The uniqueness estimates indicate redistributive preferences do not only move together through time, but also exhibit movement specific to the income groups.

Our analyses so far indicate common movement across Europe, shared movement between income groups and income-group specific movement. The question we then ask is whether certain income groups show more shared variance than others. In that regard, Table 2.6 presents the results of a cross-national factor analysis of the preference measures for each income group. We notice that high-income groups share more variance than the other income groups,

---

[13] We refer to section 2.F of the supplementary materials for detailed correlations and alpha scales.

[14] If we examine the underlying trend across income groups and countries, we find that a first factor explains about 30 percent of the variance in redistributive preferences and, thus, accounts for about a third of the common movement.

therewith indicating more common movement across countries. We also see this reflected in the more sizeable uniqueness measures for low- and middle-income groups. This suggests that low-and middle-income groups might be more influenced by national dynamics whereas high-income groups are more permeable to international trends.

Table 2.5 Factor analysis of the preference series within each country

		Factor	Uniqueness	Eigenvalue
France	Low-income groups	0.800	0.360	1.739
	Middle-income groups	0.619	0.617	
	High-income groups	0.846	0.284	
Germany	Low-income groups	0.467	0.778	0.849
	Middle-income groups	0.642	0.588	
	High-income groups	0.468	0.777	
Great Britain	Low-income groups	0.870	0.243	2.527
	Middle-income groups	0.955	0.088	
	High-income groups	0.926	0.142	
Netherlands	Low-income groups	0.711	0.494	1.600
	Middle-income groups	0.703	0.506	
	High-income groups	0.775	0.400	
Norway	Low-income groups	0.860	0.261	1.650
	Middle-income groups	0.850	0.277	
	High-income groups	0.434	0.812	
Sweden	Low-income groups	0.974	0.051	2.570
	Middle-income groups	0.965	0.068	
	High-income groups	0.830	0.311	
Switzerland	Low-income groups	0.430	0.815	0.345
	Middle-income groups	0.234	0.918	
	High-income groups	0.326	0.878	

To summarise, we notice that the variance of our preference measures depends on the objective group interest (income), the individual country setting and the temporal evolution. A more detailed analysis of variance (ANOVA) suggests that, on average, the preference measures are indeed characterised by differences between income groups (28 percent), across countries (10 percent) and through time (4 percent).[15]

---

[15] For more detailed information about the ANOVA of the preference measures, we refer to section 2.H in the supplementary materials.

Table 2.6 Factor analysis of the preference series across countries

	Low-income groups		Middle-income groups		High-income groups	
	Factor	Uniqueness	Factor	Uniqueness	Factor	Uniqueness
France	-0.735	0.397	0.809	0.225	-0.730	0.328
Germany	0.576	0.505	-0.376	0.620	0.748	0.239
Great Britain	-0.316	0.584	0.268	0.600	-0.442	0.696
Netherlands	0.184	0.579	0.323	0.412	-0.216	0.747
Norway	-0.214	0.594	0.306	0.356	-0.321	0.516
Sweden	0.680	0.472	-0.729	0.416	0.861	0.121
Switzerland	0.356	0.485	0.428	0.540	0.150	0.276
EV	1.642		1.780		2.202	

Note: The factor analysis for the high-income groups returns a second (significant) factor with an EV>1. We include more details of the factor analysis in section 2.G of the supplementary materials.

Figure 2.3 plots the explained variance by income and time in each country. Following Enns and Wlezien's (2011) suggestion that the variance explained by time provides a measure of parallel movements across income groups in the same unit, we find more parallel movement in Germany, Great Britain and the Netherlands than in other countries. This, by and large, confirms earlier observations from Figure 2.2 and Table 2.4. Conversely, income groups in Switzerland explain the preference structure to a much greater extent than in other countries.
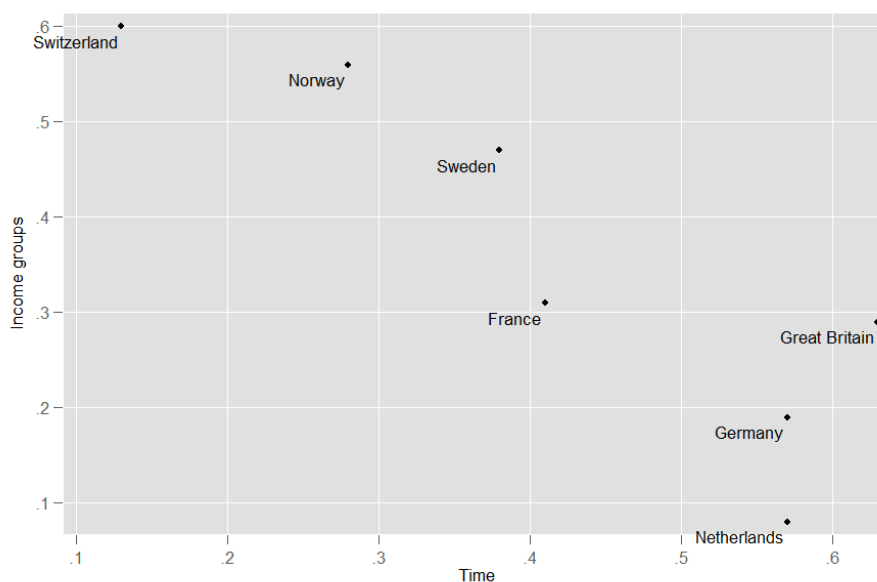
Figure 2.3 Relationship of between-group and through-time variance, by country

Note: The figure shows the R-squared values for two ANOVAs of redistributive preferences with income group and time as independent variables, respectively.

2.4.2. Polarisation of redistributive preferences?

In addition to structural differences in levels, Figure 2.2 highlights that periods of convergence and divergence between income group opinions alternate. The combination of heterogeneous movement between income groups and the cyclical nature of the preference dynamics result in a fluctuating and contingent preference gap. To examine this in more detail, we calculate the through-time difference in standardised redistributive preferences of the high- and low-income groups. Figure 2.4 plots the evolution of this distance, as well as the corresponding fitted line, providing well-defined insights into the potential polarisation dynamics between income groups.
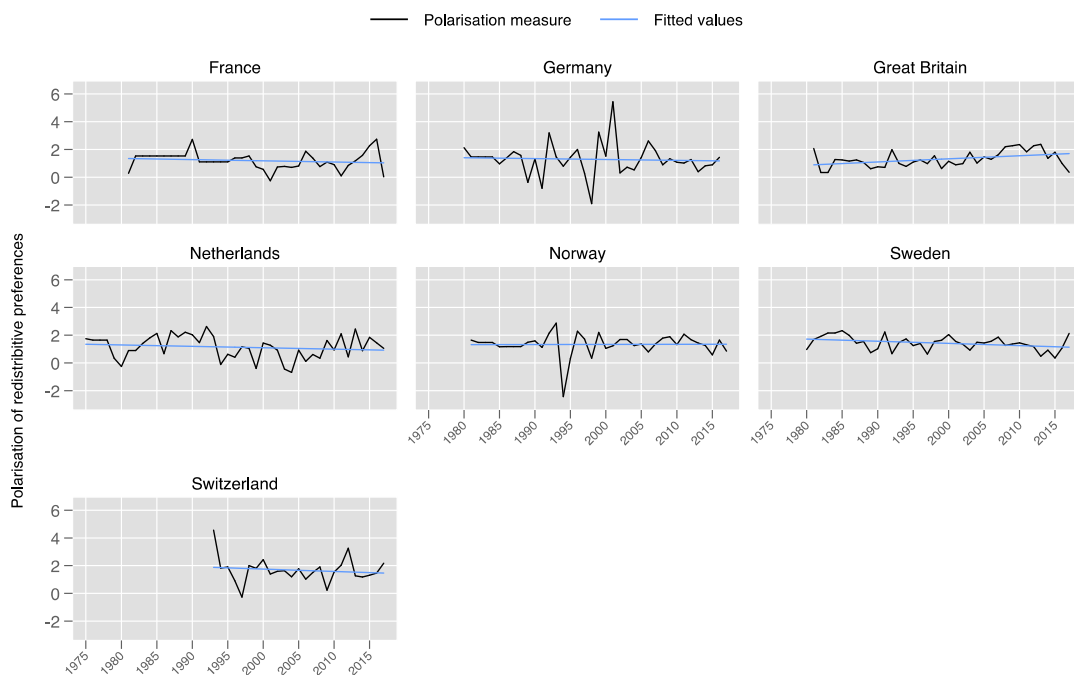
Figure 2.4 Distance between high- and low-income groups, by country

Note: Measures are calculated from redistributive preferences that have been standardised using country-means (see Figure 2.2). Higher values indicate more polarisation.

The fitted lines indicate the extent to which the gap between the redistributive preferences of the high- and low-income groups follows a consistent trend. A negative slope would suggest that group preferences converge, whereas a positive slope would indicate an increasing polarisation. Yet, as the slope coefficient approaches zero in all countries, it is safe to say we find little to no cross-national evidence of systematic polarisation between the rich and the poor. The distance between their preferences is not constant or symmetric, but shows discontinuous periods of polarisation with a long-term equilibrium. For example, in Germany we find a distinct period of polarisation between the mid-1990s and early 2000s. This is then followed, as in every other instance, by a period of preference convergence.

This heterogeneity further highlights that differences between income groups are irregular across countries. We have already alluded to this on various occasions by positing that not all movement is shared (see also Table 2.4). Yet, the preference gap itself does not reveal which population stratum is actually driving the observed short-term polarisation periods. To tackle

this, we analyse which income group moves further away from the previous equilibrium when the preference gap grows. In particular, we are interested in the relationship between both low- and high-income group preferences with those of the middle category.

Table 2.7 presents the results of different OLS regressions, with all variables standardised. The first three models report pooled estimates of the middle-income group preferences predicted by its own lag and different combinations of the low- and high-income group preferences. It is important to note these models are not meant to imply or assess causal relationships amongst the redistributive preference series. They are merely a tool to identify potential asymmetry in the movement. Models four to six estimate the first difference of middle-income group preferences expressed as a combined function of its own lag and the first differences of the lower- and higher-income group series. This ensures that inferences derived from the models are not the result of spurious relationships amongst non-differenced income-group preference series.

Table 2.7 Middle-income series as a function of lower- and higher-income group series

	Middle-income group preferences $_t$			Δ Middle-income group preferences $_t$		
	(1) pooled	(2) pooled	(3) pooled	(4) pooled	(5) Germany	(6) remaining
Middle-income group preferences$_{t-1}$	0.402* (0.051)	0.379* (0.053)	0.335* (0.051)	-0.359* (0.052)	-0.554* (0.158)	-0.321* (0.055)
Low-income group preferences$_t$	0.448* (0.050)		0.321* (0.055)			
High-income group preferences$_t$		0.352* (0.043)	0.219* (0.047)			
Δ Low-income group preferences$_t$				0.293* (0.049)	0.200* (0.086)	0.373* (0.063)
Δ High-income group preferences$_t$				0.111* (0.043)	0.143 (0.107)	0.074 (0.049)
Constant	-0.050 (0.043)	0.464* (0.055)	0.205* (0.068)	0.112* (0.039)	0.129 (0.108)	0.105* (0.042)
Observations	247	247	247	247	36	211
Number of countries	7	7	7	7	1	6
R-squared	0.476	0.452	0.520	0.346	0.423	0.348
sigma_u	0.179	0.194	0.210	0.082		0.079
sigma_e	0.545	0.557	0.522	0.575		0.564
rho	0.097	0.109	0.139	0.020		0.019
chi-square					0.298	

Note: All entries are OLS regression coefficients (standard errors in parentheses); Cross-national models include country-specific fixed effects; * $p \leq 0.05$ (two-tailed tests); Results from alternative models for models 3 and 4 can be found in section I of the supplementary materials. All substantive implications remain the same.

The different models consistently illustrate that the redistributive preferences of middle-income groups are more strongly related to the preferences of low-income groups than high-income groups. Comparing the first two models, we notice the coefficient of low-income groups is about 25 percent larger than the coefficient of higher-income groups. This remains in the combined third model, but the difference between them is not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). The fourth model draws a similar substantive conclusion: Conform to earlier indications, the association between low- and middle-income group preferences is considerably stronger than the association between middle- and high-income group preferences. Here, the difference between them is statistically significant ($p \leq 0.05$). With the same interpretation from the differenced model, we can be sure that our cross-national findings are not sheer artefacts of temporal dynamics in the raw data.

It is clear from Figure 2.4 that the difference in redistributive preferences of high- and low-income groups is most dynamic in Germany (sd = 1.186). In other words, the movement of the preference gap indicates that polarisation in Germany fluctuates quite a bit through time. With that in mind, we address two additional questions. First, we wonder whether the initial findings also hold if we examine Germany independently. Model 5 indicates this is effectively the case. Even more, as the coefficient for high-income groups is not significant in Germany, we find clear evidence that redistributive preferences of middle-income groups move together with the preferences of low-income groups. Second, we also examine if Germany might have been driving the earlier pooled results from models 1 to 4. Model 6 endorses and strengthens the earlier findings, suggesting there is no significant association between changes in preferences among the high- and middle-income group preferences when we exclude Germany from the sample. Overall, this provides additional credence to our substantive take-aways.

Altogether, we find clear evidence of asymmetry in the underlying dynamics of redistributive preferences. That is, the cyclical patterns of more or less polarisation are not the result of symmetric changes between the redistributive preferences of low- and high-income groups. Rather, our findings suggest that middle-income group preferences are more strongly associated with low-income group preferences, while high-income group preferences exhibit more idiosyncratic movement. As a result, the movement of income group preferences may be thought of as an asymmetrical process with separate explanatory variables. Even though we do not find any evidence of long-term polarisation in redistributive preferences, our analysis reveal the short-term asymmetric movement between income groups.

2.5. Conclusion

The interdependence between the socio-economic environment and political outputs (public policies) is part of the empirical and normative framework of contemporary democracies. According to David Easton (1965), citizens and their preferences (public opinion) provide the necessary link between the two. Applied to the inequality-redistribution puzzle, this places citizens' redistributive preferences at the centre of the analysis. Yet, the role of citizens and their preferences for redistribution in this equation remains underdeveloped. We believe that the primary reason is a lack of data and corresponding measures enabling time-series cross-sectional analyses. This study aims to provide a solution to this problem. Drawing from an unprecedented number of public opinion surveys, we design a set of redistributive preference

measures that cover an average of 36 year across seven European democracies. Through a dyadic ratios algorithm, we estimate measures for the population as a whole, as well as population strata based on income. The resulting dataset enables new insights into when, and potentially why, certain segments of the population update their demands for more or less redistribution. Moreover, its time-series cross-sectional character allows us to assess the extent to which we can speak of trends within and between countries. Our measures offer a relevant resource for scholars interested in the evolution of redistributive preferences and, more generally, the dynamics of public opinion across Europe.

Our analysis takes a three-fold approach. First, we explore the dynamics of national redistributive preference measures. On average, we find no evidence that European citizens are systematically becoming either more reluctant towards or more supportive of redistribution. Put differently, there is no single cross-national and longitudinal trend towards more (or less) demand for redistribution. While we observe some common movement amongst European publics, much of the observed movement remains unique to the country. This leaves considerable variance to be explained by within-country dynamics. Nonetheless, our analysis suggests that around one third of the variation of redistributive preferences is shared across countries.

Second, we delve into the disparities in both levels and movement of redistributive preferences of low-, middle- and high-income groups. Regarding preference levels, the data reveal a persistent gap between income group opinions. We find that low-income citizens consistently demand more redistribution than their middle- and high-income counterparts. The distance between the groups is not constant but fluctuates through time in a non-systematic but cyclical way. The preferences of the middle group are closer to those of the low income group in continental Europe. In contrast, the preferences of the middle category are closer to those of the rich in the majoritarian system of Great Britain. These results echo the expectation that, in proportional systems, the middle class tends to ally with the poor, whereas in majoritarian two-party systems, the middle class tends to ally with the rich (Iversen and Soskice, 2006). This, in turn, explains why in proportional systems left-wing governments are more common than right-wing ones, which prevail in majoritarian systems. Regarding the movement of group preferences over time, we observe more variation in the preferences of high-income groups. At the same time, while income groups within and across countries share some movement, we find that considerable movement is unique to the income groups.

In a third and final step, we explore the fluctuating and contingent preference gap between low- and high-income groups. The evolution of this gap over time shows no evidence of any systematic trend towards polarisation between the rich and the poor. At the same time, while examining the short-term cyclical nature of the preference structure, we show that patterns of convergence and divergence are not the result of symmetric change between the redistributive preferences of low- and high-income groups. Whereas American scholarship typically shows that the redistributive preferences of the middle-class resemble those of the rich, our analysis identifies a strong association between low- and middle- income preferences, both in levels and changes. Consequently, high-income citizens support redistribution considerably less,

although their preferences are more volatile. Given the idiosyncratic movement of their preferences, our evidence suggests that the rich drive and maintain the preferences gap.

The novel dataset we present in this study allows for the comprehensive analysis of redistributive preferences as a dependent, independent or control variable. Our dataset can facilitate further analysis of various components of a broader comparative macro polity and may be used to study a wide variety of research questions: What shapes redistributive preferences? Which group interests are accounted for in politics, and redistributive policy more specifically? What does income group heterogeneity mean for the inequality-redistribution puzzle? Our data allow researchers to provide new insights into these questions and to obtain a broader and deeper understanding of the dynamics of public preferences and their interplay with the political and economic context.

Chapter 3

Responding to inequality: Income groups and their support for redistribution in advanced democracies

Xavier Romero-Vidal, Leuphana Universität Lüneburg

Steven M. Van Hauwaert, University of Surrey

Abstract

This article measures the influence of income inequality on citizens' support for redistribution. A large body of literature has produced numerous yet contradictory results: whereas findings from the US appear to suggest a negative link, comparative studies have suggested a positive or a null relationship. Using new cross-sectional time-series data from the early 1980s to 2017, we track the levels of support for redistribution of different income groups in seven European democracies and subsequently examine how inequality affects these preferences. We show that economic demand for redistribution increases when income inequality grows and that this positive association holds for low-, middle- and high-income citizens.

3.1. Introduction

The continuing rise of income inequality amongst advanced post-industrialised democracies is an important concern in public debate and academic discourse (Atkinson, 2015; Bartels, 2008; Kenworthy and Pontusson, 2005; Piketty, 2014, 2020; Stiglitz, 2012). The growing concentration of wealth in the hands of fewer individuals and the long-term economic stagnation of those at the lower ends of the income distribution cement social and economic disparities. The widening gap between the 'average' and the 'median' citizens is at risk of permanently segregating and compartmentalising advanced democracies, thereby increasing the overall risk of democratic backsliding (Kapstein and Converse, 2008). After all, inequality can challenge development, undermine democratic resilience, disrupt social cohesion, weaken support for democracy and instigate polarisation.

A large body of scholarship examines the interplay between inequality and redistribution (Kelly, 2009; Morgan and Kelly, 2013; Piketty and Saez, 2003; Pontusson, 2005; Pontusson and Weisstanner, 2018). Many of the theoretical models explicitly highlight the important mediating role of citizens and their demands for redistribution (Bénabou, 2000; Meltzer and Richard, 1981). Yet, these theoretical models often outperform empirical research. The corresponding evidence is not definite and empirical support remains scattered and rather inconclusive. Ultimately, if we want to understand the democratic implications of inequality and bring clarity to the broader debate, we must first and foremost examine its relationship with the nucleus of representative democracy, namely the citizens. With this in mind, we rely on existing theoretical accounts to promote a comprehensive time-series cross-sectional design that provides unique comparative insights into the intricate relationship between inequality and redistributive preferences in post-industrialised European democracies. Our study focuses on West European democracies, which face analogous income inequality dynamics and thus ensure a high degree of comparability.

To do so, we empirically scrutinise competing theoretical models concerning the relationship between inequality and the redistributive preferences of different income groups. In this regard, we first design unique redistributive preference measures for low-, middle- and high-income groups. This goes beyond different preference levels between income groups and primarily focuses on how redistributive preferences change compared to each other. Drawing from these measures, we subsequently discern whether increasing inequality diminishes citizens' support for redistribution or, on the contrary, triggers higher demand for redistributive policies correcting inequalities. In addition, we compare the reactions of different income groups, and therefore allow for heterogeneous effects of inequality. We find evidence that, in fact, all income groups increase their support for redistribution in response to growing inequality. Since this effect is stronger amongst the rich, income loses its stratifying power in relatively unequal contexts, leading to a generalised demand for redistributive policies. Our results have important ramifications for democratic representation, as they suggest different group responses to important societal dynamics like growing inequality.

3.2. The inequality-redistribution puzzle

Distinguishable groups of citizens, or so-called sub-publics, have measurable, deliberative and meaningful opinions that are dynamic and react in an orderly manner to environmental stimuli (Erikson et al., 2002; Stimson, 1991, 2004). Considering the rising tide of inequality (Solt, 2016) and different waves of economic and financial hardship (Piketty and Saez, 2003), stimuli related to inequality and redistribution are highly relevant. In typical Eastonian terms (1965), we wonder how inequality itself relates to the (group) preferences that subsequently feed into the political system.

As part of a larger model, Meltzer and Richard (1981) – M&R from now on – posit that growing inequalities increase the overall demand for redistribution (Roberts, 1977; also, Romer, 1975).[16] They argue that increasing levels of inequality imply a greater distance between the mean income and the income of the decisive voter (i.e. the median income), with the latter further below the former.[17] The lower the median relative to the mean, the more the below-average income group is likely to benefit from the redistribution from rich to poor. That is, the more right-skewed the income distribution, the higher the level of desired redistribution by a majority of citizens.[18]

This mechanism, according to the model, is not homogeneous and citizens' demands further specify the relationship between inequality and redistribution. Lower-income strata always benefit from more redistribution, so they consistently support it. Higher-income groups might remain ambivalent to state intervention, as they are less affected by increasing inequality. Therefore, it is the median-income citizens whose support would vary the most as a function of inequality. For this group, the potential gains from redistribution increase when inequality rises because the income distribution is skewed to the right in advanced democracies (i.e. the income of the median voter is below the mean). Those around the median income are thus expected to be the primary drivers of the relationship between inequality and redistributive preferences.

A number of studies have empirically tested this model, providing some evidence that rising inequality triggers redistributive support in post-industrial societies. Kevins et al. (2018) find a positive effect particularly among middle-income groups, whereas other studies find that this positive association is not exclusive to middle-income groups but is also present across high- and low-income ones (Andersen and Curtis, 2015). Consistent with these findings, scholars studying the aggregate support for redistribution at the national level have also found a positive effect of inequality on redistributive support (Franko 2016; Kenworthy and Pontusson 2005). In contrast to these findings, some studies suggest that income inequality only rises support for redistribution amongst the rich (Finseraas 2009; Schmidt-Catran 2016), possibly as a result of

---

[16] This model assumes majority rule, universal suffrage and a linear tax rate. Inglehart (1990) further argues that the marginal utility of redistribution decreases, implying the demand for redistribution decreases as equality increases.

[17] The ratio of mean over median income is another expression for income inequality. Under the assumption that income follows a log-normal distribution, it is monotonically related to the more traditional Gini-Index.

[18] Welfare policy is expected to "lean against the wind" in the sense that the greater the inequality, the greater the electoral support for government policies that redistribute from rich to poor (Moene and Wallerstein, 2003).

an increased fear of crime (Rueda and Stegmueller, 2016). However, much evidence of this positive association of inequality and high-income redistributive preferences remains limited to cross-sectional studies. In sum, there is a large body of literature suggesting that inequality increases support for redistribution, as predicted by the M&R model. The extent to which this effect is stronger – or exclusive – to the median-voter (middle-income voters) is more dubious. In fact, Kenworthy and McCall (2008) find little support for the M&R model and question its empirical utility.

This gives place to an opposing model. Bénabou (2000) suggests that popular support for redistribution actually decreases with inequality. When inequality is low, the welfare-enhancing benefits of redistribution will be broadly supported because large portions of the population benefit from them. As inequality increases, support for redistribution declines amongst the growing proportion of the population that stands to lose from it. Differently put, there is a systematic increase in support for redistribution when aggregate welfare enhancements are relatively large compared to income inequality, and thus support for redistribution decreases when inequality rises. Specifically, Bénabou posits that when redistribution sufficiently enhances aggregate welfare and inequality is below a certain threshold, an increase in inequality will be negatively associated with redistributive support.

The foundation of this argument is Bénabou's underlying assumption that redistribution can enhance aggregate overall welfare, whereas Melzer and Richard assume that redistribution keeps the aggregate level of welfare constant (or even reduces it). Similar to the M&R model, there are indications that the middle and top tiers of the income distribution are the primary drivers of the relationship. With increasing inequality, Bénabou argues that higher-income strata become less motivated to promote redistribution and thereby go against their self-interest. That is, higher-income groups demand less redistribution as inequality rises because they are less likely to continue to benefit from public welfare enhancement efforts. Importantly, neither model argues that increasing inequality leads to decreased support for redistribution amongst lower-income groups.

In their seminal study, Kelly and Enns (2010) evaluate both models in the context of rising inequality in the US. They find that rising inequality is associated with decreasing levels of support for redistribution in the long-term. These results are similar to those reported by Wlezien and Soroka (2019), who show how support for welfare spending has decreased in response to increasing inequality. At the same time, Kelly and Enns find that inequality has a similar effect on low- and high-income groups, which is largely consistent with the so-called parallel preference movement between income groups (Page and Shapiro 1992; Stimson 2009).[19] Similar to these results, Luttig (2013) finds that both absolute levels and the structure of inequality have been promoting conservatism amidst both the rich and the poor. Altogether, American scholarship has provided empirical support for Bénabou's view (Erikson et al., 2002; Kelly, 2009).

---

[19] Johnston and Newman (2016) suggest that, to the extent the negative relationship exists, high-income citizens likely drive this relationship.

In contrast, cross-national research has produced scattered results thus far. What is more, a number of studies relying on a variety of measurement and modelling approaches find that the demand for redistribution does not change as a function of inequality (Bowles and Gintis, 2000; Breznau and Hommerich, 2019a; Gimpelson and Treisman, 2018; Lübker, 2007). Others have shown that results are likely to vary across countries depending on differences in values, social justice norms and political culture, as well as the structure and normativity of inequality itself (Aalberg, 2003; Bassett et al., 1999; Breznau and Hommerich, 2019b; Kluegel et al., 1995).

While numerous studies indicate that preference differences between groups stem from differences in self-interest (Benedictis-Kessner and Hankinson, 2019; Sears and Funk, 1991), some of the more prominent explanations of redistributive preferences go beyond this. Lupu and Pontusson (2011), for example, claim the structure of inequality is more important for redistributive preferences than the absolute level of inequality. That is, the relative distance between groups, or classes, is an important predictor of redistributive preferences. With this, Lupu and Pontusson step away from the mythical *homo economicus* and argue preferences derive from "altruism bounded by perceptions of common groups membership or shared experience" (2011: 318). The middle class has a crucial role here. Specifically, they argue that as the middle class becomes economically closer to the poor relative to the rich, the middle class will increasingly support redistribution. When the middle class is closer to the rich as opposed to the poor, support for redistribution will decrease. They find moderate support for their arguments across more than a dozen advanced democracies.

All in all, an extensive scholarship remains largely inconclusive about the empirical relationship between inequality and the redistributive preferences of different income groups. This ambiguity certainly relates to the myriad of data sources, methodological approaches, indicators and country subsets that various studies use to examine this question. Most importantly, while many theoretical frameworks highlight the importance of the middle-income group, most empirical accounts overlook or approximate their analysis from afar. Our approach, while per definition imperfect, addresses some of these issues.

3.3. Income group effects: polarisation of convergence?

We are interested in both the directionality of the association between inequality and redistributive preferences, as well as the differences of this association between income groups. If the effect of inequality is homogenous across income groups, the demand for redistribution will clearly increase or decrease at the aggregate level. However, if high- and low-income groups respond to inequality in different ways, the overall equilibrium of public opinion changes and might result in polarisation or convergence. We present in *Table 3.1* the four possible scenarios depicting the combination of results we can theoretically encounter.

Table 3.1 Theoretical effect of inequality on the redistributive preferences of income groups

		Effects on the Poor	
		Positive	Negative
Effects on the Rich	Positive	General increase	Convergence
	Negative	Polarization	General decrease

If, as Bénabou (2000) predicts, citizens demand less redistribution as inequality rises, and if such reaction occurs across all income groups, we would find a general decline of the demand for redistribution. Conversely, if increases in inequality stimulate redistributive demands of both the poor and the rich, we will find a general increase of the demand for redistribution. In contrast to these more balanced scenarios, different income groups might also react in different ways to changes in inequality levels. If such changes only instigate more demand for redistribution amongst the poor, while the demand of the rich remains constant or even decreases, elevated income inequality would trigger mass ideological polarisation (Garand, 2010). Most literature in support of such polarisation hypotheses relies on political or partisan proxies of redistributive preferences. For example, Piketty and Saez (2006) argue that a progressively skewed income and wealth distribution increasingly divides countries economically. Bosancianu (2017) also finds a similarly close connection between economic inequality and the polarisation of political attitudes and behaviours across a wide variety of advanced democracies.

Since the poor would benefit from redistribution regardless of the level and structure of economic inequality, they might be expected to keep their demand for redistribution constant. However, the rich might be the ones adapting their demands to changing contexts. A number of empirical studies have found that, in fact, the rich demand more redistribution when inequality rises (Finseraas, 2009; Rueda and Stegmueller, 2016; Schmidt-Catran, 2016). Since the rich typically demand less redistribution than the poor, when the rich disproportionately increment these demands, there is a convergence between the income groups towards similar redistributive preferences (Andersen and Curtis, 2015).

In what follows, we present our measures of public support for redistribution across income groups in seven European democracies and their evolution over time. Drawing from these unique measures, we subsequently identify which of the four scenarios of Table 3.1 is more likely to occur when inequality rises.

3.4. Data and methods: Estimating redistributive preference measures

We rely on a unique dataset for the design of redistributive preference measures. It relies on a comprehensive selection of thematically grouped items from a wide range of national and international surveys and specifically includes repeated survey questions concerning positions towards inequality and redistribution. Since our aim is to estimate redistributive preferences in a broad sense, we include not only questions dealing directly with redistribution, taxation and the role of the state in reducing inequalities, but also those about the welfare state, social benefits and public spending in fields that directly enhance redistributive policies.[20] Based on data availability and to ensure the quality of our estimates, this results in a time-series cross-sectional dataset of seven European democracies, namely France (1997-2017), Germany

---

[20] We include an overview of the selected items, as well as their frequency, in Section 3.A of the supplementary materials.

(1984-2017), Great Britain (1981-2017), Netherlands (1978-2017), Norway (1989-2017), Sweden (1985-2017) and Switzerland (1987-2017).[21]

We divide populations in low-, middle- and high-income groups, represented by the top first, third and fifth quintiles. Since the data usually offers income ranges instead of absolute values, the number of citizens in each group does not always represent an exact quintile. The group with lower income represents a higher share of the sample than the top quintile in most cases. We correct these errors using a weight measure for each survey. For each income group, we then calculate a common metric across survey items by dividing all responses between those who express support for redistribution and those who oppose redistribution. The resulting index represents the percentage of all substantive responses (excluding neutral and missing responses) that express support for redistribution:

$$Index\ of\ preferences = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{N} Pro - redistribution\ responses}{\sum_{i=1}^{N} Pro + against\ redistribution\ responses} \times 100$$

Since we seek to examine the changes over time and in reaction to changes in income inequality, we focus on the relative changes rather than in the absolute levels of support for redistribution. Some survey items have been included only two or three times, others more frequently, but none systematically. We need to combine this scattered data into a single series accounting for the common trends across all series. To estimate a single series of support for redistribution in each country and for each income group, we use a dyads ratio algorithm.[22] This algorithm uses each single survey question as an indicator of redistributive preferences, and the change between any two points in time within that series (a dyad ratio) a relative indicator of change in redistributive preferences over time. Through an iterative process, the result is a single (unsmoothed) redistributive measure for each income group in each country.

While the included data varies between countries, the combined redistributive measures rely on nearly 6,000 survey marginals (an average of nearly 275 per country-income group) to form more than 800 distinct dyad-ratio series (an average of nearly 40 per country-income group). With the exception of Switzerland (which presents shorter series than the other countries), each country-income measure relies on at least 14 item series, with thee countries including at least 65 item series. We find that one unique dimension, which we theorise as redistributive

---

[21] Most of the countries have survey items from earlier sources available. While we use this data to estimate our redistributive preference measures, we do not include those earlier years in of our analysis due to frequent and longer gaps.

[22] For a more detailed account of the methodological foundations of the dyadic ratios algorithm, we refer to Stimson (1991, 2018) and McGann (2014).

preferences, accounts for an average of around 50.5 % of the variance (Eigen value) across our measurement models.[23]

Figure 3.1 displays the redistributive preference series for low-, middle- and high-income categories in each country. Higher scores indicate more redistribution (left-wing positions). Lower scores indicate less redistribution, and thus more market freedom (right-wing positions). Since the absolute values of each measure are dependent on a country's individual series, we standardise the measures using country-means.
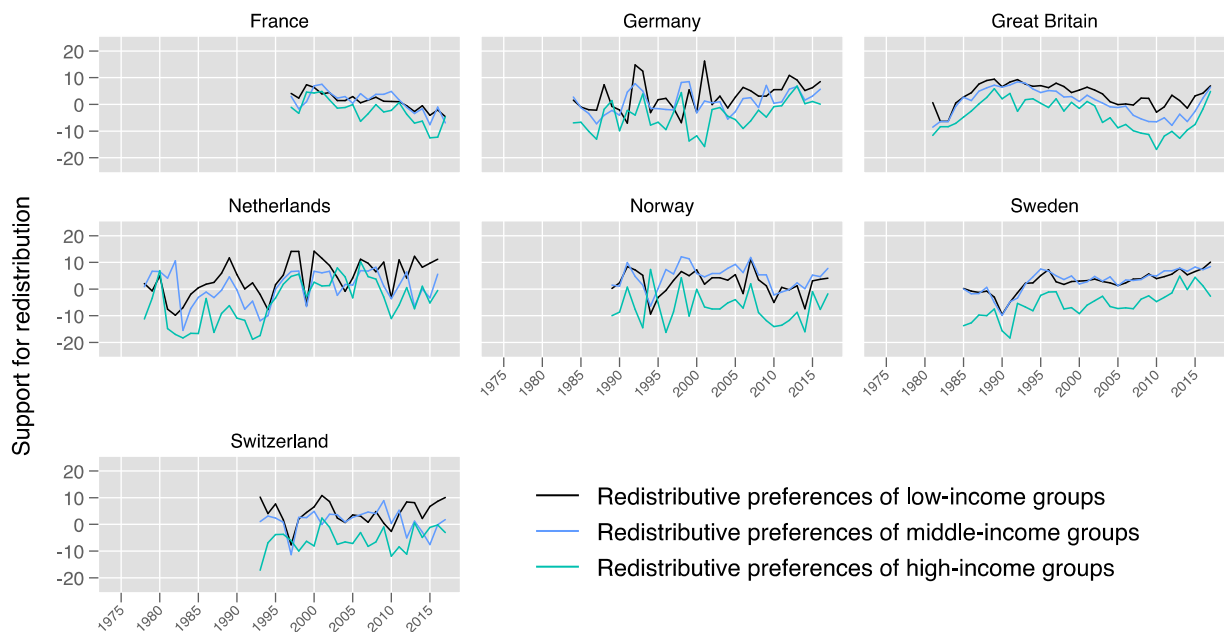
Figure 3.1 Support for redistribution measures, per income group and by country

Figure 3.1 indicates there is no clear homogeneous structure or evolution of redistributive preferences across the included European democracies. With few exceptions, the higher-income groups demand less redistribution than their lower-income counterparts. This is fully in line with our expectations. What is more surprising, however, is that middle-income groups lean closer to the lower-income groups in terms of their redistributive preferences. This is a similar observation to what Peters and Ensink (2015) find for 25 European countries from 2002 to 2010. Yet, extant scholarship from the US shows the middle classes typically approach the rich, leaving a more pronounced 'underclass' (Soroka and Wlezien, 2008; Wlezien and Enns, 2011). We only find traces of such a pattern in Great Britain, not across continental Europe. This suggests a distinct difference between middle classes in Anglo-Saxon countries and European democracies (Atkinson, 2015; Piketty, 2014).

---

[23] Tables 3.B.1 to 3.B.7 in the supplementary materials provide an overview of the encompassing data for each country. Tables 3.B.8 to 3.B10 presents descriptive statistics of the redistributive measures by income group and by country.

3.5. Modelling redistributive preferences: The role of inequality

Most movement in Figure 3.1 appears to be cyclical. This is in line with Stimson's (1991) policy mood, which posits that periods of desires for limited redistribution follow periods where citizens want more redistribution, and vice versa. While this might suggest that citizens adjust their demands to changing political and economic contexts (Durr, 1993; O'Grady, 2019; Wlezien and Soroka, 2019), we set out to examine to extent to which income inequality is one of those contextual factors. As the main indicator of inequality, we rely on a measure of disposable (post-tax, post-transfer) income inequality from the "Standardized World Income Inequality Database" (Solt, 2019).

In a first instance, Figure 3.2 plots the correlations between support for redistribution and inequality for each separate income group. The density of observations across the *y*-axis shows again that, on average, low-income citizens tend to display stronger redistributive preferences than the middle category, and that high-income citizens tend to be the less supportive of redistribution. Despite these differences in levels, the fitted lines suggest a common positive relationship between the inequality and mass preferences: in contexts of higher inequality, the public tends to demand more redistribution. The positive correlation is statistically significant for all groups, but the coefficient is larger for low-income groups (r =0.33) than it is for middle- (r = 0.25) and high-income groups (r = 0.23). These patterns are consistent with previous studies showing that the public demands more support for redistribution when inequality rises. Yet, contrary to the M&R model's expectations, the correlation seems to be stronger for the poor, rather than for the middle category.
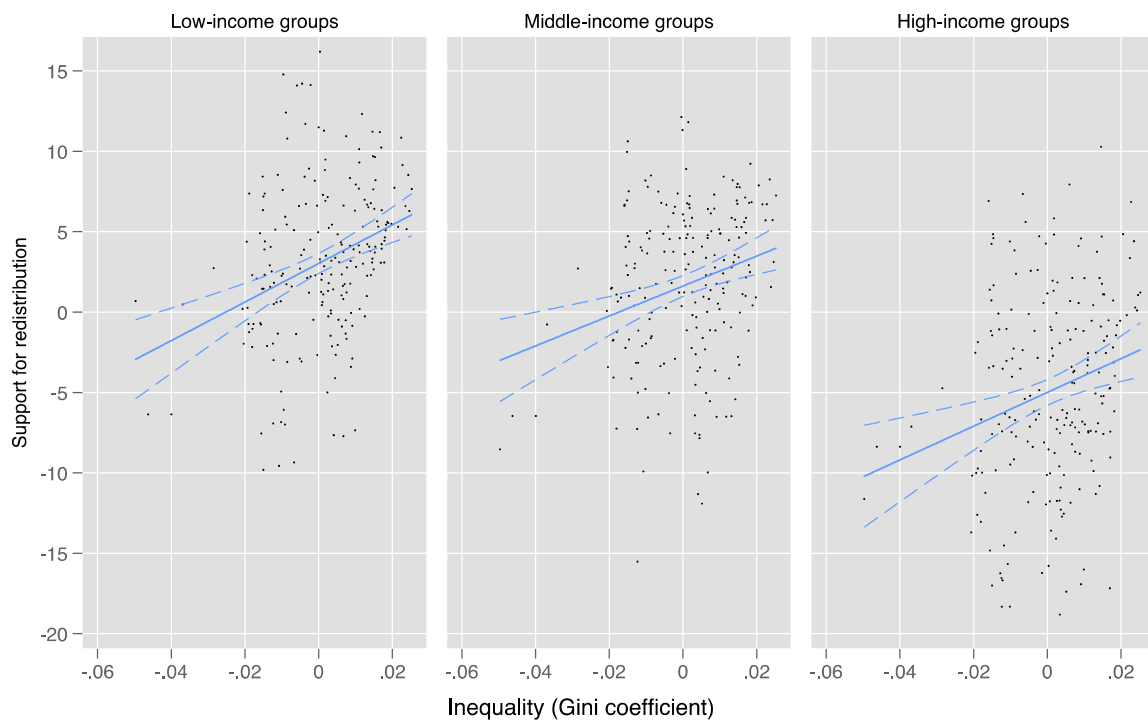
Figure 3.2 Correlation between support for redistribution and inequality, by income group

Note: Support for redistribution (y-axis) represents yearly country mean-centred estimates of redistributive preferences. Inequality (x-axis) represents yearly country mean-centred Gini coefficients.

For a more rigorous test of our initial theoretical expectations, we now turn to a set of multivariate regression models to estimate the effects of inequality on redistributive preferences, while controlling for other factors that influence the path of macro opinion. We use a cross-sectional error correction model (ECM) to track the effects of contextual variables on redistributive preferences. An ECM has the particular advantage that it can be used in case of non-stationary time-series because it imposes relatively few restrictions (De Boef and Keele, 2008). At the same time, it allows for the diagnosis of both short-term and long-term effects. For each time t and country j, the ECM equation takes the following form,

$$\Delta Y_{j,t} = \alpha_{j,0} + \alpha_{1,j} Y_{j,t-1} + \beta_{1,j} \Delta X_{j,t} + \beta_{2,j} X_{j,t-1} + \varepsilon_{j,t}$$

For our dependent variable, we use the previously estimated preference measures. We rely on the Gini coefficient (range 0-100) from the "Standardized World Income Inequality Database" to measure inequality (Solt, 2019). We also include a measure for social spending as a percentage of GDP from the OECD Statistics database to control for (thermostatic) responses to government action. Our models also account for general economic conditions by including indicators of unemployment and inflation from the same source (Erikson et al 2002; Kelly and Enns 2010). Altogether, this allows us to isolate the effect of income inequality.

Error correction models are only suitable with nonstationary data if the variables are cointegrated (Engle and Granger 1987), so when the variables are regressed, the error term is stationary. In other words, we need to assess whether the time series move in parallel through the whole period. Relying on Persyn and Westerlund (2008), we test whether each panel is cointegrated as a whole and whether at least one unit is cointegrated. The results of these tests provide us with enough evidence of cointegration.[24] Political scientists have been debating about the suitability of ECMs in our field and the conditions under which it is appropriate to use them (Enns et al., 2016; Grant and Lebo, 2016; Lebo and Kraft, 2017). To cross-validate our ECMs for each income group and further substantiate they are not simply the result of spurious correlation, we pool all income groups and run additional Prais-Winsten regressions with correlated panels corrected standard errors. They provide similar results (see Table 3.D.1 in supplementary materials).

We begin the analysis in Table 3.2 with three error correction models that illustrate the effects of economic inequality on the redistributive preferences of the low-, middle- and high-income categories, while controlling only for social spending. Models 4 to 6 include additional spending and macro-economic indicators. It becomes clear from the different models that none of the controls changes results significantly and we therefore consider these findings quite robust.

---

[24] Our four tests suggest that our measures for redistributive preferences, inequality, social spending, inflation and unemployment are cointegrated. Previous panel-data unit-root tests suggest that at least one of our panels is stationary. We refer to Tables 3.C.1 to 3.C.3 in the supplementary materials for an overview of these tests.

Table 3.2 Models of redistributive preferences, by income group

	Δ Redistributive preferences					
	Low income (1)	Middle income (2)	High income (3)	Low income (4)	Middle income (5)	High income (6)
Inequality						
Short-term effect	1.83	1.04	2.38*	1.65	1.037	2.55*
	(1.058)	(0.995)	(1.194)	(1.072)	(1.009)	(1.233)
Long-term effect	0.94***	0.52*	0.80**	0.75*	0.68*	0.79*
	(0.264)	(0.243)	(0.292)	(0.322)	(0.300)	(0.367)
Social Spending						
Short-term effect	-0.63	-0.44	-1.19***	-0.04	0.20	-1.35**
	(0.350)	(0.328)	(0.396)	(0.445)	(0.422)	(0.515)
Long-term effect	-0.57***	-0.46***	-0.80***	-0.69***	-0.48**	-0.84***
	(0.169)	(0.158)	(0.201)	(0.186)	(0.179)	(0.224)
Unemployment						
Short-term effect				-0.65	-1.08*	-0.31
				(0.480)	(0.455)	(0.553)
Long-term effect				0.40*	0.36	0.04
				(0.203)	(0.192)	(0.233)
Inflation						
Short-term effect				-0.16	0.08	-0.74*
				(0.297)	(0.280)	(0.342)
Long-term effect				-0.13	0.33	-0.04
				(0.261)	(0.247)	(0.301)
Error correction	-0.78***	-0.60***	-0.67***	-0.81***	-0.61***	-0.66***
	(0.071)	(0.067)	(0.067)	(0.072)	(0.068)	(0.068)
Constant	41.93***	37.54***	37.93***	49.63***	31.22**	38.30***
	(8.911)	(8.559)	(9.922)	(10.825)	(10.404)	(12.279)
Observations	204	204	204	201	201	201
Countries	7	7	7	7	7	7
R-squared	0.39	0.3	0.35	0.42	0.34	0.37

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. * $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$, *** $p<0.001$

The different long-term inequality coefficients in *Table 3.2* systematically suggest a positive and significant effect on redistributive preferences across the three groups: when inequality increases, so does support for redistribution. As we add macro-economic controls to the latter three models, we observe a significant decrease of the lower-income groups' inequality coefficient ($p < 0.05$), but no significant change for the other two groups ($p < 0.12$ and $p < 0.60$, respectively).

If we interpret the models with controls, a one unit (percent) increase in the Gini coefficient at time *t* predicts an increase of about 0.75, 0.68. and 0.79 points in support for redistribution in

time *t+1* amongst the lower-, middle- and higher-income groups respectively. We can, therefore, calculate the change in support for redistribution within the full range of inequality observed in our sample. Most notably, the difference between the least unequal country (Sweden, average Gini = 23) and the most unequal country (Great Britain, average Gini = 32) can change redistributive preferences with 6.75 points for the poor, 6.12 points for the middle category and 7.11 points for the rich. The error correction parameters indicate that the public's responsiveness to inequality (and to the broader social environment) adjust at a rather rapid pace, namely -0.81, -0.61 and -0.66 for the lower-, middle- and higher-income groups respectively. For example, for the lower-income groups, this parameter predicts that 81 percent of any deviation of preferences from the target rate is corrected within one year.

The short-term effects of inequality on redistributive preferences are positively signed in all models but only reach statistical significance for the higher-income groups. This suggests that only the rich respond to temporary shocks in income inequality by increasing their support for redistribution. These differences might result from the correlation between socio-economic status and political sophistication (Converse, 1964; Dalton, 2019; Lau and Redlawsk, 2001). However, while the different inequality coefficients suggest there might be unequal effects of inequality favouring the richer cohorts in the short-term, this imbalance between income groups becomes restored in the long-term, where the effect of inequality is much homogeneous.

We also see that support for redistribution decreases in response to increases in social spending, which suggests a typical thermostatic response to government action where policy and preferences level each other out in a long-term equilibrium (Wlezien, 1995). That is, the public reduces its support for more redistributive policies when governments increase social spending. In this case, the negative effect of social spending on support for redistribution is larger amongst high-income citizens. This is not all that surprising, as richer cohorts have distinctive interpretative capabilities (e.g. as a result of higher educational attainment) that make more (accurate) political information becomes available to them. In turn, this renders them more politically informed and more able to interpret government signals accurately, and thus respond with more determination. In this regard, Zaller (1992) argues that information environments and the corresponding elite cues influence patterns of opinion change (delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; Schneider and Jacoby, 2005).[25] Simultaneously, cognitive differences between income groups affect the ability to connect material interests with political preferences. For example, lower-income groups are less likely to take their own personal finances into account when deciding their political preferences (Duch and Sagarzazu, 2014), thereby suggesting that self-interest and economic priorities can also structure group opinions in distinct ways (Sears and Funk 1991). Since high-income citizens can better connect their own interests and their preferences, their stronger thermostatic response to redistribution might also result from a perception that they might have more to lose if redistributive polices expand.

As we previously highlighted, adding the macro-economic controls to models 1 to 3 does not change anything to their substantive interpretation. Yet, we can say something about the

---

[25] Even if self-interest would not be a driver, we would still expect different levels of political awareness to affect opinion updating (Enns and Kellstedt, 2008).

implications of these variables. Not surprisingly, the poor increase their demand for redistribution when unemployment increases. On the one hand, unemployment has a negative short-term effect on the median voter category, whose support for redistribution decreases as unemployment rises. On the other hand, unemployment does not have neither a short term, nor a long-term effect on the preferences of the rich. However, this latter group does react to increasing inflation, and it does so by reducing its support for redistribution. That is, when long-term economic indicators improve (i.e. inflation decreases), the richer cohorts appear to increase their support for redistribution. As a whole, the short-term negative effects of unemployment for the middle-income groups and of inflation for the rich are surprisingly similar to those identified by Franko (2016) across US states. These findings indicate that higher-income group preferences move pro-cyclically and those of the poor move counter-cyclically with the variation in unemployment (Durr, 1993; Wlezien and Soroka, 2019).

Table 3.3 Models of the redistributive preference gap, by income group

| | Preference gap between income groups | | | | | |
| | Rich-poor | Rich-Middle | Poor-Middle | Rich-poor | Rich-Middle | Poor-Middle |
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Inequality	-0.15	-0.51***	0.18	-0.18	-0.37***	0.07
	(0.17)	(0.12)	(0.13)	(0.233)	(0.130)	(0.199)
Social Spending	-0.13	-0.03	-0.20*	-0.20	0.04	-0.35**
	(0.12)	(0.09)	(0.08)	(0.158)	(0.108)	(0.116)
Unemployment				0.17	-0.29	0.41
				(0.275)	(0.181)	(0.248)
Inflation				0.17	0.35	-0.35
				(0.232)	(0.192)	(0.222)
Constant	15.26*	21.41***	-5.35	16.27*	17.39***	6.10
	(6.46)	(4.86)	(4.530)	(8.158)	(5.126)	(6.205)
Observations	211	211	211	208	208	208
R-squared	0.21	0.13	0.06	0.22	0.11	0.09
Number of countries	7	7	7	7	7	7

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

As the various models in Table 3.2 systematically return positive effects of increasing inequality on redistributive preferences, we find initial support for the "general increase" expectation from Table 3.1. Nevertheless, since the effects are (significantly) different for the income groups, we further explore the extent to which inequality affects the moving preference gap between income groups. With that in mind, we present a set of Prais-Winsten regressions with correlated panels corrected standard errors to model the effect of inequality on the

preference gap (Beck and Katz, 1995).[26] Table 3.3 presents the results for the gap between lower- and higher-income groups (models 1 and 4), higher- and middle-income groups (models 2 and 5) and lower- and middle-income ones (models 3 and 6).

The results of models 1 and 4 from Table 3.3 indicate that increasing inequality does not necessarily lead to an increasing divergence between the redistributive preferences of the rich and those of the poor. The coefficient of inequality is negative but not significant, suggesting that inequality has not triggered polarisation over redistribution in Europe in the last decades. However, when we take a closer look at the dynamic structure of redistributive preferences, the models bring a surprising dynamic to light. The effect of inequality on the preference gap between the middle- and higher-income groups is negative across models. This suggest that more inequality actually reduces the preference gap between them. Differently put, increasing inequality contributes to a convergence in demands for redistribution between the middle classes and the rich. While we find an opposite effect for the preference gap between lower- and middle-income groups, the respective coefficients do not reach conventional levels of significance. Despite different modelling efforts, we therefore find no conclusive evidence of inequality affecting this particular preference gap.[27] Economic inequality primarily influences how the middle-income groups move in conjunction with the higher-income groups, and not the lower-income groups. It further shows that, while the typical response to increases to inequality is the "general increase" scenario in Table 3.1, there are still income-group-specific dynamics at play. In short, these dynamics suggest that inequality stimulates convergence at the higher end of the income scale.

In order to further illustrate these results, we plot the predicted levels of support for redistribution for each income group at different levels of observed inequality, while controlling for unemployment and inflation.[28] Figure 3.3 shows the positive effect of inequality on the support for redistribution across all groups, and illustrates the convergence of redistributive preferences in contexts of higher levels of inequality, in line with the trends identified by Andersen and Curtis (2015). They show that although the effect of income inequality is positive for all social classes, opinions across groups become more akin as inequality rises. The authors argue that inequality affects more people as it grows, and this increasingly shared experience leads to more homogenous demands across groups. Figure 3.3 also shows that the predicted preferences of the low- and middle-income groups are statistically undistinguishable. Reverting back to Figure 3.1, this is particularly the case in more egalitarian contexts.

---

[26] We revert to regular TSCS models instead of cross-sectional ECMs, as there is no reason to assume the preference gap between income groups has a long-term equilibrium. Rather, we consider a more realistic assumption that the preference gap changes freely over time.

[27] In Table 3.D.2, we present an additional random-effects GLS regression model with standard errors adjusted for seven country-clusters.

[28] We draw the predicted values from the earlier Prais-Winsten regression with correlated panels corrected standard errors listed in Table 3.D.1 of the supplementary materials.
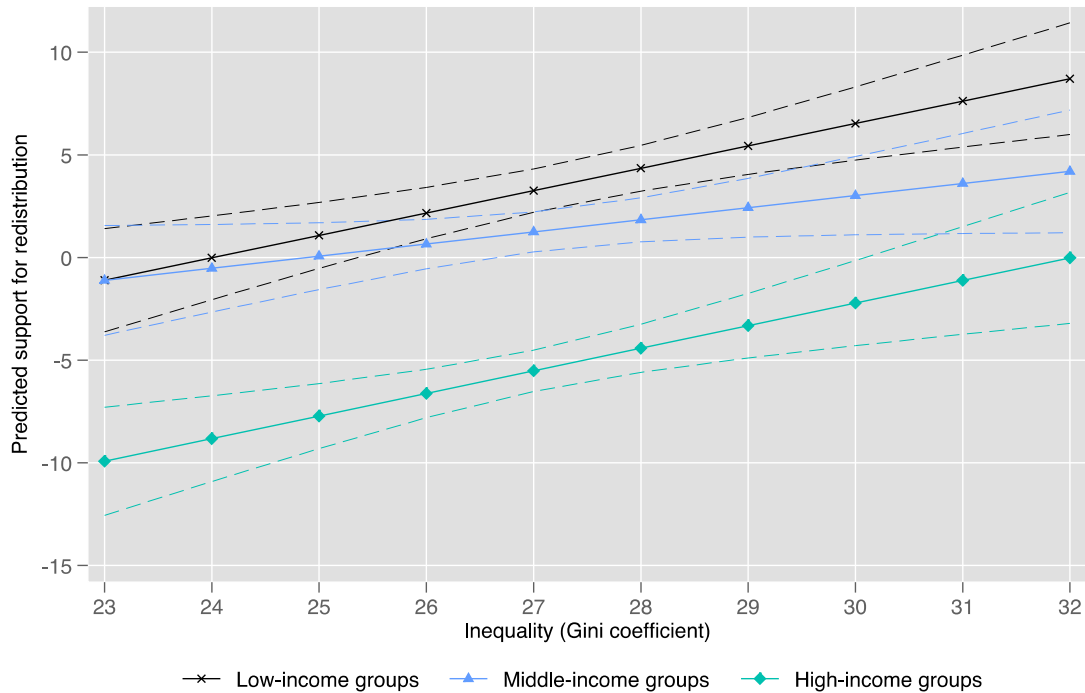
Figure 3.3 Linear prediction of redistributive preferences, by income group

Note: Predictive Margins with 95% CIs. Predicted support for redistribution (y-axis) is drawn from country mean-centred estimates of redistributive preferences.

3.6. Discussion

One of the most important take-aways from our analyses is that citizens are not necessarily uninformed, as they effectively notice societal dynamics and respond to inequality when formulating their support for redistribution. Using different approaches, the results repeatedly signal that citizens demand more redistribution when inequality increases. While this positive association occurs across income groups, it is nonetheless higher amongst the rich. This suggests that the initial preference gap is reduced and the stratifying effect of income tends to disappear with higher levels of inequality, in line with previous research (Andersen and Curtis, 2015; Finseraas, 2009; Rueda and Stegmueller, 2016; Schmidt-Catran, 2016).

Rational choice explanations that emphasise economic self-interest can explain why support for redistribution grows as inequality rises. However, the similar (and even stronger) reaction amongst the rich cannot be explained by the same mechanisms. We propose two possible mechanisms that might be at play: one involving self-interested calculations and one accounting for more altruistic motivations. As regards to the former, recent evidence suggests that fear of crime contributed to the increase in redistributive demands in the US (Rueda and Stegmueller, 2016). Inequality leads to higher criminality rates, thereby activating self-interested demands for redistribution, particularly amongst the rich. Similarly, Alesina and Perotti (1996) argue that in unequal countries, the rich support redistribution because of their fear of social instability. Thus, the activation of redistributive demands amongst the rich would involve self-interested calculations. Delving into the realm of value orientations, we know that individuals with higher education and income tend to embrace emancipative values more

strongly (Welzel, 2013). These emancipative values proliferate pro-social orientations and unselfishness. Thus, the increase in support for redistribution amongst the rich when inequality rises might result from an increased sense of fairness. These two mechanisms (selfish and selfless, respectively) are not mutually exclusive and might even occur at the same time.

As a result, increasing inequality does not – per definition – stimulate the polarisation of redistributive preferences. Whereas some authors suggest that income inequality might trigger mass ideological polarisation across the board (Garand, 2010), our results provide a more intricate picture in this policy field. Considering redistributive preference between the lower- and middle-income groups are largely indistinguishable within the range of inequality in our sample, we only find evidence of polarisation between these income groups under more (extreme) inequality that go beyond levels included in our analysis. By and large, within the inequality parameters of our sample, evidence of polarisation remains limited. Contrasting this, the effect of inequality on the preference gap between the middle- and higher-income groups suggest that more inequality actually reduces the preference gap between them. That means that we find more apparent evidence of convergence between preferences, even when comparing the preferences of the rich and the poor. Here, it might well be that the missing polarisation over redistributive preferences contrasts with an increasing polarisation over moral values (see Alexander and Welzel 2017). Further research is required in this regard.

3.7. Conclusions

Building on a unique set of country-year measures of redistributive preferences, this study analyses how different income groups change their redistributive preferences in relation to income inequality. We find that demands for redistribution almost systematically increase with inequality, as predicted by the M&R model. However, this effect is not limited to the theoretical median voter (the middle-income category) but holds also amongst the top and bottom income quintiles. While the increasing demands for redistribution among low-income citizens in light of rising inequality is not particularly surprising, we also find evidence that richer cohorts want more redistribution when inequality becomes more pervasive.

Our analysis contributes to a large body of literature aiming to disentangle the effects of income inequality on public preferences, in particular in the field of redistribution. We do so in a number of ways. While most scholarship either looks exclusively at the middle-income category or focuses entirely on the movement of the rich vs. the poor, there is much less research examining all three income groups together. Here, our study provides a necessary and comprehensive complement to extant literature. We also provide new insights using a novel dataset of country-year estimates of redistributive preferences across income groups in seven European democracies. These estimates allow us to run independent analysis for each income group as well as a pooled panel analysis, showing repeatedly that all income groups demand more redistribution when inequality increases. It further allows us to examine how the effect of inequality shapes the relationship between these income groups.

Our study has several limitations. On the one hand, our sample of countries remains limited to seven European countries. Our method to estimate income group preferences demands great amounts of survey data and therefore limits the number of cases for which enough longitudinal

data are available. However, the variance in inequality levels gives us with enough confidence in the generality of the results for similar countries. Conversely, our results do not necessarily apply to other contexts with substantially larger levels of inequality. On the other hand, our research design does not allow the control of other sociodemographic characteristics like education or occupation. While these alternative variables would provide further insights into the structure of public opinion, we think that the stratifying effect of income is most important in this case, given its key role in the classic economic models that we are reviewing.

The findings from these studies suggest that growing inequality increases the support for redistribution. Certainly, this does not automatically imply that as inequality increases so does actual redistribution. While this would imply a self-regulating process, empirical evidence suggest that redistributive demands are systematically unsatisfied, resulting in a constant "welfare deficit" (Bartels, 2017). The extent to which governments respond to increasing demands of redistribution is a matter for future research. Our new country-year estimates of support for redistribution across income groups provide the opportunity for scholars to not only further explore the intricate inequality-preferences relationship in more detail but to also assess the extent to which support for redistribution of different income groups effectively translates into redistributive policies.

Chapter 4

Responsive to whom? Party ideology and income-group preferences on redistributive policies

Xavier Romero-Vidal, Leuphana Universität Lüneburg

Steven M. Van Hauwaert, University of Surrey

Abstract

The extent to which policy-makers respond to public opinion has been at the heart of a vivid scholarly debate over the past decade. While some research suggests that governments respond to changes in mass preferences, an increasing number of scholars claim that governments either disregard public opinion in general or are only influenced by the opinion of the more affluent segments of the population. Considering the rising tide of inequality and the growing size of lower- and middle-income electorates, this question is particularly relevant when it comes to social provisions. After all, social policy is at the heart of the contemporary European state structures. With that in mind, this study examines whether and how social policies respond to public opinion. We rely on a comprehensive dataset and a time-series cross-sectional design to examine these questions in seven advanced democracies from the 1980s to 2017. The results suggest that social policy reflects changes in aggregate preferences. When disaggregating our question for separate income groups, we find clear indications of underrepresentation of the preferences of the poor in social policy. We also provide some evidence of partisan effects on social policy, and discuss their implication for policy representation.

4.1. Introduction

The rising tide of inequality across Western democracies is at the forefront of the political agenda, as well as public and policy debates (see Piketty, 2020). The main claim of the *Gillets Jaunes* in France relates to inequality and wealth disparity, as the movement posits France's working poor are (being) left behind. The World Inequality Database (WID) even highlights rising levels of inequality in countries we typically identify with equality and consider the bedrock of social democracy, like Norway and Sweden. Even for one of the champions in fighting inequality, the Netherlands, income disparities remain largely unchanged in the past decades. It is, thus, fair to say that concerns related to economic inequality and income redistribution remain crucial matters in advanced democracies.

A core tenet of representative democracy is the reflection of citizens' concerns and preferences in government action, and more precisely policy outputs. An extensive literature highlights this in a variety of policy domains (Bartle et al., 2018; Hakhverdian, 2010; Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2008; Schakel et al., 2020; Soroka and Wlezien, 2010). Typically, these studies argue citizens get what they want, meaning their preferences are effectively reflected in policy. Extant scholarship indeed teaches us that government policy, and particularly social policy, responds to citizens and reflects their desire for redistribution (Brooks and Manza, 2008; Peters, 2018; Schakel et al., 2020). Yet, recent scholarship provides noteworthy challenges to this mechanism. One strand of research finds that governments simply disregard public opinion and either follow alternative opinions, like interest groups (Rasmussen et al., 2014), or rely on 'top-down' policy-making (Statham and Geddes, 2006). Another literature posits policy-makers are only influenced by the concerns and preferences of the wealthiest segments of the population (Bartels, 2017; Gilens, 2012; Peters and Ensink, 2015; but see Erikson, 2015; Ura and Ellis, 2008).

The general aim of this study is to examine the extent to which and how social policies are shaped by public preferences. To do so, we rely a time-series cross-section dataset that covers seven European democracies and goes back to the 1980s. We proceed in a two-folded analysis. First, we explore two mechanisms through which mass preferences about redistribution could be translated into policy. On the one hand, we assess whether changes in support for redistribution amongst different social groups are reflected in social policy. On the other hand, we simultaneously examine partisan effects as an electoral mechanism of policy representation. Together, this assesses the alternative mechanisms through which the public opinion-policy link develops in representative democracies. Second, we examine policy responsiveness to different social groups. If different socio-economic groups exert different levels of influence on policy-makers, this would add evidence that economic inequality translates into political inequality. While policy responsiveness does not exhaust the requirements of good democratic performance (Sabl, 2015), if policy accommodates the preferences of the rich better than those of the poor, policy responsiveness becomes a relevant indicator of representation inequalities. At the same time, lack of partisan effects on social policy could indicate that incumbents adjust policy to mass preferences at the expense of the party's own ideology, therefore prioritizing direct policy responsiveness. Alternatively, the lack of partisan effects might reflect the inability of governments to implement the mandate they were voted for. Taken together, direct

responsiveness and partisan effects provide alternative mechanisms for representation in the domain of social policy.

Our results suggest that policy change generally responds to public opinion, but seems to be more aligned with the preferences of middle and high-income citizens than those of the poor. Additionally, our account of party ideology provides evidence that it shapes social policy and can function as an indirect way of representation.

4.2. Political inequality and the public opinion-policy link

The link between public opinion and policy change and the degree to which public policy reflects the wishes of the public is an essential question for political science (Mansbridge, 2003; Sabl, 2015). It is not surprising, then, that scholars have originated a large body of literature about the opinion-policy link, particularly about the US (Erikson et al., 2002; Soroka and Wlezien, 2010) but also in Europe (Rasmussen et al., 2019). Most empirical studies suggest that policy-makers essentially give citizens what they want (Page and Shapiro, 1983; Stimson et al., 1995). This means, for example, that as the public becomes moves to the left, so does the aggregate of policy indicators (Erikson et al., 2002). More specifically, increases or cuts in spending across different domains also seems to respond to the demands of the citizens (Soroka and Wlezien, 2005, 2010; Wlezien, 2004). Governments tend to follow public opinion, particularly in the most salient domains, maximizing the chances that citizens approve of the chosen policy direction (Wlezien 2004). For example, spending in the usually salient social and welfare domains seems to track spending preferences in the US, Canada and Great Britain (Soroka and Wlezien 2004, 2005, 2010). In turn, some scholars focusing on European democracies have also found that, for a wide range of issues, policy tends to be congruent with the opinion of the majority of citizens (Rasmussen et al., 2019).

While this positive relationship is prevalent in empirical studies, some research suggests that it is conditional on other factors. Pacheco (2013) finds that policy representation is dependent on legislative professionalism (higher representation in states that are highly professionalized) and on issue salience (higher responsiveness for salient issues). More recent evidence suggest that governments are more responsive to public preferences when the economy is performing well and less when it is not (Ezrow et al., 2020).

Despite this cumulated evidence of a "dynamic representation" system in which policy responds dynamically to public opinion change (Erikson et al., 2002; Stimson et al., 1995), scholars have further inquired about the imbalances these accounts at the aggregate level might fail to disclose. The US have been the most studied case to examine the representation of preferences of different social groups, particularly between the more and less affluent layers of society. Two schools of thought have come up with contradicting results. On the one hand, some scholars argue that representation is equal across income groups (Enns, 2015; Enns and Wlezien, 2011; Soroka and Wlezien, 2008). On the other hand, there are scholars who find that governments are more responsive to the preferences of the rich than to those of the poor (see Bartels, 2008; Gilens, 2012; Gilens and Page, 2014; Soroka and Wlezien, 2008). Building on this expanding strand of scholarship, a growing number of studies have found similar results

in other advanced democracies, including Switzerland (Rosset, 2013), Germany (Elsässer et al., 2017), and the Netherlands (Schakel, 2019).

The study of income-group representation from a more comparative perspective remains limited, with some notable exceptions studying European democracies (Giger et al., 2012; Peters and Ensink, 2015; Rosset and Stecker, 2019) or broader set of thirty advanced democracies (Bartels, 2017). For the most part, these studies show that unequal representation seem to be substantial between high- vs low-income citizens. That is, when expanding the analytical scope, policy-makers appear to give credence to what the rich want, while the poor find their preferences often overlooked. In particular, the evidence show that the relatively poor are particularly underrepresented on redistribution (Rosset and Stecker, 2019). At the same time, in line with extant scholarship on the US, there is comparative evidence of so-called 'coincidental representation' (Enns 2015), meaning that the middle category would most commonly be represented as long as their preferences moved in the same direction of those of the rich, who would in fact exert the most influence on policy change (Elkjær, 2020; Elkjær and Klitgaard, forthcoming)

These findings of a pervasive pattern of political inequality are not surprising. Less informed individuals are less likely to follow and discuss politics and to hold stable opinions over time, and therefore politicians may not trust the preferences of the poor to be accurate or even meaningful (see Althaus, 1998; Bartels, 1996). Furthermore, since more educated and wealthier citizens are typically better informed, they are also more likely to participate in politics by working for a political party, attending local community meetings or contributing to political candidates (delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; Verba, Sidney et al., 1995). They are also more likely to form and articulate an opinion and to vote (Gallego, 2007; Gilens, 2005; Soroka and Wlezien, 2008). If policy-makers prioritize the opinions of voters who hold them accountable and the rich are better represented amongst them, policy outputs might also be geared more towards the preferences of the wealthy (Griffin and Newman, 2005). Moreover, politicians themselves tend to come from higher strata (Gaxie and Godmer, 2007), and following the preferences of the poor would –in theory– go against their self-interest. Considering this incentive structure, governments would respond to the preferences of strata with economic and political influence and directly ignore the preferences of others.

In contrast to these findings, some scholars argue that there is no evidence of systematic imbalances in policy responsiveness to different social groups. Since all votes count equally and policy-makers seek electoral rewards, they tend to place policy to the median voter (Downs, 1957). Thus, even if representation differs across groups, the median voter would be effectively represented (Soroka and Wlezien, 2010)[29]. The distance of a given voter from the median one is the cause of differentiated responsiveness and not his or her socioeconomics status (Enns and Wlezien, 2011).

---

[29] It is important to note that, even amongst these scholars, differentiated responsiveness is found (to different extents) when differences in preferences exist.

Not coincidentally, scholars working from this perspective find parallel movements of group opinions (Enns and Wlezien, 2011; Soroka and Wlezien, 2008; Ura and Ellis, 2008). If group opinions mostly change in the same direction over time, all group opinions might end up being equally represented even when they exert different levels of influence on government decisions. Additionally, over-time similarity between income groups could be increasing (Page and Jacobs, 2009), thereby reducing the possibility for unequal representation. Yet, our accounts of the evolution of redistributive preferences across income groups suggest that the distance between top- and low-incomers are not polarizing (Chapter 2). In fact, a reanalysis of Gilens (2012) suggests that in the subset of observations where preferences when the middle and rich disagree, it is unclear whose preferences matter (Branham et al., 2017). Overall, this perspective would characterize a "democracy by coincidence" (Gilens and Page, 2014) or "coincidental representation" (Enns, 2015) in which representation is due to preference similarity rather than to equal influence on governments. Consequently, policy output will display similar levels of responsiveness to all income groups (Soroka and Wlezien, 2010; Tausanovitch, 2016; Ura and Ellis, 2008).

4.3. Partisan effects as indirect responsiveness

The notion of policy responsiveness that we have discussed so far implies that governments react directly to changes in mass preferences by adjusting their policy outcomes accordingly. Yet, the public opinion-policy nexus is mediated by political parties who have incentives to seek and remain in office. As a result, policy representation may be observed through the electoral mandate.

We know that preferences can respond to policy "thermostatically", moving right as policy moves left and left as it moves right (Wlezien, 1995). In the long run, these changing preferences contribute to a change of government, which in turn brings policy back in line with public opinion (Soroka and Wlezien, 2010). This rationale draws from Erikson et al.'s (2002) classic macro polity model, which demonstrates that the demand for liberal or conservative policies affects both elections and the policies that result from it. While some studies are premised on the notion that governments merely transmit preferences to policy, thereby rendering the behaviour of representatives largely irrelevant (Erikson et al., 1987; Miller et al., 1999), others consider this to be a mechanism of democratic accountability that allows citizens to hold governments accountable for their policies (Powell Jr., 2000). The question thus remains, what is the role of partisan effects in this puzzle of representation?

A wide-ranging empirical literature shows partisan or ideological effects on policy-making directly or on policy responsiveness, indicating that governments can (and do) play an effective role (e.g. Caughey and Warshaw, 2018; Erikson et al., 1994; Lax and Phillips, 2009; Schmidt-Catran, 2016; Soroka and Wlezien, 2010). This seemingly supports a prominent and structuring role of elites as responsive actors (Cohen, 1997; Geer, 1996). It suggests that representatives concerned with re-election may perceive incentives to actively respond to the median voter through their proposed policies, or what Stimson et al. (1995) refer to as 'rational anticipation'. That is, governments promote their ideologically congruent orientations to satisfy their electorates and to avoid electoral punishment. In this sense, citizens get what they want: Left-wing governments represent left-wing interests, while right-wing governments promote more

right-wing policies (Allan and Scruggs, 2004; Erikson et al., 1994; Hibbs, 1977; Schmitt, 2016). In socio-economic terms, we find applications related to redistribution and welfare state generosity (Brooks and Manza, 2008), while in socio-cultural terms scholars find applications in the field of immigration (Ford et al., 2015) and European integration (Toshkov, 2011).

The simplicity of partisan effects has been challenged by theoretical counter-arguments and corresponding empirical findings showing that partisan politics has declined over time (Busemeyer, 2007), only matters on rare occasions (Loftis and Mortensen, 2017) or remains ineffectual (Garrett and Mitchell, 2001; Swank, 2002). Some argue this is due to the power of organised interests (Rasmussen et al., 2014, 2019) or to the influence of the institutional structures and barriers of government (Schmitt, 2016; Tsebelis, 2002). Alternative accounts indicate the external pressures from international or supranational organisations (e.g. European Union) and evolutions (e.g. complexification, globalisation) constrain the policy freedom of national governments and limit the corresponding budgetary resources (Garrett and Mitchell, 2001; Hix, 1999; but see Mair, 2000). In different ways, empirical research highlights that policy-makers only have limited margins for manoeuvre (Arnold and Franklin, 2012). That is, their opportunities to fulfil electoral promises and respond to citizen demands are often constrained (Pierson, 2001; Rose, 1984). Specifically, Rose and Davies (1994) argue that governments inherit their agendas to a large extent from their predecessors, suggesting that policy-making is rather path dependent (Baumgartner and Jones, 2010; Brooks and Manza, 2006).

4.4. A comparative macro polity

While Erikson et al.'s (2002) macro polity depicts the dynamics of public opinion and electoral politics in the US, its application goes beyond this. Bartle et al. (2011, 2018) show that changes in the central tendency of British public opinion can predict electoral outcomes and that, successively, new incumbents adjust policy output to satisfy public demands. They refer to these mechanisms as electoral turnover and policy accommodation, respectively. Thus, rather than yearly changes in public opinion being captured by changes in policy, this process would require that different parties in power produce different policy outputs

The US and Great Britain are two most-likely cases of the previously discussed partisan effects because of their electoral systems and the larger institutional state structure. Yet, while they often go under the radar, other applications of the macro polity do exist. Weiss (2012) adapted the macro polity model to the multiparty system of Germany, indicating that dynamic representation is not limited to majoritarian systems. Bellucci and Pellegata (2017) confirm that Italian governments adapt their preferences to thermostatic public opinion. So, in a context of strong challenges to democratic accountability and government responsiveness, there remains a relationship between citizens' preferences and their voting choices. Similarly, Bartle et al. (2020) show that thermostatic public opinion in Spain is indeed associated with election outcomes, but that policy is not immediately responsive to public opinion. Much like in Great Britain, representation in Spain is *only* indirect through electoral turnover.

Even beyond Europe, selective applications of the macro polity model typically examine the electoral turnover mechanism. Baker (2015) finds that policy mood in Mexico explains

ideological differences across elections. Even in post-communist Russia, Matovski (2018) shows that authoritarian rulers serve as intermediaries between public opinion and political outcomes. But most comprehensively, Ohmura (2018) shows that Japan is somewhat different because the government's system of policy responsiveness ensures that mandate representation is likely to exist, while accountability representation remains limited.

Building on this literature, we offer a comprehensive understanding of the interdependence between (groups of) citizens, governments and policy outcomes. We do so by providing an empirical framework that incorporates a number of related questions. First, to what extent does policy conform to aggregate preferences? Second, to what extent are governments on par with the ideological position of the median voter? Third, how do governments contribute to policy outputs? Fourth, how – if at all – is this three-folded relationship different for citizens from different income groups? We examine this theoretical model across seven advanced democracies, for three distinct income groups, from the early 1980s to 2017 and in the specific domain of redistribution. Drawing from the original macro polity framework (Erikson et al. 2002) and building on the distinction Bartle et al. (2018) make between policy accommodation and electoral turnover, we illustrate in Figure 4.1 the different mechanisms we set out to examine in our analysis. Policy responsiveness reflects the direct influence of public opinion on policy, while the electoral turnover mechanism presupposes that government partisanship conveys voters' policy preferences.
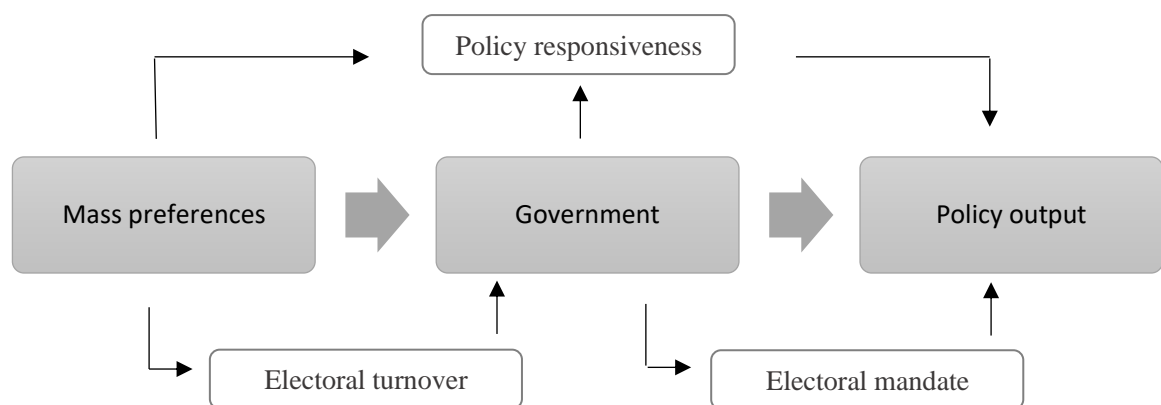
Figure 4.1 Direct and indirect mechanisms of policy representation

While the first question models direct policy responsiveness, the latter three questions provide unique insights into how elected officials, and governments specifically, serve as mediating causal mechanisms by and through which various groups of citizens can exert their impact on (social) policy. This broader theoretical scheme, thus, innovates and complements existing research that remains more compartmentalised in its analysis. Altogether, empirical results will allow us to simultaneously estimate the total effect of citizen preferences on policy outcomes and further add to our understanding of governments as either "delegates" (listeners) or "trustees" (leaders) (Bowler, 2016).

4.5. Measures and Data

We evaluate the extent to which social policy responds to income group demands. In order to track the evolution of preferences in the field of redistribution, welfare, and social policies, we

work with a large database of national and international surveys fielded in seven European democracies in the past decades: France (1997-2017), Germany (1984-2017), Great Britain (1981-2017), Netherlands (1978-2017), Norway (1989-2017), Sweden (1985-2017) and Switzerland (1987-2017). Across all these surveys, we identify the questions dealing with welfare state and social benefits, redistribution and taxes, public spending and government intervention that have been asked in more than one occasion.

We want to compare populations in low-, middle- and high-income groups, represented by the top (first), middle (third) and bottom (fifth) quintiles. Accordingly, we split our survey sample in quintiles, although the use of income scales instead of absolute values leads to deviations. Most commonly, the group with lower income represents a higher share of the sample than the top quintile. We correct these errors using a weight measure for each survey. For each income group, we subsequently calculate a common metric across survey items by dividing all responses between those who express support for redistribution and those who oppose redistribution. The resulting index represents the percentage of all substantive responses (excluding neutral and missing responses) that express support for redistributive policies:

$$Index\ of\ preferences = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{N} Pro - redistribution\ responses}{\sum_{i=1}^{N} Pro + against\ redistribution\ responses} \times 100$$

The resulting set of preference measures includes nearly 6,000 data points (an average of nearly 275 per country-income group), including an average of 40 questions per country. Some of these questions have been included only two or three times, others more frequently, but none systematically. In order to overcome this, we rely on dyadic ratios algorithm (Stimson, 2018) that uses the index of preferences of each iteration of a question as an indicator to estimate the latent support for redistributive policies.[30] The result is an aggregate measure that not only provides us with unprecedented yearly estimates of preferences on this field, but which are also less affected by house effects or measurement error. Thus, the result is a single redistributive measure for each income group in each country that accounts for an average of around 50.5 % of the variance (Eigen value) across our series.

As an indicator of social policy, we rely on the welfare state generosity index, from the Comparative Welfare Entitlements Dataset (Scruggs et al., 2017). This index is the sum of sub-indices measuring a broad range of social insurance benefits, such as employment insurance, sick pay insurance, and public pensions. Whereas social spending has been more commonly used as a proxy for social policy (e.g. Peters and Ensink, 2015), we give preference to the use

---

[30] The change between any two values within that iteration (a dyad-ratio) is a relative indicator of our broader concept, redistributive opinions. Repeated across each point in time, for each individual iteration, the algorithm then estimates the covariance between the dyadic-ratios of each item. From this covariance, it then calculates validity estimates for the different dyad-ratio series and uses these to estimate the best possible latent measure of redistributive opinions. The algorithm then uses these estimates (the dyad-ratio series combined and adjusted according to their covariance) to estimate redistributive opinion values for each year. For a more detailed account of the methodological foundations of the dyadic ratios algorithm, we refer to Stimson (1991, 2018) and McGann (2014).

of an entitlement-based indicator of social policy, as this more clearly reflects government's political decisions, rather than a country's underlying unemployment rate and population of pensioners (Wenzelburger et al., 2013).We, thus, expect welfare state generosity to capture direct policy responsiveness and more indirect partisan effects.

In order to measure governments' partisanship, we rely on data related to the ideological composition of each cabinet from the ParlGov database (Holger and Manow, 2019). Each party has a 0-10 value in the left/right scale, which we attribute to the incumbent. In case of coalition governments, the each party score is a weighted accounting for the number of seats in parliament of each coalition member. Since we are primarily interested in the within-country variation between governments, we country mean-center government ideology scores.

4.6. Results

We start our analysis by testing generally the two mechanisms of representation we present in section 4.4. First, we model changes in welfare generosity as a function of aggregate support for redistribution to account for direct policy responsiveness. In this first analysis, we estimate preferences at the national level (that is, taken all income groups together). In our second model we substitute mass preferences by government ideology to measure partisan effects, and finally we include both variables in the model. We add measures of economic growth and unemployment from the OECD dataset as economic controls.

Table 4.1 Mechanisms of representation in social policy

	Δ Welfare Generosity $_t$		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Aggregate redistributive preferences $_{(t-1)}$	0.03***		0.04***
	(0.01)		(0.01)
Government ideology $_{(t-1)}$		-0.04	-0.05
		(0.03)	(0.03)
Unemployment $_{(t-1)}$	-0.09***	-0.10***	-0.08***
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
GDP growth $_{(t-1)}$	-0.00	-0.00	-0.01
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Constant	-0.02	-0.04	-0.01
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.05)
Observations	160	171	160
R-squared	.23	.17	.25

The results in Table 4.1 show a significant association between mass preferences and welfare generosity. When the public demands more redistribution, governments tend to expand welfare entitlements. By contrast, these models do not provide any decisive evidence of partisan effects. The negative coefficient signals that more conservative governments tend to reduce

welfare generosity, in line with expectations. However, the coefficients are not statistically significant neither in models excluding mass preferences nor including them.

Since preferences seem to have a major influence on social policy, we now turn to examine policy responsiveness in more detail. In particular, we want to assess the extent to which redistributive preferences of different income groups relate to social spending. Models in Table 4.2 account for high, middle- and low-income redistributive preferences, together with government partisanship and the previously mentioned economic controls.

Table 4.2 Change in Welfare Generosity and responsiveness to income group preferences

	Δ Welfare Generosity			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Low-income redistributive preferences $_{(t-1)}$	0.02**			-0.00
	(0.01)			(0.01)
Middle-income redistributive preferences $_{(t-1)}$		0.03***		0.02*
		(0.01)		(0.01)
High-income redistributive preferences $_{(t-1)}$			0.02***	0.02**
			(0.00)	(0.01)
Government ideology $_{(t-1)}$	-0.05	-0.05*	-0.06*	-0.06*
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Unemployment $_{(t-1)}$	-0.09***	-0.08***	-0.08***	-0.08***
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
GDP growth $_{(t-1)}$	-0.02	-0.02	-0.01	-0.01
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Constant	-0.08	-0.08	-0.07	0.01
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.06)
Observations	163	163	163	163
R-squared	.21	.25	.27	.27

Note: Prais-Winsten regressions with correlated panels corrected standard errors (PCSEs). Standard errors in parentheses. * $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$, *** $p<0.001$

When included in separate models, support for redistributive policies is positively associated with policy change, and this holds for low- middle- and high-income groups. In consequence, more support for redistribution of any income group would be associated with higher welfare generosity. However, when we include the preferences of all income groups in the same model and let them compete with each other, the results substantively change. The coefficient of higher-income citizen preferences is not affected by the inclusion of the other two measures: its size and statistically significance remain the same. Similarly, the coefficient of middle-income preferences stays positive and significant, although slightly reduced in size. By contrast, the preferences of low-income citizens lose their significance and the coefficient

becomes negative, although with a small coefficient. Thus, while the poor seem to be represented in social policy, when we control for the preferences of other income groups, this association largely disappears. This change across models suggests that the responsiveness to the poor might be the result of so-called "representation by coincidence" (Enns, 2015): governments respond to their preferences when they align with those of higher strata, but when they differ, their demands are neglected.

In three out of the four models in Table 4.2, the coefficient of government partisanship is statistically significant. As in Table 4.1, the effect is a negative one, suggesting that left-wing governments tend to expand social policies, whereas right-wing ones reduce them. However, accounting for the influence of income-group preferences renders partisan effects significant. Although partisan effects are not as robust as those of mass preferences, our results suggest that government partisanship still shapes social policy. Parties change social policies in the direction that electorates expect from them. By doing so, incumbents enable the representation of mass preferences via electoral turnover.

The effects of economic conditions are also worth noting. Economic growth does not seem to have a direct effect on the generosity of the state. However, the negative coefficient in all our models indicate that when economies grow, state generosity decreases, in line with previous findings (Peters and Ensink, 2015). Higher unemployment rates seem to lead to cuts in social entitlements, and this effect is significant and robust to different model specifications. Given the typically negative correlation between economic growth and unemployment, the two coefficients would cancel each other if they had similar effects. However, unemployment effects seem to outweigh those of economic growth, suggesting that in times of economic hardship welfare generosity decreases.

4.7. Discussion and conclusions

This study assesses political representation in the field of social policy, which remains one the more salient issues domains across Europe. More specifically, we ask how and to what extent redistributive preferences become reflected in social policies. Our results show that direct responsiveness occurs, but is biased towards the middle- and top-incomers. In line with recent studies, we find that the poor are underrepresented in Europe (Lefkofridi and Giger, 2020). The fact that we encounter responsiveness to the preferences of the poor only when we do not control for other group preferences is consistent with the hypothesis of coincidental representation (Gilens, 2015).

In addition, our analyses provide some evidence of partisan effects. When we control for income-group preferences, the results suggest that that party ideology matters in social policy. Conservative governments tend to reduce welfare generosity, all things being equal. However, the significance of these effects is dependent on model specification, so we should be cautious with their interpretation.

We contribute to existing scholarship by providing new insights from Europe, which remain scarce in comparison to those of Anglo-Saxon countries. To do so, we have used a unique data set of country-year estimates of redistributive preferences across income groups. Regarding the dependent variable, we move beyond studies focusing on social spending and measure instead

the effects of preferences in welfare entitlements, providing evidence that representation biases also exist in these policies, in line with Schakel et al (2020). Given the relevance of social policies in regulating economic imbalances, our results point to a vicious circle of economic and political inequalities.

Chapter 5

Measuring objective and subjective class: The effects of survey questionnaires on the study of class voting

Xavier Romero-Vidal, Leuphana Universität Lüneburg

Abstract

Despite its crucial role for social scientists, the concept of social class remains elusive and its measurement inconsistent. Building on the class voting literature, this study presents an updated assessment of the explanatory power of vote of objective class indicators (occupation, income and education) and subjective class measures. To do so, it uses three class schemes commonly used in survey questionnaires: two of them refer to the lowest categories as "lower" or "working" class alternatively, while the third one uses a numerical status scale. This article scrutinizes (a) the link between material conditions and subjective class, (b) the link between the two sets of measures and voting behaviour and (c) the influence of different subjective class questions on the results. The findings suggest that different subjective-class schemes result in substantially different distributions of class identities. Despite these differences, all measurement strategies indicate that both objective and subjective class influence vote simultaneously.

5.1. Introduction

Sociologists and political scientists have largely debated about the association of social class and electoral behaviour and the extent to which this has weakened over time (Clark and Lipset, 1991; Evans, 2017; van der Waal et al., 2007). The substantial changes and increasing instability of Western electorates since the 1970s have called into question the idea that the structuring effects of social cleavages can predict party choice. In particular, research has questioned whether lower class individuals are more likely to vote for left-wing parties, while higher-class individuals tend to vote for right-wing ones. Perceptions on competence, issue voting, and many other factors have come to complement the classic cleavages identified by Lipset and Rokkan (1967): religion, worker-employer, centre-periphery and urban-rural. However, the emergence of new dimensions of political debate does not necessarily imply that class politics is over in modern democracies. Despite the decline of the magnitude of differences between classes, the order in which social classes favour left or right parties is still consistent with the rationale behind the class voting literature (Jansen et al., 2013: 72).

In spite of the importance of the concept of social class, its measurement is inconsistent in the existing literature. In fact, the operationalization of social class is a matter of ongoing debate for social scientists (see Hout, 2008: 26–28). Social class is sometimes measured using objective indicators like occupation, income, education or a combination of them. Alternatively, some scholars rely on the subjective identification of respondents to classify them as belonging to a specific social class. Yet, the various class categories used to measure subjective class prevents comparison of results across surveys. Moreover, the questions used in surveys influence the subjective class identities expressed by respondents (Hout, 2008). The lack of consensus on how to measure social class is thus a major challenge for social scientists, in particular for those interested in class politics.

This study aims to contribute to the study of measurement of social class by comparing the stratifying power of different objective and subjective indicators. As regards the measurement of subjective class, I use data from a survey experiment that provides a unique opportunity to assess the extent to which different survey questions result in different distributions of responses. A first question uses a categorical class scheme that includes "working" class categories; a second categorical scheme substitutes "working class" by "lower class"; and a continuous variable offers an 11-points status scale ranging from 0 to 10. Using these three schemes, I study the effect of material conditions on class identification and the degree of congruence between objective and subjective class variables. In other words, the goal is to assess the extent to which objective and subjective measurements of class correlate and to scrutinize the meaning of inconsistencies between the two.

In a second step, this study examines the explanatory power of voting behaviour of material conditions (income, education, occupation) and subjective class using different survey questions. Moreover, the mismatches between objective and subjective class are taken into account to study voting behaviour. Recent studies have focused on the relation between objective and subjective measures of social class, emphasising the fact that subjective class perceptions often differ from objective class indicators (D'Hooge et al., 2018; Sosnaud et al.,

2013). The study of mismatches between material conditions and class identity might allow us to create more fine-grained explanations for the influence of class on electoral behaviour. Yet, the evidence so far has produced mixed results. Whereas class misperceptions do not seem to influence vote choice in the US decisively (Sosnaud et al., 2013), more recent evidence suggests that they do so in Europe, where class identification is a necessary condition of class voting (D'Hooge et al., 2018).

To study the mismatches between objective and subjective indicators and their combined effect on electoral behaviour, the present study analyses the results of a survey experiment fielded in Catalonia in 2018. This context can be thought of as a litmus test for class voting, since we expect class-voting patterns to be overshadowed by the independence issue. Despite this, my findings suggest that social class is a powerful predictor of left-right vote even in such a context. As regards the measurement of social class, my results show that objective and subjective measures result in substantially different groups within the same sample. Consequently, objective and subjective indicators should not be treated as interchangeably components of social class. Moreover, the categories used in questions on class identification influence the distribution of responses significantly. These differences, however, do not prevent class voting patterns from emerging. Both the objective and subjective dimensions of class exert an influence on voting behaviour. Yet, my results suggest that the concordance or discrepancy between the two dimensions does not seem to provide additional information about voting behaviour. It is thus important for social scientists to control for both material conditions and class self-identification, but the extent to which the two are consistent or not is less relevant.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. Section 5.2 critically reviews the most common measurements of social class and the meaning of mismatches between objective measures and class identity. Section 5.3 presents a brief account of the class voting literature and discusses the hypothesised effect of class discrepancies. Section 5.4 explains the aims of the study and Section 5.5 describes the case study and the survey experiment used in the analysis. The results on the link between objective and subjective class and the effect of both on voting behaviour are presented in Section 5.6 and 5.7 respectively. In Section 5.8, I consider their implications of my findings for the measurement of social class.

5.2. The measurement of social class

This section provides an overview of the main operationalisations of social class. After reviewing the most common indicators of objective social class, I discuss how different social class categories influence the study of subjective class. Finally, I address the relationship between objective and subjective class and examine the meaning of discrepancies between the two.

5.2.1. Objective class

Objective social class can be thought of as prolonged access (or exclusion) from critical resources (Kraus et al., 2012). In other words, we can think of class as "how people earn their money, how much money they have, or what they do with their money" (Hout, 2008: 26). The most common measures of objective class are occupation (see Erikson and Goldthorpe 1992;

Langsæther 2019), income (see Bartels 2008; Leighley and Nagler 2007) and education (see Bartels 2006). A review of studies on social class finds that over 67% of social class measures account for one of these three main objective indicators: occupation, education, and income (Loignon and Woehr, 2018: 75–76). By contrast, only 5% of measures refer to subjective class. Therefore, objective class measures are by and large more prevalent in empirical research.

The effect of these objective measures on political preferences or value orientations tend to run in parallel. In other words, the effects of higher education, income or occupational category tend to shape political attitudes and voting behaviour similarly. For instance, Welzel finds a *quasi-universal* pattern suggesting that emancipative values are more pronounced among white-collar workers than among blue-collar workers, more among high-income earners than among low-income earners, and more among people with university education than among people with little or no education (Welzel, 2013: 99).

Despite this parallelism, not all objective indicators have the same influence on policy preferences or vote. In particular, relying on education exclusively might be problematic, since people with similar educational backgrounds often have very different life chances, attitudes, and behaviours (Manza and Brooks, 1999; Sosnaud et al., 2013). Alternatively, income alone seems to have sufficient explanatory power to predict different policy attitudes (see chapter 2). However, some scholars argue that income responses are more susceptible to bias because of the respondents' reluctance to disclose it, and prone to error because of vagueness regarding what to include as income (Evans, 2017: 178). As a result, relying on income as a stratifying variable leads to more missing observations than relying on occupation (Fernández and Jaime-Castillo, 2018). Occupation-based measures are also expected to be more stable over time and account simultaneously for income, working conditions, career prospects and, to a large extent, lifetime expected earnings (Goldthorpe and McKnight, 2006).

Taking a Weberian approach to occupational class, the position in the labour market is indeed expected to shape life-chances (Weber 1978 [1922]). This perspective assumes that individuals compare the living conditions of their occupational group with those of other occupations to develop a cohesive understanding of their positions in the social structure. Scholars using occupation to measure social class assume that it shapes socio-political attitudes and worldviews. However, the tertiarisation of the employment structure in post-industrial societies introduces greater heterogeneity in the occupational structure.[31] The complexity of the evolving occupational structure translates into a large variation of the number of categories used to rank occupational schemes, ranging from 2 to 17 (Loignon and Woehr, 2018: 75).

All in all, the large number of operationalisations used in the literature reveals a lack of consensus, particularly between political scientists and sociologists, as to what material condition better captures social class.

---

[31] In order to deal with this increasing heterogeneity, we can distinguish occupational categories vertically (the level of marketable skills required in the job) and horizontally (as regards the nature of work or work logic) (Oesch, 2006). Due to the wide range of variables discussed in this article, I treat occupational categories in a single main dimension.

5.2.2. Subjective class

Subjective class captures the rank-based sense of one's position within the economic hierarchy (Kraus et al., 2013). Bourdieu (1984) suggests that status is the symbolic aspect of class structure that transcends its sheer economic relations. Such subjective feelings of status can drive opinions toward redistribution and other ideological views that justify those positions (Brown-Iannuzzi et al., 2015). Consequently, subjective class can provide us with substantive information about the socio-political orientations and behaviour of respondents.

Previous research on class identity suggests that citizens tend to see themselves in the middle of the social scale regardless of their material situation (Evans and Kelley, 2004). This is particularly true in rich countries, where citizens are less likely to identify as "lower class" (Andersen and Curtis, 2012). In order to study subjective class, social scientists rely on survey data and an overwhelming majority of studies use closed-ended questions. The class identities expressed in close-ended questions and open-ended ones vary widely: respondents are less likely to identify as working class and more likely to identify as middle-class in open questions (Hout, 2008: 30). By contrast, close-ended questions prompt respondents with specific class labels, which might affect the likelihood to identify with them in different ways. The probability of identifying as lower class depends on the name used to define it (e.g. lower vs working) and the number of categories included in a class scheme.

There is no standard class categorization in survey research, and questionnaires make use of several different class schemes to measure class self-identification. Some systems include three categories (which, in turn, sometimes include subcategories): upper, middle and lower class. Alternatively, some class schemes substitute *lower* for *working* class (as in Sosnaud et al., 2013), while others include both lower and working class as distinct categories, as in the World Values Survey or the European Elections Study. Since respondents are sensitive to the way in which a question is posed, the different class labels used in questionnaires may lead to substantially different response patterns (Hout, 2008).

Let us take the American national surveys as a case in point. The American National Election Survey (ANES) primes respondents with a dichotomy between middle class versus working class: "Most people say they belong either to the middle class or the working class. Do you ever think of yourself as belonging in one of these classes?" (cited in Hout, 2008: 28). The ANES[32] data shows that between 1948 and 2016, 99.19% of respondents chose one of the two labels they were primed with: 51.63% of respondents identified as working class, whereas 47.56% as middle class. Only 0.45% and 0.13% chose the not mentioned "lower" and "upper" class respectively. Another American survey, the General Social Survey (GSS), offers a four-point scale that explicitly includes upper, middle, working and lower class. The distribution of subjective class responses between 1972 and 2018 differs when using this alternative scale. When presented explicitly, the percentage of respondents identifying as lower class increases to 6.31%, reducing the number of people identifying as working class to 45.6%. Similarly, the proportion of respondents identifying as upper class increases to 3.21%, reducing the number

---

[32] Source: Time Series Cumulative Data File (1948-2016) of the American National Election Studies.

of middle-class responses to 44.87%.[33] The World Values Survey uses a five-point scale, distinguishing between upper, upper middle, lower middle, working and lower class. The results of this survey in the US between 1995 and 2017 suggest that inclusion of a lower-middle class further reduces de number of respondents choosing working class (28%) or lower class (5.3%).[34]

It seems clear that different subjective class questions result in substantially different distributions of class identities. The different shares of low- and middle-status expressed identities is likely to influence the explanatory power of class as a predictor of policy preferences or electoral behaviour. The largest differences in subjective class responses appear within the lower status categories, which suggests that the inclusion or exclusion of the "working class" category particularly alters the distribution of identities. The labels *lower* or *working* class might thus hold politically charged meanings that influence how people think of them (Kelley and Evans, 1995). As a consequence, survey questions about social class self-identification are particularly sensitive to the contextual meaning attributed to the words used in the question.

A way to avoid linguistic and cultural biases is to use a numerical scale in which respondents place themselves in a status gradient from 0 to 10. A numerical scale has the additional benefit of enhancing cross-national comparability (Evans et al., 1992: 462). Nevertheless, it is unclear that respondents can easily translate their class identities into numbers. For instance, Hoffmeyer-Zlotnik and Krebs (2000) find a low correlation between self-placement of respondents in categorical and continuous self-ranking scales in Germany. Respondents seem to identify with lower categorical labels while placing themselves in higher positions in the continuous scale. The mismatches between the two calls into question the validity of either continuous or categorical measurements.

The different measurements of subjective social class discussed in this brief review present different caveats that put into question their measurement validity. Yet, the lack of a golden standard to measure social class leaves unanswered the question of which measurement captures subjective class more accurately. Therefore, more research is needed on the quality of the measurement of such a key concept for social scientists.

5.2.3. (Mis)matches between objective and subjective class

Rather than alternative measures of a unidimensional concept, social class can be thought of as a complex concept involving both objective and subjective components. In fact, social scientists highlight that, together with objective measures of material class, subjective class identification also shapes political orientation (Calhoun, 1982; Centers, 1949; Jackman and Jackman, 1973). In their classic study on social class and status, Bendix and Lipset (1966) argue that in order for material conditions to shape attitudes and behaviour, individuals need to believe and feel that they are in such position. However, the vast majority of empirical studies using objective social class measures do not control whether this is the case. As a result, the

---

[33] Source: Cumulative data file (1972-2018) of the General Social Survey
[34] Source: World Values Survey Time Series (1981-2017)

relationship between objective and subjective class is often taken for granted and these categories are sometimes used interchangeably.

Kelley and Evans (1995) find that material conditions are indeed linked to subjective class, and that this association is mostly driven by income and education. This does not mean, however, that this relationship is stable over time. Alexander and Welzel (2017, 11) report that subjective social class correlated equally strongly with education and income in the mid-1990s. In the early 2010s, however, the correlation of subjective social class with education has decreased, while that with income has increased, which speaks for a monetization of class identity. The authors find this association using data from the World Values Survey, which includes both lower- and working-class categories. In order to assess the contemporary link between objective and subjective class and its robustness, I will analyse the influence of income, education and occupation on three different scales of subjective class.

Recent studies have taken a new approach to study the relationship between objective and subjective class, focusing on the discrepancies between the two and their consequences on electoral behaviour. Sosnaud et al. (2013) study the extent to which the subjective class identities of voters differ from their objective class positions in the US. They then analyse the implications that such differences have for voting behaviour. The authors describe those whose subjective class identity corresponds to their objective class position as having a "concordant" class perception. For those with a discrepancy between objective and subjective class, they distinguish whether they identify with a class above or below their objective class. They classify people who have subjective class identities that are higher than their objective class position as having "inflated" class perceptions and those with class identities below their objective class position have "deflated" class perceptions (Sosnaud et al., 2013: 84–85). The authors use these new class perceptions categories to predict vote choice in the US. Building on this approach, D'Hooge et al. (2018) evaluate party preferences in 18 European countries when material and subjective social class do not coincide. Combined, these studies put forward a new approach to measure class voting patterns which takes into account both the objective and subjective dimensions of social class.

It is important to note that this line of research has exclusively used occupation to measure objective class. Therefore, the analysis has been limited to the discrepancies between occupational category and class identity. Income and education have only been considered as predictors of class inflation or deflation. The results indicate that income increases the odds of class inflation, that is, identification with a higher class (D'Hooge, 2019; Sosnaud et al., 2013). The effect of education, however, is less clear. D'Hooge (2019: 48) finds that having a higher education makes people more likely to inflate their perceptions than their peers in their respective material class. By contrast, Sosnaud et al. (2013) find that those with lower education are more likely to hold inflated perceptions while those with higher education are as likely to hold inflated or deflated class identity. Overall, it is clear that occupation alone cannot predict subjective class and that education and income also shape it.

5.3. Dimensions of social class and class voting

The class voting literature generally posits that economic interests are stratified through social class and that voting behaviour reflects conflicting class interests (Svallfors, 1997; van der Waal et al., 2007). Lower-class citizens would typically vote left-wing parties that would foster redistribution. Higher-class citizens would be more reluctant to support state intervention in the economy and would therefore tend to vote right-wing parties.

Against this backdrop, the increasing salience of the cultural dimension has led to new insights on voting class patterns. In particular, lower-class voters are expected to hold more conservative attitudes on cultural issues, whereas higher-class voters are more progressive on issues like immigration (Van der Brug and Van Spanje, 2009) or sexuality norms (Alexander and Welzel, 2017). As a result, voters experience crossed pressures to make their vote choices, which might be triggering a realignment of class voting patterns (Kitschelt and Rehm, 2019). However, D'Hooge et al. (2018) show that when it comes to the effects of class inflation and deflation, there is no substantial trend in the cultural dimension, while clearer patterns emerge in the economic dimension or in a general left-right dimension accounting for both economic and cultural issues (D'Hooge et al., 2018: 79). Thus, I rely on an inclusive left-right dimension to classify party positions. If education and income exert opposite force on cultural and economic issues, and these are indeed orthogonal dimensions (completely independent to one another), we should not see any systematic correspondence between social class and voting behaviour. By contrast, if class-voting patterns still emerge in a single left-right dimension, this would provide evidence of the long-standing stratifying effect of social class despite the changing salience of economic and cultural issues.

Sosnaud et al. (2013: 85–86) formulate two opposite hypotheses for how differences between objective and subjective class positions should affect vote choice. First, the "perceived economic interest" hypothesis posits that inflators falsely perceive their economic interests as consistent with higher classes. Conversely, deflators think that redistribution is to their benefit. Because of these perceptions, deflators vote left-wing parties while inflators vote right-wing parties. The second hypothesis is the "cultural affinity" one. In line with the crossed pressures discussed above on the cultural dimension, cultural conservativism is negatively correlated with education. Individuals with higher objective class positions but low education are likely to hold deflated class identity and vote conservative based upon cultural issues. Thus, deflators would vote conservative parties based on cultural issues. Conversely, if education leads to inflated status perceptions, inflators would be more likely to vote left-wing parties upon cultural issues. In addition to the conflicting hypotheses, the authors consider the null hypothesis: the possibility that inflation and deflation simply result from status inconsistencies, and that their effects are incoherent or unpredictable.

The initial results of Sosnaud et al. (2013) indicate that inflators are more likely to vote Republican, in line with the perceived economic interest hypothesis. However, the effect becomes insignificant when taking ethnicity and income into account, which supports the null hypothesis. D'Hooge et al. (2018) do not find that inflators and deflators vote differently in the European context either. However, they show that subjective class identification is a necessity

for material class positions to affect voting behaviour. Those who subjectively identify with the working class (be it concordant or discordant with their material class) tend to vote left-wing parties, while those who materially belong to the working class but identify with the middle or the high class tend to support right-wing parties. Subjective identification would thus lead to stronger differentiation than material class positions alone. Unlike Sosnaud et al. (2013), D'Hooge et al. (2018) could not control for income because of data availability. Therefore, the effects of class discordant perceptions in a European context remain to be fully explored.

5.4. Aims of this study: an updated account of class voting

This brief review of the different measurements of social class highlights the need for more research on the quality of the measurement of such a key concept for social scientists. In order to advance in this line of research, this study has three main goals. First, it aims to critically review the measurement of social class by using simultaneously commonly used indicators. Second, this study aims to provide an updated account of the link between objective and subjective class, focusing on the mismatches between the two. Third, building on the previous steps, regression analysis is used to compare the influence on voting behaviour of (a) objective class, (b) subjective class, and (c) the mismatches between the two.

As regards the measurement of social class, I examine the extent to which the use of different variables results in different classifications of respondents. I focus on three variables related to objective class (occupation, income, and education) and three class schemes used in survey questionnaires. Relying on these three different measures of subjective class for the same sample of respondents provides a unique opportunity to compare how they shape the distribution of responses. In addition, using different subjective-class schemes provides a test for the robustness of the effects of class identification on voting behaviour.

As regards the second objective, I examine the link between and within the objective and subjective dimensions of social class. In line with recent studies, I focus on the mismatches between the two (D'Hooge et al., 2018; Sosnaud et al., 2013). These studies have provided mixed results on the influence of class mismatches on electoral behaviour, maybe as a result of different operationalisations of subjective class and different controls for material conditions. Thus, building on their approach, I aim to make three contributions to the study of the class discordant perceptions. On the one hand, I rely on three different operationalizations of subjective social class, which ensure that the results are not dependent on the survey question. On the other, I accounting for the income of respondents, which was not included in the previous study on class discordance in Europe (D'Hooge et al., 2018). The third contribution is the development of the concept of class discordance. In light of the increasing influence of income on subjective class, I revisit the concept of inflated and deflated class conceptions. In addition to taking occupational category as an objective benchmark for social class (as in D'Hooge, Achterberg, and Reeskens 2018; Sosnaud, Brady, and Frenk 2013), I measure the mismatches between subjective class and income and educational level respectively.

Finally, the third goal of this article is to explain voting behaviour using the three abovementioned approaches to social class: its objective components, subjective identification

and the distance between the two. Combined, the analyses presented in this article provide a renewed account of the class voting patterns, which might shade light on the extent to which each variable shapes political behaviour in post-industrial societies.

5.5. Data and measurements

This study relies on an experimental survey fielded in Catalonia (Spain) in November 2018. A priori, the Catalan political arena is quite an adverse case selection for the study on class voting. Class differences in Spain have been shrinking since the first decade of the 2000s, both in terms of ideology (Medina and Caínzos, 2018) and electoral behaviour (Orriols, 2013). Furthermore, Catalonia is a rich post-industrial region, and thus one in which we should find the lowest levels of low-class identity. More notably, the debate about independence has dominated Catalan politics for the last decade. As a consequence, the classic left-right divide in which class voting is expected to function seems to be blurred by the pro- vs anti-independence cleavage (Romero-Vidal, 2019). Therefore, the Catalan electorate constitutes a least-likely case for class voting, since it is a particularly adverse context to explain electoral behaviour by social class. In that sense, the Catalan case provides the litmus test for class voting: if we can find class voting patterns in such a context, we should find them elsewhere.

The *Experimental survey on social classes in Catalonia* (REO 914) was fielded by the Catalan Centre of Opinion Studies (CEO). A representative sample of 1803 individuals were asked about their material and subjective class. All respondents were requested to place themselves in a continuous status scale, ranging from 0 (lowest status) to 10 (highest status). Additionally, the questionnaire included two alternative questions using different categorical class schemes. Half of the sample (922 respondents) were asked to place themselves in a class scheme including *lower class* as the lowest category, whereas the other half (901 respondents) were presented with a scale which used the label *working class* instead.[35]

In order to generate a common scale between objective and subjective class categories, I create low- middle- and high- status categories across different indicators, as listed in Table 5.1. While rescaling different variables into as few as three groups inevitably produces some measurement error, doing so facilitates the comparison between objective and subjective variables. The variable income is recoded in such a way that it produces three quasi-terciles. Educational groups are divided between those who did not finish high school, those who did, and those who attended university. The questionnaire included eleven occupational categories, which are reorganised in three objective class categories analogous to those used by Sosnaud (2013) and D'Hooge (2018). Occupations in categories (5) services, (6) skilled workers, (7) semi-skilled workers, (8) unskilled workers and (9) elementary occupations are grouped in the lower-class

---

[35] The exact wording of the questions was: "From the following list, what social class do you think you belong to?" ("*Del següent llistat, a quina classe social creu que pertany?*") and "In a social scale in which 0 represents the lowest social class and 10 the highest one, in which point would you place yourself?" ("*En una escala social, en la qual 0 representa la classe social més baixa i 10 la més alta, en quin punt es situaria?*")

group. Middle class is constituted by (3) technicians and (4) clerical workers. Finally, (1) managers and (2) higher technicians are grouped in the upper class category.[36]

Table 5.1 Categorization of objective and subjective class variables

	Objective class			**Subjective class**		
	Income (monthly)	*Education*	*Occupational groups*	*Working-class scheme*	*Lower-class scheme*	*Continuous scale*
Low	Less than 1,800€ per month	Less than high school	Services, skilled workers, semi-skilled workers, unskilled workers, elementary occupations	Lower working class, middle working class and upper working class	Lower class,	0-4
Middle	Between 1,800€ and 3,000€	High School	Technicians and clerical workers	lower middle class, middle class	lower middle class, Middle class	5-6
High	More than 3000€	University	Managers and higher technicians	upper middle class and upper class	Upper middle class, upper class	7-10

In order to pair the objective class of the respondents with their subjective class, I also transform the latter into a corresponding three-group scheme. The 11-point continuous status scale has been transformed into a low status group (from 0 to 4), a middle one (5-6) and higher status (above 7) one. An alternative recoding (0-3, 4-6, 7-10) has been used as a robustness check with similar results, which are available in the supplementary materials (5.A).

In another question, half of respondents were asked to choose a status label from a closed list. It included several working-class subcategories (lower, middle and upper working class), which are merged into a lower status category. The remaining options are classified as middle class (lower middle class and middle class) and upper class (upper middle class and upper class).[37] Hereafter, this categorization offering "working class" responses will be referred to as *working-class scheme*. The other half of the sample replied to an identical question with a different list of status categories to choose from. The lowest categories included the label "lower class" instead of "working" class, two middle class options (lower middle class and middle class) and two upper class options (upper middle class and upper class). Henceforth, this categorization will be referred to as *lower-class scheme*.

Figure 5.1 displays the distribution of respondents across objective and subjective classification systems. The first three bars show the composition of the social class groups as a function of material conditions. The next three columns show the distribution of subjective class identities. At first glance, it is noticeable that more respondents choose working class than the alternative

---

[36] Categories (10) military occupations and (11) non-workers/living on capital gains, are omitted because of their ambiguity regarding occupational status. Combined, the two categories compromise 14 observations.
[37] Since only 0.11% of respondents identified directly as upper class, "upper middle class" (3% of response) is included in the top category.

low-status options. Over 60% of respondents identify as working class, outnumbering the number of low- and middle-class respondents according to the objective measures. By contrast, when using the lower-class scheme, the middle class is largely overrepresented (83.6% of respondents) and only 3% of respondents identify as a lower class. Lastly, the continuous 11-point scale produces a more balanced distribution of status perceptions, closer to that of the objective measures.
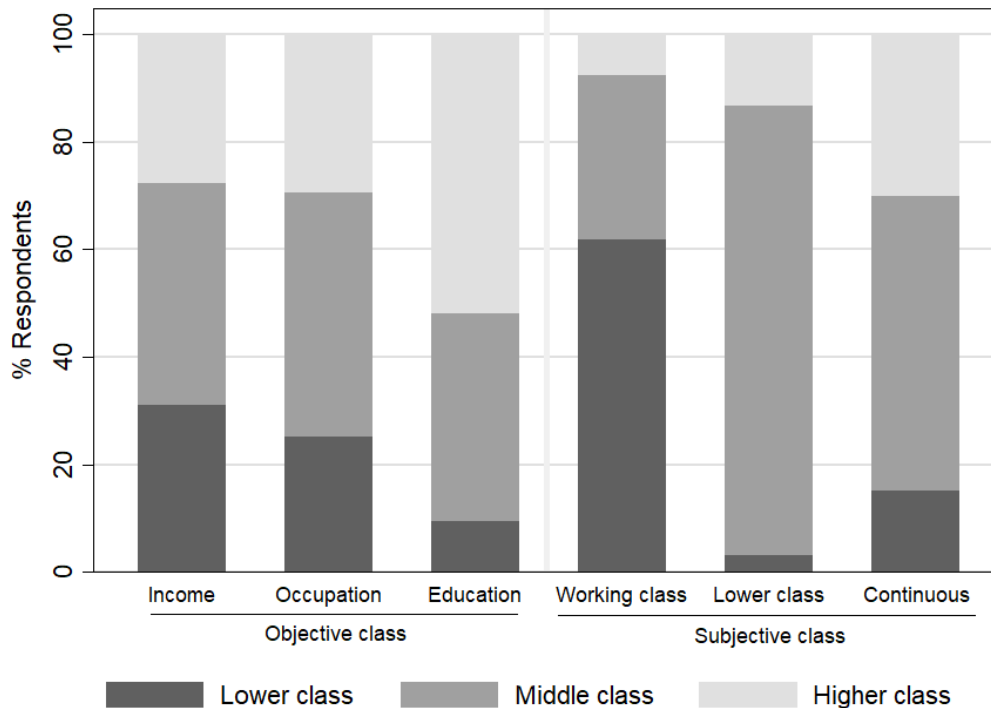
Figure 5.1 Percentage of respondents in each social class using different indicators

The descriptive statistics of Figure 5.1 reveal great discrepancies between and within the objective and subjective dimensions of social class, particularly within the latter. In what follows, I explore how each objective and subjective component relate to each other and how they influence electoral behaviour.

To measure left-right vote, I use the reported vote in the 2018 Catalan elections[38], in which seven parties entered the resulting parliament. I use data from the Regional Manifestos Project Dataset (Gómez et al., 2020) to attribute to each party a left-right score.[39] As a robustness test, all models have been replicated using an alternative measure of party ideology. Specifically, I use data from a post-electoral survey to attribute an ideological score to each party. Respondents were asked to place each party in a 1-10 left-right ideological scale. I take the average score of each party and impute it to each recalled vote in the survey experiment. Using

---

[38] While regional elections are sometimes thought of as second-order elections, Spanish regional elections appear to be closer to the autonomy end of that scale than to the dependency to the national level (Liñeira, 2016).

[39] Non-voters or voters of unspecified parties are treated as missing values.

the alternative measurement of party ideology does not change the results, as shown in models available in supplementary materials 5.B.

5.6. Reassessing the relationship between objective and subjective class

The first step of the empirical analysis examines the link between objective measures (occupation, income and education) and subjective class: do material conditions explain class identity? By using three subjective-class schemes in all analyses, I ensure that the results are not affected by measurement shortcomings.
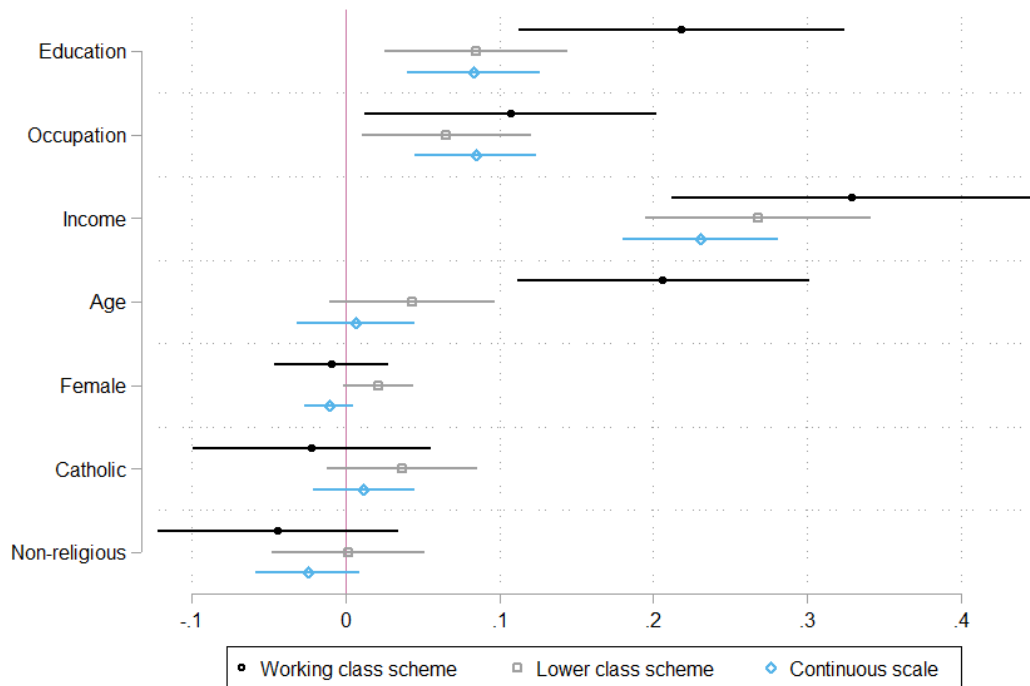
Figure 5.2 Effects of objective indicators on subjective class using different schemes

Figure 5.2 shows the effects of a set of socio-demographic variables on subjective class using the three alternative measurements in three separate OLS regressions. Education, income, occupation and age values are standardized between minimum 0 and maximum 1. The models also include controls for gender and religiosity (with other religions as a baseline category). These control variables do not seem to have a significant effect on class identity. Age seems to be associated with higher subjective class only in the working-class scheme, suggesting that older individuals are more reluctant to identify with working class than younger ones, material conditions being equal. Age does not have a significant effect when using the other two class schemes. By contrast, education is positively associated with class identity, indicating that higher educational attainment tends to lead to higher perceptions of social status. This effect holds across subjective class measurements. The effect of occupation is also a positive one in the three models, indicating that higher-ranking occupations are associated with higher-class identity. Lastly, the effect of income is also positive and significant regardless of the operationalization of subjective class. The size of the coefficient clearly surpasses that of education and occupation. This is consistent with the shift from occupation to income-based subjective class identities reported by Alexander and Welzel (2017).

83

The link between objective and subjective measures indicate that they are, as expected, intertwined. In particular, income seems to influence subjective class the most, while occupation and education have a relatively smaller effect. Despite this positive relationship between objective and subjective indicators, the distribution of responses in Figure 5.1 shows that the subjective identities do not necessarily correspond to their position in the income, education or occupation ranks. That is, while the link between objective and subjective class is a positive one, this does not ensure that class identification is fully consistent with objective class.

In order to analyse the mismatches between objective and subjective indicators in more detail, Table 5.2 presents the classification of respondents into groups of individuals holding inflated (higher class identity than objective class), concordant or deflated perceptions (lower class identity than objective class). The existing literature on class discordant perceptions has exclusively considered occupation as a benchmark to measure class inflation or deflation (D'Hooge et al., 2018; Sosnaud et al., 2013). In this article, I expand the scope of possible class discordant perceptions by also taking into account discrepancies between subjective class and education or income. To do so, I create a class discordance variable by subtracting objective class from subjective class, both ranging from 1 to 3. When material and subjective class match, this new variable takes a value of zero, signalling that perceptions are *concordant*. Positive values indicate that class identity is higher than their objective class, suggesting *inflated* perceptions. By contrast, respondents whose class identity is lower than their objective class hold *deflated* perceptions, indicated by negative values in the discordance variable.

Table 5.2 Distribution of class perceptions

	Occupation			Income			Education		
	Deflated	Concord	Inflated	Deflated	Concord	Inflated	Deflated	Concord	Inflated
Working Class scale	**54.5%** (359)	36.6% (241)	9.0% (59)	**50.1%** (315)	39.1% (246)	10.8% (68)	**71.6%** (585)	24.9% (203)	3.6% (29)
Lower Class scale	35.9% (236)	**45.5%** (299)	18.6% (122)	18.8% (120)	**45.4%** (289)	35.8% (228)	39.9% (321)	**47.2%** (380)	12.9% (104)
Continuous scale	21.9% (300)	**47.7%** (654)	30.5% (418)	18.7% (247)	**46.8%** (619)	34.6% (457)	36.7% (628)	**45.8%** (785)	17.5% (300)
Average	37.4%	**43.3%**	19.3%	29.2%	**43.8%**	27.1%	**49.4%**	39.3%	11.3%

Note: Percentage and number of respondents. Largest group in each objective-subjective-scheme combination in bold.

The first set of columns in Table 5.3 displays the proportion of respondents with deflated, concordant, and inflated perceptions when taking occupational category as objective benchmark. The second set of columns uses income as objective indicator to which subjective class is compared and the third set of columns uses educational level. Occupation and income are on average more consistent with subjective identities than educational level. Taking education as objective benchmark results in almost half of respondents holding deflated class perceptions, due to the large share of respondents with university degrees.

Each of the rows on Table 5.3 uses one of the three subjective-class schemes to match objective indicators, resulting in quite different results. Since a majority of respondents in the sample identify as working class, relying on the working class scale produces a large share of deflated class perceptions. More than half of the sample identifies with a class below their material position. By contrast, the lower-class scheme or the continuous scale result in a larger share of concordant perceptions. Using either of these two subjective class schemes, almost half of the sample identifies with a status group that matches their occupational, income or educational category. However, it is important to note that a majority of respondents' self-identifications do not match their material class, and this is true across all combinations of objective indicators and subjective-class schemes. If material conditions and class identification are considered two autonomous dimensions of social class, as a multifaceted category, the mismatches between objective and subjective indicators is not necessarily problematic. However, if the objective and subjective components are thought of as interchangeable indicators of a unidimensional concept, the working-class scheme seems particularly problematic.

5.7. The predictive power of different social class measures

In addition to the two main dimensions of social class, objective and subjective components, this study accounts for a third dimension, the distance between the two at the individual level. In this section, I compare the explanatory power of vote choice of these three dimensions of social class. First, I compare the predictive power of vote of objective and subjective class measures. In a second step, I assess whether discrepancies between objective and subjective class can improve our understanding of class voting patterns.

Figure 5.3 presents the results of the multiple OLS regression analyses for left-right vote. For simplicity's sake, the models include only the variables of interest for this study. The same models including controls for gender, age and religion do not alter the results and are available in the supplementary materials (5.C).

The first figure contained in Figure 5.3 displays the effects of the three objective class indicators on vote choice. Education has a negative and significant coefficient, which indicates that higher education is associated with left-wing vote. Income has the opposite effect, since it increases the likelihood to vote for right-wing parties. These results are consistent with the realignment hypothesis, which argues that income and education exert crossed pressures on voting behaviour (Kitschelt and Rehm, 2019). According to this model, occupational category does not appear to have a significant effect on vote choice.

The second figure in Figure 5.3 presents the coefficients of three separate regressions using alternative subjective class variables to predict vote. All of them indicate that higher subjective class is associated with right-wing voting. These effects are also present in the last set of regressions, in which objective and subjective measures of social class are used simultaneously. Interestingly, despite the large differences in the distribution of responses across subjective class schemes, the link between subjective class and vote is robust. Although the magnitude of the effect changes depending on the measurement of subjective class, the direction and significance of the effect is the same across models.
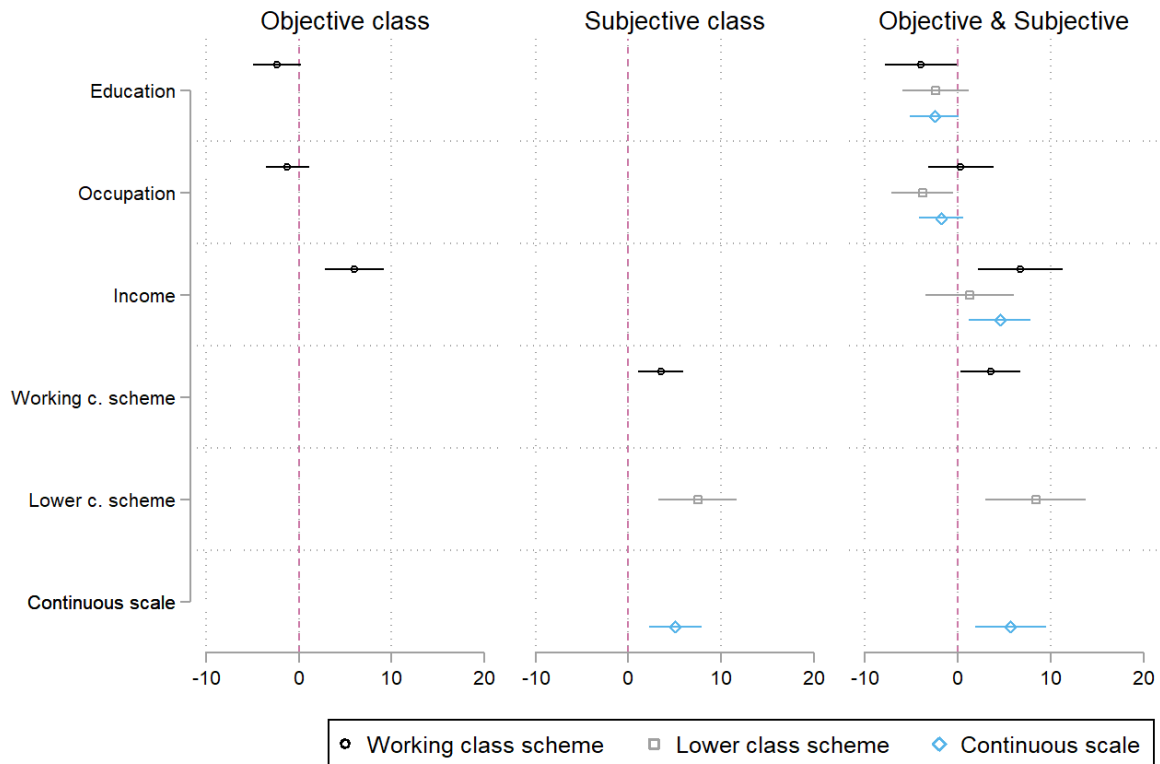
Figure 5.3 Objective and subjective class indicators and voting behaviour

As regards the objective indicators, while the directionality of the effect does not change, controlling for subjective class alters the significance of some coefficients. However, the changes of the effects of objective measures when controlling for subjective class do not follow any consistent pattern. Overall, income is the strongest objective class predictor of voting behaviour, both before and after controls.

Both material conditions and class self-identification influence simultaneously electoral behaviour. Therefore, people that identify themselves as lower or working class are more likely to vote left-wing parties than those identifying as middle or higher class. Correspondingly, those with lower income are more likely to vote for left-wing parties than those with higher income. However, we have seen that most respondents do not identify with their material class. Does the mismatch between objective and subjective class exert an additional effect on voting behaviour? Figure 5.4 illustrates the results of nine OLS regressions addressing this question. Class perceptions are treated as a categorical variable distinguishing between inflators, deflators, and those with concordant perceptions as the reference category.

The first set of results uses occupation as a reference to estimate class discordance. In line with the "perceived economic interest" hypothesis, the direction of the effect would indicate that inflators are more likely to vote right-wing parties, while deflators opt for left-wing parties. Yet, most coefficients of class inflation and deflation fail to reach statistical significance. The same occurs in the second and third sets of regressions, using income and education as benchmarks to establish class mismatches. Therefore, I do not find any systematic effect of class mismatches on vote.
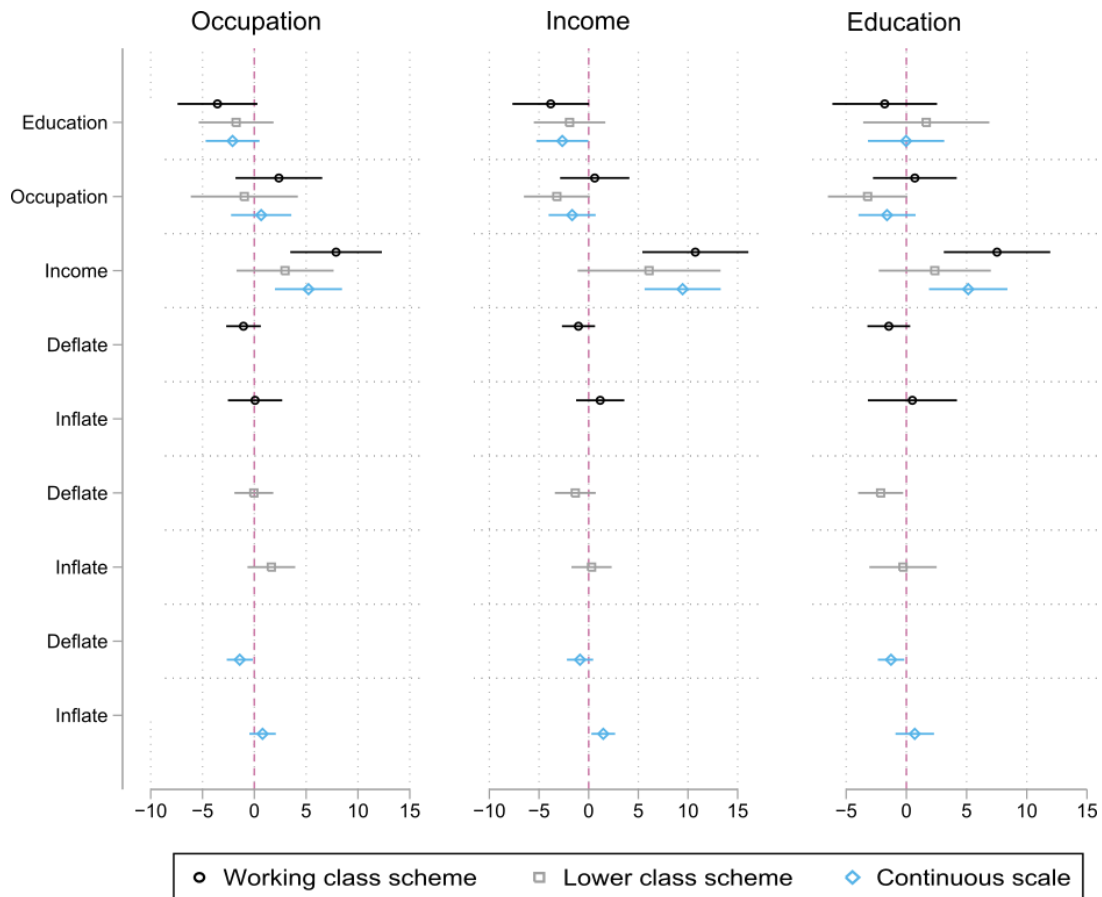
Figure 5.4 Class discordant perceptions and voting behaviour

All in all, and in line with Sosnaud et al. (2013), class discordant perceptions do not seem to have an effect on voting behaviour when income controls are included. The results in Figure 5.4 suggest that this is not dependent on the measurement of objective class or subjective class. As regards the former, class inflation or deflation estimated using occupation, income or educational level produce similar results. Likewise, using different subjective-class schemes does not alter the results.

As regards the effect of objective measures when controlling for class discordant perceptions, income is the only variable that significantly influences electoral behaviour. Its effect is significant using two out of the three subjective class scales and across discordance models. These results, together with those shown in Figure 5.3, suggest that income has the strongest explanatory power of vote among objective class indicators.

5.8. Discussion and conclusions

This study has reviewed the operationalization of social class in empirical social sciences. Using data from a survey experiment fielded in Catalonia in 2018, it provides an updated account of the link between material conditions and subjective class identity. In line with recent studies, it discusses the potential implications of mismatches between objective and subjective indicators for class voting studies.

To ensure the validity of the measurement of subjective class, the analyses rely on three different class schemes. In particular, I rely on three survey questions asking respondents to choose the social class they identify with from a list of pre-established labels. The first question includes "working" class categories as an option; the second one uses "lower class" instead, and the third one uses a numerical status scale ranging from 0 to 10. The distribution of the social class identities expressed by the respondents changes substantially depending on the question asked. The working-class scheme results in a large overestimation of the lower-status group, while not including it produces an overestimation of middle one. These differences are likely to stem from the political meaning attached to the different labels (Kelley and Evans, 1995). In that regard, the continuous scale offers a good alternative, as it avoids using specific labels whose meaning might change from context to context. In addition to the increased comparability of numerical scales, the distribution of subjective class responses using it is closer to that of objective indicators. Despite these differences, however, the results of my analyses are surprisingly similar regardless of the subjective-class schemes in place. This suggests that the different operationalisations of subjective class used in current surveys does not necessarily bias the results.

This article uncovers great discrepancies between and within the objective and subjective dimensions of social class. Material conditions play a crucial role in determining class identity. In particular, income is the stronger predictor of subjective class. Education and occupation also contribute to class identification, although to a smaller degree. This is consistent with the notion that income has increased its influence on subjective class at the expense of occupation over the last decades (Alexander and Welzel, 2017: 11; Hout, 2008: 46).

Both objective and subjective class influence electoral behaviour. Among material conditions, income does a better job at predicting vote. As expected, higher income increases the probability to vote conservative. Education has the opposite effect, fostering left-wing vote. These results echo the idea that education and income exert opposite influences in the left-right dimension (Kitschelt and Rehm, 2019). While income triggers conservatism in the economic dimension, education diminishes conservatism in the cultural dimension. This study relies on a single left-right dimension, and therefore distinguishing between the economic and cultural dimensions is not possible. Yet, the fact that traditional class voting patterns still emerge using a single left-right dimension highlights the long-standing stratifying effect of social class despite the changing salience of economic and cultural issues. This is even more meaningful because these patterns are present in Catalonia in 2018, in a context of high polarization over the independence issue where one would assume that class no longer determines electoral behaviour.

In addition to the effects of objective indicators, subjective class is a strong predictor of electoral behaviour too. This is the case also when controlling for income, education and occupation, which means that class identity has an effect on vote that goes beyond the effect of living conditions. Those who identify with higher classes tend to vote for more conservative parties, regardless of their objective class attributes, in line with previous research on European democracies (D'Hooge et al., 2018). These results suggest that objective and subjective class are two distinct components of a multidimensional concept, and both objective and subjective

dimensions exert distinct influences on voting behaviour. Therefore, the two dimensions should not be thought of as interchangeable variables of a unidimensional concept but rather as complementary indicators of a multifaceted one.

Lastly, the fact that subjective identification and material conditions do not match at the individual level does not seem to have an additional effect on voting behaviour. Higher subjective class increases the chances to vote a right-wing party, but this effect is not dependent on whether this is a concordant or an inflated perception. Similarly, identifying as lower class increases the chances of voting a left-wing party, regardless of material conditions. In other words, subjective class does have an effect on vote, but it is not related to the distance between one's status perceptions and the objective measure's rank.

Given the importance of the contextual meaning of different wordings used in survey questionnaires, further research should study the effects of questions on social class in a comparative setting. One additional limitation is the inability to control for the effect of the number of categories in different class schemes. Thus, we need more research on how altering the number of categories (keeping the wording constant) might have an effect on the distribution of expressed class self-identification. Future studies should also consider the prompting effect of survey questions including simultaneously working-class and lower-class categories. These caveats aside, this study provides new insights about the measurement of social class, showing that different variables produce substantially different groups. In spite of these differences, social class appears to still have an important role on voting behaviour. Among its different components, income and class identification seem to be the strongest predictors of vote.

Chapter 6

Two temperatures for one thermostat: The evolution of policy attitudes and support for independence in Catalonia (1991-2018)

Xavier Romero-Vidal, Leuphana Universität Lüneburg

Abstract

Using data from 177 surveys, this study examines the evolution of mass preferences in Catalonia from 1991 to 2018, measuring (1) territorial preferences and (2) the central tendency of public opinion in the left-right scale. Consistent with previous research, I find that the political centre in the left-right scale of a subnational public opinion moves in an orderly manner in reaction to economics and both national and subnational incumbents. In contrast, demands for decentralization or independence do not systematically react to economic and political stimuli. Additionally, I find that, more and more, rises in support for independence are correlated with left-wing shifts in public opinion.

6.1. Introduction

Over the last decade, support for territorial decentralization and independence have gained ground across European multinational states. Scholars examining the driving forces behind such movements at the individual level have shown that identity and partisanship are the main predictors of support for decentralization (Muñoz and Tormos, 2015; Serrano, 2013) or secession (Guinjoan and Rodon, 2016) do not always suffice as explanatory mechanisms. Let us take Catalonia as a case in point: although the distribution of national identities has shifted slightly towards Catalan identity since 2010 (Hierro, 2012), this shift alone cannot account for the massive increase of support for independence in the region (Rico and Liñeira, 2014)[40], and explanations are to account for contextual variables. The sudden rise of the pro-independence movement emerged right after a controversial reform of the Catalan Statute of Autonomy – the region's legislative corpus regulating self-government – and during the economic crisis and the subsequent austerity policies that triggered political dissatisfaction across Southern Europe. Thus, in order to provide a multifaceted account of the Catalan case, this study takes a novel approach by analysing the unprecedented changes in public opinion at the aggregate level. Rather than focusing on the individual-level predictors of sovereignty preferences, this paper aims to uncover the macro-level drivers of change in Catalan mass preferences from 1991 to 2018.

In their seminal study, Page and Shapiro (1992) found public opinion to be more than the sheer addition of individual preferences. Even though preferences at the individual level might be inconsistent or uninformed (Campbell et al., 1960; Lippmann, 1922), public opinion follows reasonable and predictable patterns over time at the aggregate level. By taking Catalan public opinion as a whole, I aim to analyse its internal dynamics – that is, evolution over time and dimensionality – as well as its relation with the economic and political context. Although our knowledge about contextual drivers of sovereignty preferences is limited, observers have often assumed that the recent rise of the pro-independence movement is related to the tortuous process of reform of the Catalan Statute of Autonomy, the centralizing policy enforced by the conservative Popular Party at the central government in Madrid or the economic crisis. This study provides a systematic analysis of how mass preferences have actually reacted to economic crises as well as to the different governments both at the national and the regional level. In line with Wlezien's (1995) *thermostatic model*, this study shows that mass preferences in the left-right scale react in an orderly manner to incumbents. Conversely, territorial preferences do not evolve following the same patterns.

This paper also delves into the dimensionality of mass preferences, that is, the extent to which changes in sovereignty and left-right preferences are interrelated. The present case study poses a paradox: Spanish national politics have traditionally been characterized by the conservative parties' reluctance to decentralization and the left-wing parties' willingness to grant greater autonomy to Catalonia. Thus, there is a stable correlation between left-right positions and

---

[40] Some evidence suggests that economic motivations may play a role (Muñoz and Tormos, 2015), particularly among individuals with dual identity, who tend to be highly influenced by their interaction networks (Rodon and Guinjoan 2018).

attitudes towards decentralization. Conversely, the Catalan multi-party system has been usually described as two-dimensional, with no systematic correlation between stances on sovereignty and socioeconomic issues. In fact, a fragile coalition of liberal, social democrat and anti-capitalist parties have backed recent pro-independence governments, reflecting the plurality of agendas in the left-right scale while sharing their position regarding sovereignty. Recent evidence suggests that the party system is realigning its positions in such a way that the two axes of the political debate are converging (Rico 2016), evolving into a pro-independence left-wing pole versus an anti-independence conservative right-wing. This study examines whether this realignment of policy positions occurs at the mass preferences level and finds that the left-right dimension is elastic enough to incorporate sovereignty preferences. In particular, it appears that changes in support for independence are increasingly correlated with left-wing mass preferences shifts.

This paper is structured as follows. Section 6.2 reviews preceding research on the study of the dimensionality of political preferences as well as on the patterns of change in public opinion. Section 6.3 offers an overview of the Catalan case, outlining some of the main developments that have shaped the current sovereignty debate. The data sources and the methodology are laid out in Section 6.4. Section 6.5 presents the results of the analysis and, finally, Section 6.6 discusses the main findings and conclusions and suggests further avenues for future research.

6.2. The structure and origins of mass preferences

In order to understand changes in public opinion, two aspects are crucial. First, one needs to recognize the latent dimensions of political conflict that are at the core of political debates. Second, one must demonstrate how contextual factors move the central tendency of mass preferences over time. Sections 6.2.1 and 6.2.2 discuss the main contributions from the extant literature on both fields, setting the expectations for this study.

6.2.1. Dimensionality in multinational states

Scholars have devoted a great deal of attention trying to ascertain how many dimensions are needed to define policy conflict adequately. Yet, different theoretical and methodological approaches have led to conflicting results: while some have provided unidimensional characterizations, others have posited more complex dimensionalities including socioeconomic, socio-cultural or territorial issues (Bakker et al., 2012; Benoit and Laver, 2006; De Vries and Hobolt, 2012; Downs, 1957; Inglehart, 1977; Kriesi et al., 2006). One of the most important contributions to the study of dimensionality is the theory of issue evolution (Carmines and Stimson 1989), which claims that the dimensionality of policy conflict varies over time. According to this theory, when new issues that escape the dominant (socioeconomic) dimension emerge in a political arena, the dynamics of party competition end up folding the issue in the pre-existing main dimension (usually left-right). First, a party or candidate decides to politicize a controversy or take a stance on a newly relevant political debate. Second, the electorate sorts itself accordingly and expects the party to remain stable in the new articulation of policy preferences. Through these mechanisms, issues unrelated to the classic capital-labour conflict will become embedded in the elastic left-right conflict over time.

Initially, the theory of issue evolution was developed to explain the dynamics of racial conflict in the United States' two-party system. In order to apply this theoretical framework to a European multi-party system, we need to account for the 'frozen' conflicts identified by Lipset and Rokkan (1967) in their cleavage theory: that is, conflict between (1) central state and peripheral communities, (2) the state and a church, (3) urban and rural areas (4) and workers and employers. The left-right dimension seems to be flexible enough to accommodate many of these conflicts. In fact, a study dissecting the structure of mass preferences in France, reveals that the left-right divide actually incorporates both traditional socioeconomic issues and new cultural issues like morals or immigration, constituting virtually the same dimension (Stimson et al., 2012). However, the dynamic relationship of the centre-periphery cleavage with the left-right divide is still to be explored. The Catalan case offers a good opportunity to do so.

The Catalan multi-party system has been traditionally characterized as constituted by two dimensions (Riba, 2000), with no clear correlation between left-right and territorial stances. The rise of the Catalan pro-independence movement since 2012 has highlighted the co-existence of these two axes of political conflict, as pro-independence governments have been supported by parties covering a wide range of the left-right spectrum: liberals (CDC, PdCAT, JxCat), social democrats (ERC) and anti-capitalists (CUP). The opposition parties also display a wide range of policy positions, from social democracy (PSC) to liberals (C's) and conservatives (PP). Somewhat in between, *Catalunya en Comú*, the Catalan ally of *Podemos*, combines left-wing positions with a defence of a referendum, conditional on the Spanish government's agreement with it.[41]

Despite this, recent evidence suggests that the Catalan party system is tending towards a political competition between a pro-independence left and an anti-independence right (Rico, 2016). At the individual level, people with leftist positions also seem to be more likely to favour more decentralization (Guinjoan and Rodon, 2016). These findings could indicate that the independence issue is being folded in the left-right dimension, as predicted by issue evolution theory. By estimating the latent dimensions that lie beneath mass preferences, this study provides a new approach to understand their dimensionality.

6.2.2. The thermostatic model in multilevel democracies

The aim behind establishing the number of dimensions required to make sense of the Catalan polity is to enable the study of change in public preferences over time. That is, the goal here is to understand the driving forces of change in mass policy attitudes in each of its possible dimensions. In particular, I focus on two types of stimuli whose effect on political behaviour has been repeatedly found: economics and incumbency.

---

[41] The liberal party *Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya* (CDC) was refounded in 2016 as *Partit Demòcrata de Catalunya* (PdCAT), which in 2017 created the electoral brand *Junts per Catalunya* (JxCat). The social democrats *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* is the oldest Catalan party, founded in 1931 although it was illegalized under Franco's regime. The anti-capitalist *Candidatura d'Unitat Popular* (CUP) was created in 1986 focusing on municipal politics, but since 2012 they run for Catalan parliamentary elections. *Catalunya en Comú* was only founded in 2017, merging several left-wing and green parties (including the Catalan branch of *Podemos*).

The drivers of change in mass preferences

The literature devoted to economic voting shows that macroeconomic factors (or subjective perceptions on the economy) affect political behaviour. In turn, aggregate public preferences also react in an orderly manner to economics. For example, the public tends to support more government intervention as unemployment rises and more market freedom when unemployment is low (Bartle et al., 2011; Erikson et al., 2002; Weiss, 2012).[42] Sovereignty preferences might also be driven by an economic rationale, namely the belief that the region will be better off in case of secession. However, the relationship between support for sovereignty and evaluations of the economic consequences of secession might be endogenous and therefore reflect the rationalization of individuals' pre-existing sovereignty preferences (Howe, 1998; Mendelsohn, 2003). Yet we know little about the effect of economic crises on the aggregate demand for greater political autonomy.

Building on previous research on the dynamics of mass preferences, one can expect them to react not only to economics but also to government action. If they do so, the reaction can go in two opposite directions: either by following the direction of policy output or by shifting in the contrary direction (Hakhverdian, 2012). That is, under conservative governments, public opinion can follow the governmental lead and become more conservative or it might experience a sort of *fatigue* and react by shifting to the left. Previous research has repeatedly provided evidence for the latter, finding a negative feedback between government activity and policy preferences (Bartle et al., 2011, 2020; Erikson et al., 2002; Stimson et al., 1995).

What is the mechanism behind these changes in aggregate mass preferences? Following the systematic model established in *The Macro Polity* (Erikson et al., 2002), once a new government takes over or changes a policy, a crucial part of the electorate will feel their demands have been satisfied, and even more importantly, a part of the electorate will think that the government has surpassed their demands. For instance, once a social democrat government starts increasing taxes, citizens that initially supported tax increases might easily feel that the government has gone too far. They will thus update their preferences, discontinuing their support for higher taxation. Since citizens at the ends of the left-right spectrum will continue to demand either more or less taxation, only those in the centre have to change their relative preferences over time to remain constant in absolute terms (Bartle et al., 2011). Continuing with the previous example, if a right-wing party then gains power and reduces taxes beyond the *moderate* citizen's preference, the latter will again demand higher taxes. Thus, crucial changes take place in the centre, moving the overall tendency of the public.

This dynamic, characterized as a thermostatic model by Wleizen (1995, 2004), illustrates how policy and public preferences adjust and react to each other. The thermostatic model starts from the notion that most of the people do not have an exact idea of how much money the government needs to spend but rather express relative preferences about whether they want more or less public spending. These relative preferences work as a thermostat that signals a

---

[42] Conversely, the effect of inflation is ambiguous, as previous studies have not been able to find any significant impact on public preferences (Bartle et al. 2010; Weiss 2012).

desired policy direction in respect to current policy. If the output changes accordingly to match the desired *temperature* set by mass preferences, the thermostat (the public) will deactivate their demand. If the policy surpasses the desired temperature, the public will update their relative preferences and send a signal in the opposite direction (Wlezien, 2004). More generally, the public becomes more conservative under left-wing incumbents and more progressive under conservative governments (Stimson 1991, Bartle et al., 2011).

The multilevel thermostat

The thermostatic model illustrates nicely how preferences and policy interact. Even in a decentralized context such as the UK, the Scottish public reacts to UK government policy in a very similar way to the overall British public (McGann et al., 2019). Yet, control over taxation and spending has remained relatively concentrated in the UK, whereas in the increasingly common multilevel systems of governance, the public is generally exposed to two (if not more) simultaneous streams of substantial policy output, namely the national and regional governments.

In such multilevel contexts, researchers have found that preferences for spending are indeed responsive to national and regional government action (Pacheco, 2013; Soroka and Wlezien, 2010; Wlezien and Soroka, 2012). However, citizens update their preferences for national-level spending in response to regional-level spending (Wlezien and Soroka, 2011), suggesting they have difficulties when attributing responsibility for policy outcomes to the appropriate level of government (Cutler, 2008). The interdependence between national and regional budgets thus limits the accountability of each level of governance (Wlezien and Soroka, 2011, 2012). Consequently, territorial decentralization in federal systems seems to decrease the responsiveness of mass preferences to policy output (Soroka and Wlezien 2010). Nevertheless, since most of the literature in the field has focused exclusively on mainly bipartisan countries, it remains unclear how public preferences react to both national and regional levels of government in multi-party systems. In order to fill this gap, I assess the thermostatic response in a sub-national setting, expecting that mass preferences will react to both national and regional incumbents.

6.3. The Catalan case: an overview

After Franco's dictatorship (1939–1975), a regime which imposed a centralizing and homogenizing agenda (e.g. abolishing the Catalan government and banning the use of the Catalan language), Spain transitioned into a democratic and decentralized system. The 1978 Spanish Constitution grants regions a degree of political autonomy through their regional Statutes of Autonomy, the laws regulating self-government, second only to the Spanish Constitution. Throughout the 1990s and the early 2000s, Spain decentralized power by giving regions increasing autonomy. In Catalonia, self-government institutions developed mostly under the government of the conservative regional party *Convergència i Unió* (CiU) (Guinjoan and Rodon, 2016), while at the Spanish level the Socialist Party was in power from 1982 until 1996, the year in which the conservative *Partido Popular* (PP) took over. In 2000, the PP gained an overall majority in the central Spanish government and developed a pro-centralization agenda aiming to limit regional autonomy (Resina, 2003). In 2003, by the end of

the PP mandate, a left-wing coalition won the Catalan election and started a political process to secure and expand regional power by means of reforming the Catalan Statute of Autonomy. After a complex process of negotiations, a new left-wing majority in the Spanish Parliament negotiated the final text, a draft of which was ratified by the Catalan Parliament once more in 2005. In 2006, both parliaments agreed on the final text, providing greater autonomy to the region and defining Catalonia as a nation in its preamble. That same year, once the amended text was finally passed, a referendum was held in Catalonia to gauge support for the new Statute. The vote, which registered a voter turnout of 48.85 per cent, resulted in a vast 73.9 per cent of votes in support of the bill.

Far from accommodating to the new *status quo*, the conservative PP, the Spanish Ombudsman and five Spanish regions presented several allegations of unconstitutionality before the Spanish Constitutional Court. In 2010, the court issued a sentence declaring several articles unconstitutional and ruled that the term *nation*, as used in the preamble referring to Catalonia, had no legal weight, as Spain remained the only nation recognized by the constitution. Following the court's sentence, a massive demonstration opposing this ruling took place in Barcelona, in what can be described as the beginning of a massive pro-independence movement. Catalans advocating higher levels of decentralization of power felt that the recognition of Catalan national distinctiveness was unachievable within the Spanish political system, particularly after the conservative PP gained a new absolute majority in the Spanish parliament in 2011 (Rico and Liñeira, 2014).

Coinciding with this political crisis, the 2008 crash and the austerity measures that followed triggered popular discontent. In May 2011, thousands of protesters, the *indignados*, gathered across Spain to protest austerity policies, corruption and the established parties. At the same time, the demand for the Catalan people's right to vote in a referendum for independence gained ground. In 2014, 2.3 million people voted in a symbolic referendum on independence, overwhelmingly in favour of it. The Catalan government kept unsuccessfully asking for an official referendum with the approval of the Spanish government. After an early election leading to a Catalan parliament in which pro-independence parties had the majority, the Catalan parliament called a new "decisive" referendum on 2017. Despite being suspended by the Constitutional Court of Spain shortly after, the Catalan government pursued its organization. 43 per cent of the census (2.2 million people) voted in spite of the violence used by the police to prevent the referendum taking place. The majority of cast votes supported independence, and the Catalan government declared independence to immediately suspend the declaration in order to "open negotiations" with the Spanish government. Within hours, the Spanish Senate approved the Spanish government's suspension of Catalan political autonomy. Catalonia was ruled directly by the Spanish government from October 2017 to June 2018, after new regional elections were held. In turn, the main leaders of the movement have been imprisoned since late 2017, while others, including the former president, Puigdemont, fled the country.

The succession of events that led to the current situation can only be understood with a longitudinal perspective that provides the opportunity to track how public opinion has evolved over time. Furthermore, by distinguishing the evolution of socioeconomic and sovereignty

preferences, this study examines how they have reacted differently to the same events and the relation between the two.

6.4. Data and methods

Changes in individual preferences have been scrutinized in detail in the literature but less is known about the dynamics of public opinion as a whole. Yet, the political centre is a crucial concept for both theoretical and empiric models of electoral competition and representation. This key concept has been operationalized and labelled as 'policy mood' (Stimson, 1991). By aggregating the survey responses to different questions dealing with a wide range of policy preferences, the policy mood tracks the evolving political centre of the public in the left-right spectrum. It has been applied to several European countries such as the United Kingdom (Bartle et al., 2011), France (Stimson et al., 2012), Germany (Weiss, 2012) and Spain (Bartle et al., 2020). Only recently, this approach has been applied to a subnational setting (McGann et al., 2019), opening new avenues of research that will help us to understand the existence of subnational distinct public opinions and accordingly, party systems.

This study relies on a unique data set combining all available survey data for Catalonia from 1991 to 2018, aggregating the expressed preferences of 300283 respondents in 177 surveys carried out by *Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas* (CIS), *Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió* (CEO), *Institut de Ciències Polítiques i Socials* (ICPS) and *Gabinet d'Estudis Socials i Opinió Pública* (GESOP)[43]. The items included in the sample relate to any public preference as long as they do not concern a specific candidate, party or government. For instance, questions that mention the current incumbent party or prime minister are excluded to avoid partisanship contamination. Since the goal here is to observe changes in preferences over time, I selected 59 questions that have been asked identically in at least two different years. This results in over 600 unique measurements of a single public policy preference at a certain point of time. The recoding of multiple response questions into dichotomized measurements increases up the number of series to 86, with 1144 measurements.[44]

In order to estimate preferences for government activity, the marginal responses to each survey questions are coded as either 'left' or 'right' or 'Catalan nationalism' or `Spanish nationalism' for territorial preferences or, in some cases, neutral. The indexes of preferences are subsequently calculated as follows:

$$Index\ of\ policy\ preferences = \frac{\%\ left\ responses}{\%\ left\ and\ right\ responses}$$

$$Index\ of\ national\ preferences = \frac{\%\ Catalan\ nationalist\ responses}{\%\ Catalan\ and\ Spanish\ nationalist\ responses}$$

[43] The supplementary materials 6.A and 6.B present the list of surveys and questions included respectively.
[44] As an example, the question on ideological self-definition allowed the respondent to select two of the offered categories, including non-exclusive labels like communist, socialist, feminist or nationalist. The percentage of people ascribing themselves to each category has been treated as an independent item and coded separately.

The resulting data are the marginal responses to questions that have been posed a few times at irregular intervals. Thus, one cannot rely on principal components to estimate the latent dimensions. To solve this problem, I apply the Dyad Ratio algorithm (Stimson 1991, 2018), analogue of principal components analysis; nevertheless, this algorithm does not require that all variables are available every year. It assumes that each iteration of a single item is an indicator of leftist or nationalist sentiment, and therefore the change between any two values within that iteration (a dyad-ratio) is a relative indicator of these comprehensive concepts. Repeated across each point in time, for each individual iteration, the algorithm estimates the covariance between the dyadic-ratios of each item. From this covariance, it calculates validity estimates for the different dyad-ratio series and uses these to estimate the best possible latent measure of public preferences.[45]

The marginal responses to left-right issues produce the *policy mood*, reflecting the central tendency of public opinion in the left-right scale. The items dealing with territorial attitudes produce a series of what will be referred as *national mood* in which higher values represent support for further territorial decentralization (including support for independence) and lower values represent demands for recentralization of competences (including the suppression of regional government). In the last section, the procedure is repeated to exclusively estimate support for independence and to contrast it to the other two more general public opinion measures.

In order to explore the effect of economics, I discuss the two economic crises that Catalonia has faced since 1991, focusing particularly on unemployment as one of the most noticeable macroeconomic indicators. As for political stimuli, I take the party of the incumbent in either the Catalan or Spanish government as a proxy for policy output, assuming that left or right-wing parties and pro- or anti-decentralization parties implement opposite policies.

6.5. Results

This section contains four subdivisions: section 6.5.1 presents the estimation of latent dimensions together with some descriptive statistics; section 6.5.2 scrutinizes changes in mass preferences in relation to economics whereas section 6.5.3 deals with the effects of incumbents. In 6.5.4, I contrast these measures of mass preferences to support for independence and discuss the relation between them (dimensionality).

6.5.1. Policy attitudes in Catalonia

The estimation of the policy mood accounting for the central tendency of a society in the left-right scale relies on 60 series. It includes items dealing with all economic and cultural topics that can be associated to the left or the right in the Catalan context[46]. Table 6.1 reports the

---

[45] For a more exhaustive account of the methodological foundations of the dyadic ratios algorithm, see Stimson (1991, 2018), Bartle et al. (2011) and McGann (2014).

[46] Ideological self-placements are also included because they track adequately political preferences, as shown in Bartle et al. (2020).

loadings for a selection of input series that were fielded at least ten times and whose loading to the estimated variable is above 0.50.

Table 6.1 Summary of input series for the policy mood, 1991-2018

Variable	Cases	Loading
Agreement with Socialism (ICPS)	17	.90
Agreement with Catholic Church (ICPS)	17	.87
Left-right self-placement (7 points scale) (ICPS)	16	.87
Agreement with military service (ICPS)	11	.87
Left-right self-placement (10 points scale) (CIS)	19	.84
Agreement with capitalism (ICPS)	17	.79
Identifying as a communist (ICPS)	17	.66
Agreement with private property (ICPS)	17	.63
Agreement with sexual freedom (ICPS)	10	.58
Agreement with abortion (ICPS)	16	.55

The extracted series accounts for 42.1 per cent of the variance in the entire set of series. The high loading of ideological self-placement series suggest that they are closely related to the rest of items included. Both cultural issues like support for military service, the Catholic Church or sexual freedom, and purely economic items like agreement with private property, suggest that there is indeed a common underlying left-right dimension. Similarly, the economic and cultural left-right scale seems to constitute a single axis of political competition in France (Stimson et al. 2012).

Figure 6.1 displays the evolution of the Catalan policy mood. The mean value for the analysed timespan is 52.35 (SD = 3.1), and increases indicate movements towards the left while decreases indicate movements towards the right.
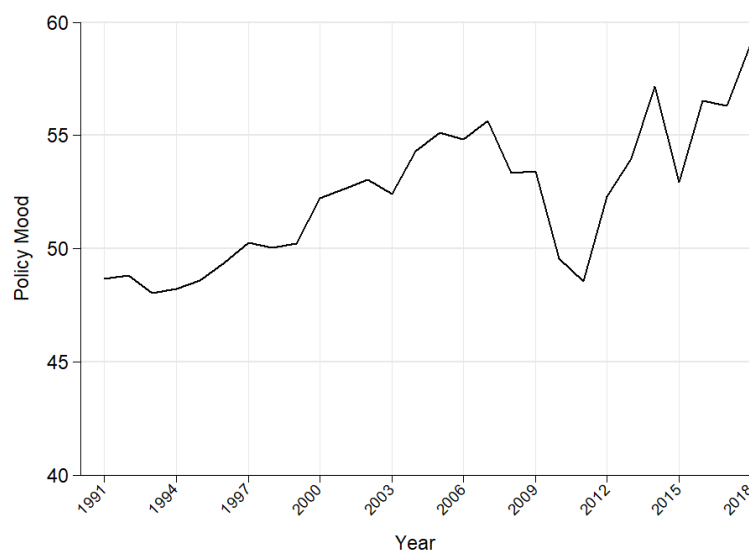
Figure 6.1 *Evolution of political preferences (left-right) in Catalonia, 1991-2018*

From 1991 to 2018, the Catalan policy mood has moved towards the left more than ten points. The trend towards an increasing demand of left-wing policies was only reversed from 2008 and 2011, when it reached its more conservative point in time. After 2011, year in which the *indignados* movement emerged, the public moves back to more progressive demands, in a trend that continues until the end of the series. A detailed account of these shifts will be presented over the next sections.

The estimation procedure is repeated with 26 series dealing with preferences for territorial decentralization and support for independence. The Linz-Moreno question on national identity (*Exclusively Catalan*, *More Catalan than Spaniard*, *As Catalan as Spaniard*, *More Spaniard than Catalan* or *Exclusively Spaniard*) is included due to its ability to predict demand for decentralization (Guinjoan and Rodon 2013, 2016b). The resulting *national mood* series explains more than 54 per cent of the variation in the selected series. Table 6.2 reports the highest loadings for those items that were included at least ten times and whose loading is above 0.50. Two of the national belonging series load on the mood at more than 0.85, confirming that they accurately track political preferences for decentralization.

Table 6.2 Summary of input series for the national mood, 1991-2018

Variable	Cases	Loading
Desired relation with Spain (ICPS)	27	.89
National belonging (ICPS)	27	.88
National belonging (CIS)	17	.81
Desired relation with Spain (CEO)	14	.77
Agreement with independence (ICPS)	17	.77
Agreement with nationalism (ICPS)	17	.77
National belonging (CEO)	14	.68
Agreement with Catalan autonomy (ICPS)	17	.66
Desired level of autonomy (CEO)	14	.59

The estimation of the national mood offers a comprehensive measure of preferences in the commonly called national axis, in which higher values indicate demand for more decentralization or independence and decreases. The series has its mean value at 65.7 (SD = 6.7) and its standard deviation doubles that of the policy mood. Not surprisingly, public preferences about the national issue have fluctuated much more than preferences in the left-right axis. Figure 6.2 displays the evolution of the national mood over the past decades.
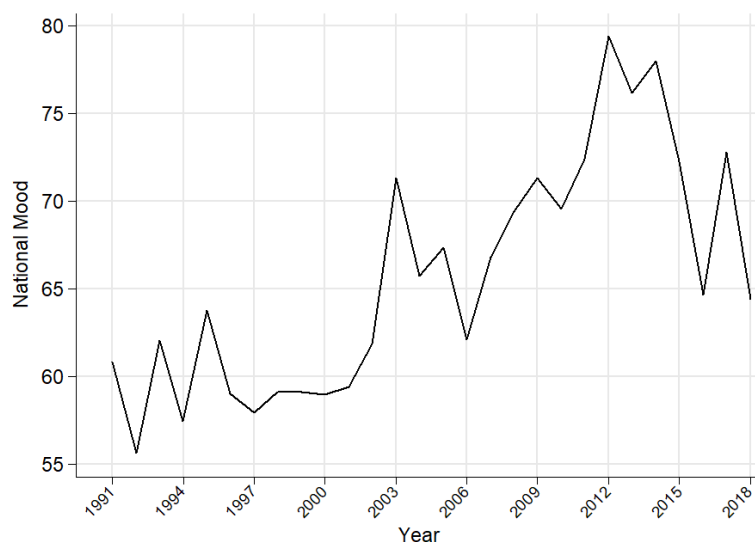
Figure 6.2 *Estimates of preferences for decentralization in Catalonia, 1991-2018*

The national mood remained rather stable from 1991 to 2001, when demands for decentralization started to increase. During 2005, the first year of the reform of the Statute of Autonomy, there was a decrease in support for further decentralization. After the approval of the new Statute in a referendum in 2006, and through the years the Constitutional Court took to resolve the allegations of unconstitutionality (2010), the mood moved again towards more Catalan nationalism. After the ruling, this trend accentuated dramatically until 2012. From 2014, the national mood moved back to the previous levels of the early 2000s.

6.5.2. *The role of economics in policy attitudes change*

Catalonia underwent two severe economic crises in the period under study (1991-2018), allowing the comparison between changes in mass preferences in each occasion. The first economic crisis started in 1992. By 1994, the Spanish *peseta* had devaluated three times and unemployment reached a rate of 21.2 in Catalonia and above 24 in Spain. Similarly, the second economic crisis, following the 2008 economic crash, also led to a dramatic increase of unemployment, up to 23.1 in 2013, three points below the Spanish rate. The Catalan government lost access to financial markets and the Catalan and the Spanish governments openly contended on how to distribute the deficit cuts imposed by the European Union. Thus, austerity measures could affect both socioeconomic and sovereignty preferences. Figure 6.3 shows the evolution of unemployment in Catalonia and the social and national moods. The policy mood in this figure has been reversed for the convenience of the reader, with ascents representing changes towards conservative positions, and decreases signalling movements towards the left.
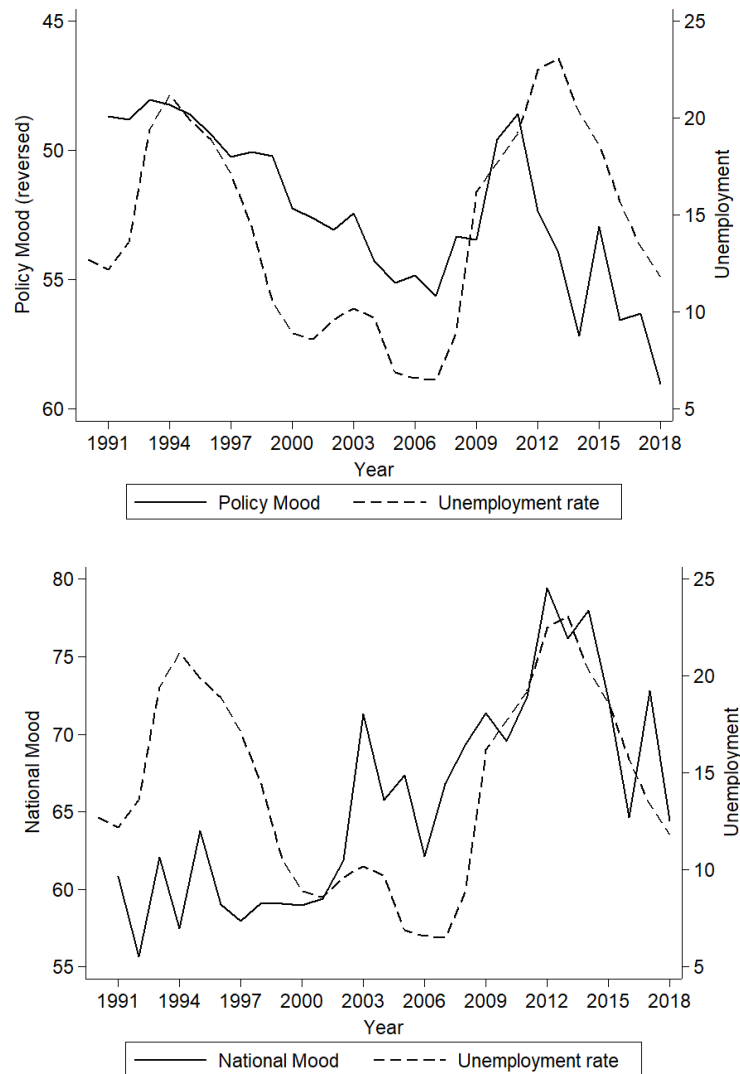
Figure 6.3 *Public preferences and unemployment in Catalonia, 1991-2018*

As previously discussed, the literature suggests that the public adapts its demands to economic conditions. Indeed, the most drastic changes in the Catalan policy mood coincide with times of economic turbulence. The four years in which the public has been more conservative, 1993-94 and 2010-11, stand after the outbreak of the two economic crises Catalonia faced since the beginning of the series. The low correlation (-.35) between economic performance and the policy mood suggests that shifts in public opinion cannot be explained by economics alone, yet a pattern emerges: economic hardship seems to trigger demands for right-wing policies while preferences move to the left when the economy performs well. As the labour market recovered from 1994 to 2007, with an unemployment rate around 6.5 per cent, public opinion shifts almost uninterruptedly to the left. As a result of this change, left parties simultaneously rule at the autonomous and state level for the first time. Coinciding with the beginning of the 2008 crisis, there is a drastic change of tendency that moves the mood 7 points to the right. In this context, the conservatives regain power in both the regional and the central governments. Interestingly, in 2011, the apparent relation between unemployment and the policy mood is broken. While the economic crisis is still hitting the population and unemployment keeps

growing, the mood shifts disruptively towards the left after the emergence of the *indignados* movement and the return of conservatives to the national government. The trend towards the left then generally continues until 2018, as unemployment recedes. It thus seems that mass preferences respond in an orderly fashion to macroeconomic indicators such as unemployment, while these alone cannot account for all variation.

There is a low correlation between the national mood and the unemployment rate (.33), suggesting that, if there is any systematic link between the two, support for decentralization tends to grow when unemployment rises. However, a closer look at Figure 6.3 shows that demand for decentralization remains stable during the first economic crisis in the nineties. Conversely, through the second recession, the national mood suddenly tracks unemployment quite closely: as unemployment rises, the public demands more decentralization, while when it recedes, so do these demands. Why does the national mood seem to respond to macroeconomics in the second economic crisis but not in the first one? The post-2008 recession developed at the same time as the institutional crisis triggered by the Constitutional Court ruling on the Statute of Autonomy. Under these two parallel situations, preferences for decentralization did evolve in parallel to unemployment. Thus, one could conjecture that the coexistence of economic and political crises triggered discourses intertwining the two dimensions of conflict. However, no institutional crisis existed during the first economic recession, and therefore the debate remained circumscribed to economic matters.

6.5.3. Public responsiveness to incumbents

Reactions to national government

The distribution of party positions regarding decentralization in the Spanish context is quite straightforward: the conservatives have traditionally been less willing to decentralize power while left-wing parties have been relatively more open to accommodate the Catalan demands of self-government. However, in Catalonia there is not such a clear correlation between left-right positions and sovereignty stances. Furthermore, party positions regarding decentralization and eventually independence have evolved considerably over time. Thus the policy signal regarding decentralization at the regional level is somewhat blurred. Conversely, positions in the left-right dimension are clear at both levels of government, and therefore the public is expected to react to both regional and national levels in analogous ways. Figure 6.4 shows the variation of the national and policy moods under each of the Spanish governments since 1991. Positive values signal a movement towards the left in the policy mood and increases in demand for decentralization in the national one.

During the last years under the Socialist president of the Spanish government Felipe González (1991-96), the policy mood shifted slightly towards the right. This trend was reversed during the eight years of Aznar's conservative government (1996-2004), which triggered demands for left-wing policies. When the Socialist Zapatero (2004-11) came into office, support for left-wing policies dropped again. Finally, under the conservative Rajoy (2011-18), preferences shifted dramatically towards the left again. This pattern of mass preference change nicely fits the thermostatic model: under PSOE governments, the public opinion becomes more conservative, whereas under PP governments it becomes more progressive.
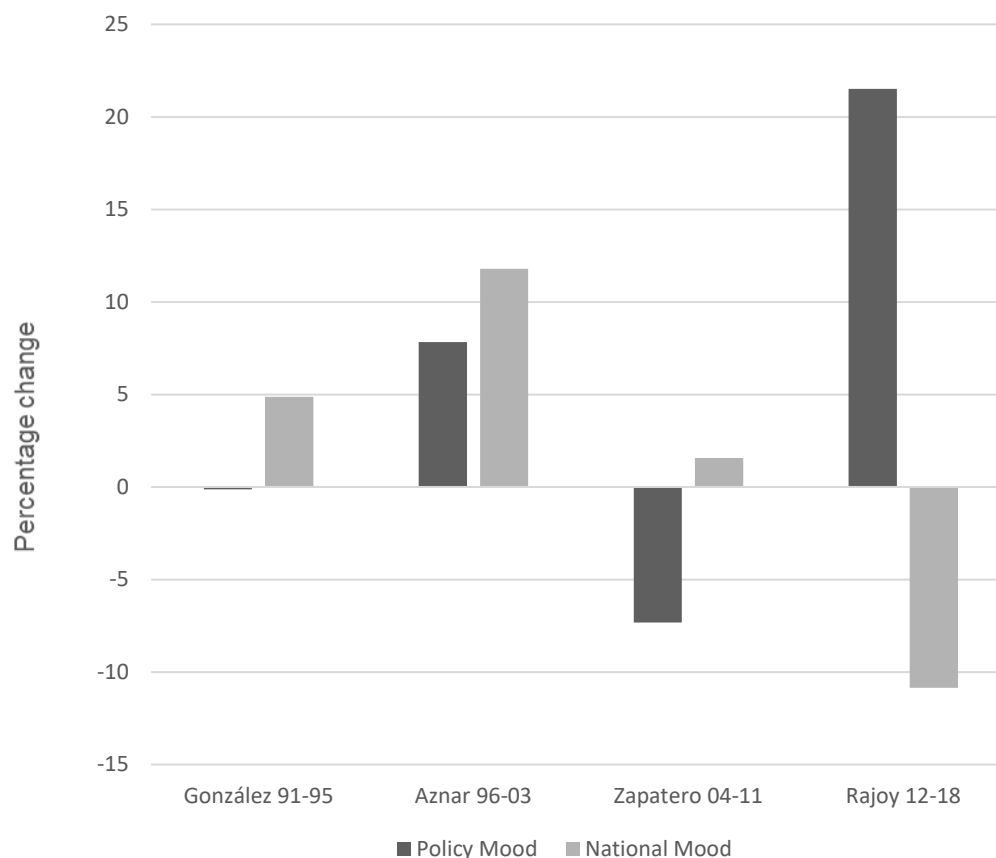
Figure 6.4 Variation of preferences under each Spanish government, 1991-2018

On the other hand, Catalan nationalism grew both under social democrats González and Zapatero and under conservative Aznar. Particularly under the latter, the conservative recentralizing agenda triggered a significant increase of demands for further decentralization in Catalonia that resulted in a new Statute of Autonomy that aimed to expand and secure the power of the Catalan government. This, however, failed to stop support for further decentralization: after the Constitutional Court ruled out some of the new Statute's content, public opinion demanded more territorial decentralization. Under Rajoy, however, these demands eventually declined (while, as will be shown, the intensity of these demands increased, as the share of people demanding independence grew among those demanding further decentralization). The sequence of events at the Catalan level, including the organization of two independence referendums could have had a greater impact on the national mood than the policy output of Rajoy's government. Consequently, while mass preferences in the left-right respond thermostatically to Spanish governments, there is no systematic response to Spanish incumbents in the territorial dimension.

Reactions to regional government

The Catalan party system differs substantially from the Spanish one. The main Catalan right-wing party has supported decentralization for decades and has only recently embraced the idea of secession. On the other hand, the left-wing government coalitions included three parties with a variety of positions in the national axis, from demands for greater autonomy to advocating independence. Similarly, parties in the opposition have a wide range of positions regarding the

territorial dimension. Therefore, the expectations about how the national mood should behave if we were to find a thermostatic response to regional governments remain unclear. Figure 6.5 shows the evolution of political preferences under each regional government.
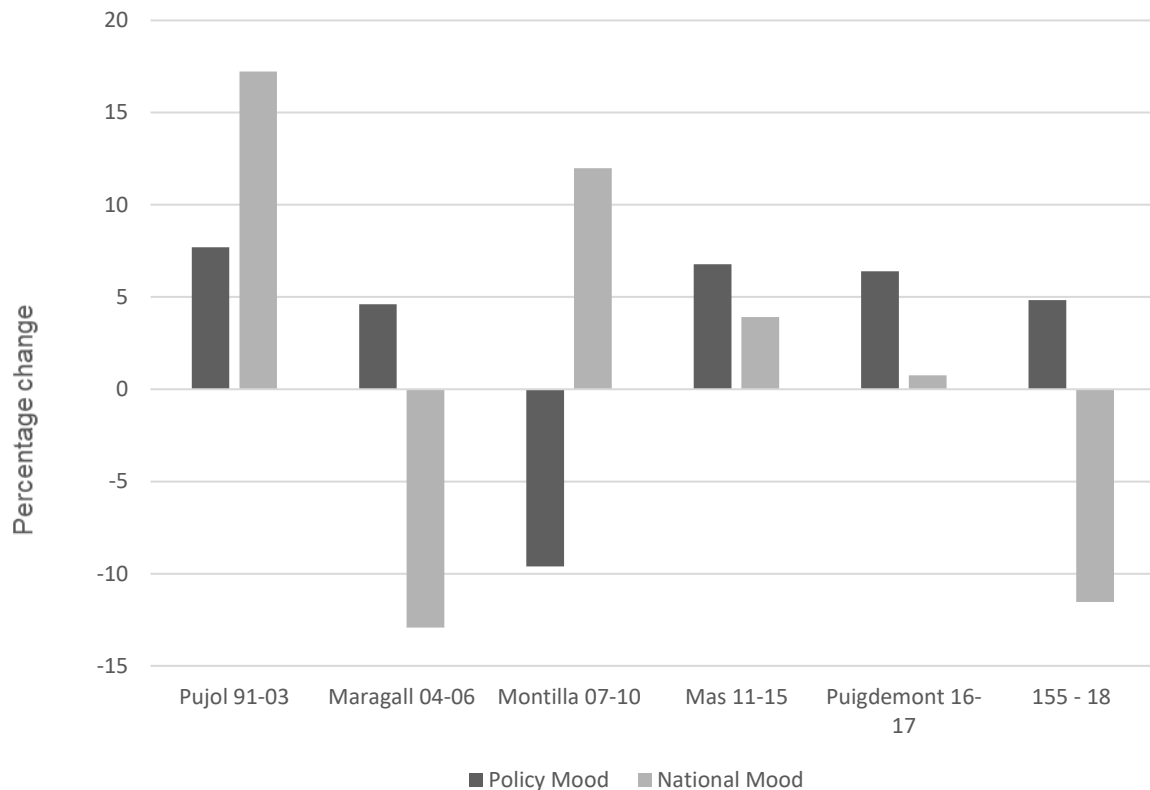
Figure 6.5 Variation of preferences for each Catalan government, 1991-2018

The evolution of the policy mood under Catalan incumbents seems to fit the thermostatic model expectations, just as it does in relation to Spanish incumbents. Under all conservative governments, mass preferences reacted by moving towards the left. Under the short government of social democrat Maragall, the movement towards the left slowed down but kept its direction. Under the next left-wing coalition led by Montilla, the trend was eventually reversed, and the public started to demand more right-wing policies. Thus, regarding the policy mood, there is a systematic and simultaneous thermostatic response to both Spanish and Catalan incumbents.

When it comes to the national mood, there is a lack of systematic responses to Catalan incumbents, as happens to the Spanish ones. While support for decentralization grew under the conservative and pro-decentralization Pujol, the demands for further decentralization decreased when social democrat pro-decentralization Maragall gained power and initiated the reform of the Statute of Autonomy. However, under social democrat Montilla, and as the reform of the Statute failed to be a peaceful accommodation to the demand for more self-government, demands for decentralization grew again. They continued to grow under pro-independence conservatives Mas and Puigdemont, yet at a progressively slow pace. The deceleration led to a sudden drop in demands for decentralization after the 2017 referendum, when the Catalan government was deposed and its main leaders were incarcerated or left the country. After the

enforcement of Section 155 of the Constitution, which deposed the Catalan government and imposed direct rule from Madrid, Catalan nationalism lost ground. These changes cannot be explained as automatic responses to the ideology of incumbents. Nevertheless, the evolution of the national mood can be read as an orderly sequence of reactions to the chain of events regarding the process of decentralization.

6.5.4. Estimating dimensionality in a complex context

Up to now, this study has relied on a deductive split of survey questions, assuming that the policy mood and the national mood are two independent (that is, orthogonal) axes of the political debate. The following section dissects sovereignty preferences and examines to what extent these two axes of political conflict are in fact independent from one another.

Unbundling the national mood

As it has been shown, the national mood suggests a decrease of support for decentralization in the last few years, in parallel to the emergence of the pro-independence movement. How should we make sense of these apparently two opposing trends? The national mood reveals the central tendency of territorial preferences, that is, the equilibrium between those who demand more decentralization and those who would recentralize power. However, support for independence might have emerged only among those who already supported more decentralization, and therefore the national mood might not be able to capture this shift in public opinion. In order to refine our dimensional analysis of mass preferences, I estimate a measure of support for independence using only the 16 series that allow respondents to express their preference regarding Catalonia being an independent state or their exclusive identity as Catalans. Here, the cleavage is not between those wanting more autonomy (including independence) or those wanting less of it (including its elimination). In this case, I separate citizens wanting independence from those that reject it, including those who still would want more autonomy within the Spanish State. The aggregation of more homogenous items increases the percentage of variance explained by the new estimate variable to 70.9 percent. The mean of this new variable is 44.29, with a standard deviation of 7.07, revealing a greater flux than that of the more general national mood. Figure 6.6 displays both measures of demand for more decentralization (including independence) and demand for independence alone.

While their starting points are different, the two series seem to move in parallel, suggesting that there is a strong correlation (.82) between the proportion of people demanding more decentralization and the amount of people demanding exclusively independence. Interestingly enough, the differences between the two, tracked by the dotted line in Figure 6.6, declines from 2008 onwards. Parallel to the economic crash and the political crisis triggered by the Constitutional Court ruling on the Statute of Autonomy, the share of citizens that support independence increased dramatically, both in absolute terms and in relation to the part of society that demanded any type of further decentralization. Thus, while the distribution of preferences accounted by the *national mood* suggests an aggregate decrease in demands for decentralization, the support for independence has remained stable since 2014, becoming dominant among those who demand more autonomy. The increasing divergence of support for

decentralization and support for independence suggests that, over time, their relation with left-right attitudes could indeed be different.
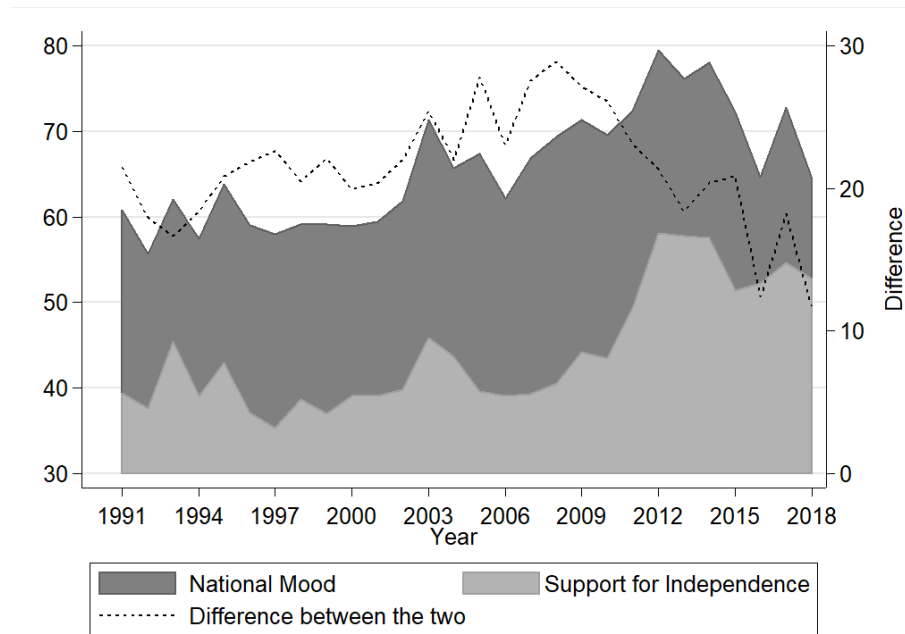
Figure 6.6 Mass preferences in the national axis in Catalonia, 1991-2018

Dimensionality of the Catalan polity

The first step to explore the extent to which changes in the policy mood and territorial preferences have evolved in parallel over time is by measuring the correlation between each series in different periods. Figure 6.7 illustrates the correlation between the policy mood and, on the one hand, support for further decentralization, and, on the other, support for independence.

There is a low correlation over time among the policy and national moods. For two of the three captured decades the correlation is negative, suggesting that increases in demand for decentralization occurred when mass preferences moved to the right, while in the 2000s the correlation between the two axes became positive as left-wing parties led the reform of the Statute of Autonomy to expand self-government. Thus, demands of decentralization and left-wing policy attitudes do not seem to be associated.

Nevertheless, the evolution of the correlation between the left-right axis and support for independence tells a different story. In the nineties, there was a strong negative correlation between the two measures, as support for independence decreased slightly while the public moved to the left during Jordi Pujol's right-wing governments. This negative correlation was almost erased during the 2000s, and reversed its direction in the 2010s, becoming a strong positive correlation between changes in public opinion across both axes. Under the economic and political crises of the last decade, the public has moved quite simultaneously to the left and towards more support for independence.
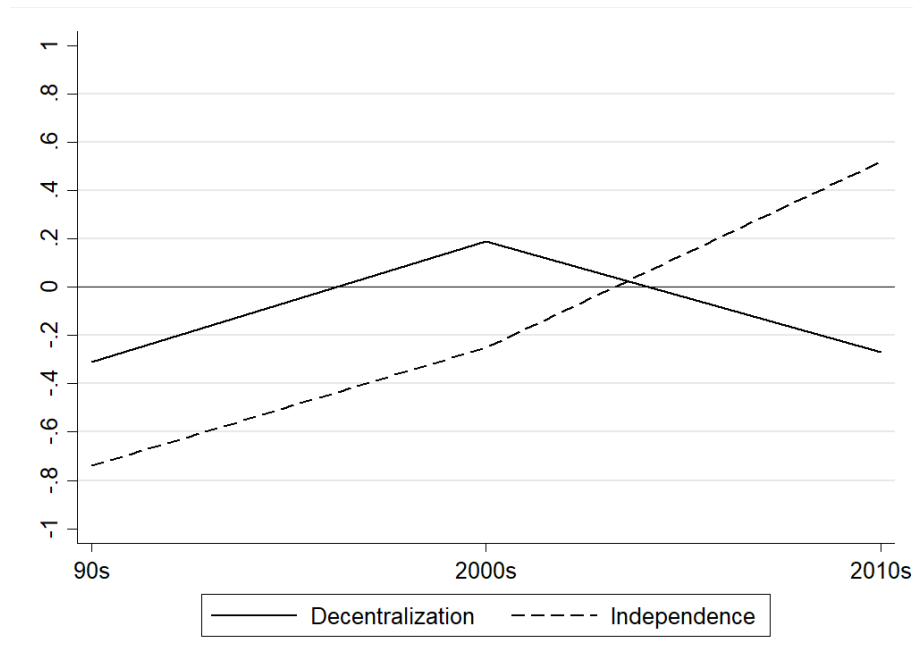
Figure 6.7 Correlations between the policy mood and national preferences

Of course, the apparent increasing correlation between changes in left-right preferences and support for independence depends on the prior decision to split the data and imposing a separate estimation of the latent variables with different items. Alternatively, one could let the algorithm find as many dimensions as possible in the entire data set to corroborate that the demand for independence is in fact aligned with the policy mood. However, if we let the algorithm estimate two dimensions on its own, the second one will still be, by design, orthogonal to the first one, whereas we have good reasons now to suspect that this is not our case.

The strategy put forward combines our knowledge on which items are related to each domain (left right or independence) and the statistical association between these indicators gained from the dimensional solution.[47] First, I will estimate an unconstrained two-dimensional solution for the full data matrix, allowing every survey item to load in both dimensions. Since the initial solution of dyad ratios (as it is for principal components) is under-identified, one can rotate the axes to obtain an equivalent solution, leaving points fixed in space while changing their relationship to the two axes. That is precisely the second step, the rotation of both dimensions to maximize the fit with the criterion variables (the items we *know* are related to left-right issues or independence), which is interpretable as correlation. This operation will enable the interpretation of the actual meaning of the dimensions identified by the algorithm and their relationship.

---

[47] This design emulates the strategy adopted by Stimson et al. (2012) to assess dimensionality in France. Prof. Stimson was kind enough to share with me an adapted version of his DRA algorithm running unconstrained estimations.
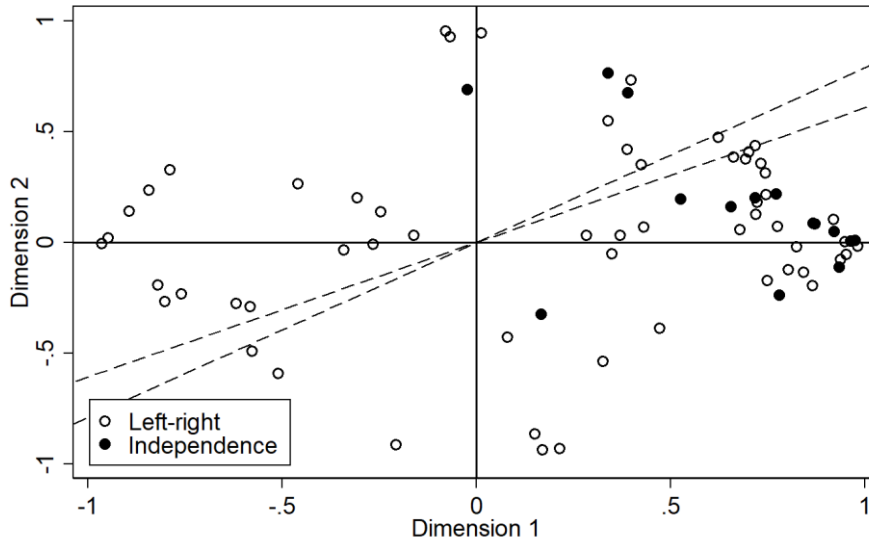
Figure 6.8 The two-dimensional dyad ratios solution: unrotated and rotated axes.

Figure 6.8 presents the loadings of the two-dimensional space created in the new unconstrained estimation in which all survey items can load in both dimensions. The points that represent left-right issues and those dealing with independence are largely concentrated in the same portion of space. Thus, both sets of items load strongly on the first dimension, which largely captures the variation in support for independence. Since the algorithm is set to produce a second dimension, it captures residual variation that is statistically distinct, but which lacks theoretical meaning.

The estimation of the two dimensions starts out at 0 degrees and 90 degrees, displayed as solid lines in Figure 6.8. Instead of forcing the two dimensions to be independent (orthogonal), I allow them to rotate independently to optimize their fit to the two defined sets of criteria, namely left-right issues and support for independence. The dashed lines in Figure 6.8 display the rotated axes:

a) Dimension 1 gets maximum correlation with the left-right criterion variables by moving from an initial position of 0° to 26°.

b) Dimension 2 gets maximum correlation with the independence criterion variables by moving from an initial position of 90° to 17°.

c) The angle between them is only 9°, indicating almost a perfect correlation between the two dimensions.[48]

The results suggest that the issue of independence is folded in the left-right dimension. While its relation to the main dimension as its salience over time may have varied over time, support for independence is not a dimension detached from the traditional left-right axis, and the Catalan party system has aligned left-right and pro-independence debates. These results are

---

[48] The first dimension rotates 26° while the second turns 73° degrees down from its 90° initial degrees. From the formula r = cosine(Θ) for theta =9, r = .911.

consistent with previous research suggesting that the Catalan party system is moving towards an increasing correlation between the two axes, with a political competition tending to be between a pro-independence left and an anti-independence right (Rico, 2016). At the individual level, recent evidence also suggests that leftist positions are more likely to support independence (Guinjoan and Rodon, 2016). Therefore, the independence issue seems to experience the process predicted by the issue evolution theory through which it is absorbed by the dominant left-right dimension.

In Spain, previous research on mass preferences characterizes public opinion as mainly dimensional (Bartle et al., 2020), with strong correlations between left-wing and pro-decentralization positions. In Catalonia, despite the traditional ownership of a right-wing coalition of the decentralization issue, the shift towards demands for independence have restructured mass preferences, establishing stronger correlations between support for independence and movements towards the left. This shift could help us understand the increasing support of the left-wing pro-independence ERC to the detriment of the pro-independence conservatives (JxCat).

6.6. Discussion and concluding remarks

In this paper, I have presented new measures to track the evolution of Catalan public opinion from 1991 to 2018. These annual measures – the policy mood, the national mood and an estimate of support for independence – enable the study of the contextual factors that shape mass preferences and, additionally, the relationship between the most salient axes of politic conflict in Catalonia.

Catalan public opinion seems to be structured by a main dimension that is able to incorporate economic and cultural issues as well as, more recently, the issue of independence. These results contribute to our understanding of dimensionality of policy conflict in complex contexts, providing evidence that polities tend to low dimensionality even in multi-party systems with extremely salient issues that in principle escape the classical left-right dimension. Whereas the association of increases in support for independence and left-wing policies has augmented substantially over time, the correspondence between the policy mood and the general demand for decentralization remains less clear. In fact, the analysis of the evolution of support for greater autonomy and left-right issues reveals that important differences remain in their reactions to political and economic stimuli.

The Catalan policy mood, capturing policy preferences in the left-right scale, reacts in a surprisingly systematic manner to both national and regional incumbents. As predicted by the thermostatic model (Wlezien, 1995), the public countermoves policy output: when conservative governments are in power, the public moves to the left, and the opposite happens under left-wing governments. Remarkably, the subnational public responds thermostatically to both levels of government at the same time, as expected by equivalent studies in multilevel contexts (Soroka and Wlezien, 2010). The policy mood is also reactive to economic conditions; the public systematically moves to the left when unemployment decreases but becomes more conservative when it rises. Overall, the policy mood moves in a meaningful and orderly manner in reaction to a complex set of stimuli that coincide in time.

Conversely, support for decentralization or independence cannot be explained as systematic reactions to either economic factors or incumbents. Demands for decentralization in general, and for independence in particular, are mainly contingent and need to be explained by a complex sequence of events to which public opinion reacts in an orderly, yet not automatic, manner. In the same way, the relationship between sovereignty preferences and macroeconomic factors requires nuanced accounts of the decentralization process. The social unrest initiated by the 1990s economic crisis did not trigger any changes in public opinion regarding decentralization. However, the 2008 crash and its aftermath coincided with a constitutional crisis that activated support for independence. The simultaneity of both processes appear to have produced new narratives intertwining demands for left-wing policies and independence, which now seem to evolve in parallel. Further research on the evolving framing of the independence issue could shed light on this issue.

A comparison of the Catalan case with similar polities such as Scotland or Flanders would allow further specifications of the thermostatic responses of subnational public opinion and its reactivity to political and economic factors. Furthermore, additional cases would provide a better understanding of the relationship between sovereignty preferences and the left-right dimension over time. Far from fading away, sovereignty tensions will remain an influential aspect of the increasingly frequent multilevel governance structures. Therefore, more research will be required to advance in our understanding on how sovereignty preferences evolve and how they restructure the political space.

Chapter 7

Austerity and Independence: Political Economy of Territorial Exit in Catalonia and Scotland

Sebastitan Dellepiane-Avellaneda, University of Strathclyde

Anthony McGann, University of Strathclyde

Xavier Romero-Vidal, Leuphana Universität Lüneburg

Abstract

This article sheds new light on the contested politics of territorial exit in Catalonia and Scotland. The aim is to explain the rise of support for independence observed over the austerity decade in both cases. Our first contribution is to profile the so-called "surge". Drawing from both federalist and crisis theories, we then explore the role of social preferences, elite strategy, and party-system realignment. By engaging both qualitative and quantitative evidence, our narratives deliver three core insights. Firstly, distinctive shifts in the public mood shaped the drive towards independence. Secondly, in the face of a deep legitimacy crisis, regional elites faced strong incentives to play the territorial card strategically. Thirdly, the striking "denationalisation" of Spanish and UK party systems underpinned the politics of independence. Our study provides new comparative insights to the study of representation in plurinational democracies and their stability in hard times.

7.1. Introduction

Recent developments in Catalonia and Scotland have been attracting the attention of many, sparking intense debates inside and outside academia. As leading historians have pointed out, what is at stake is no less than the political unity of Spain and the United Kingdom (Devine, 2016; Elliott, 2018). In addition, this once-in-generations "constitutional moment" is taking place in the context of deep concerns about political fragmentation in Europe and beyond. This paper contributes to this crucial debate by systematically comparing the dynamics of Scottish and Catalan independence movements.

Our key outcome of interest is the sustained increase in public support for independence observed in both cases over the past decade. At first glance, the evidence points to a structural shift in public attitudes towards independence. Our overarching aim is to shed new light on the economic and political drivers of this substantive change in constitutional preferences. One of the puzzles is explaining why and how a political strategy (independence), which had been unthinkable for a long time, became suddenly a mass movement. In other words, the question is how 'secessionism was brought into the mainstream' (Rico and Liñeira, 2014).

Albert Hirschman (1970) famously claimed that the 'exit option' is an extraordinary event in politics. 'Territorial exits' in particular are uniquely rare, not least in consolidated democracies (Caramani, 2004). The implication is that any plausible explanation of the drive towards independence in Catalonia and Scotland must be located around the "critical juncture" of the Great Recession. Specifically, we expect the deep economic dislocation and the concomitant political discontent to be somehow associated with the surge of pro-independence sentiment. But austerity and independence are bound to be connected in complex ways. In this light, our agenda is to uncover potential mechanisms underpinning this subtle relationship. As causal complexity might be at work, we adopt a pragmatic, inclusive research strategy.

At the theoretical level, our work seeks to bridge the established scholarship on comparative federalism (Béland and Lecours, 2005; Filippov et al., 2004; McKay, 2004) and the recent literature on the political consequences of economic crises (Bermeo and Bartels, 2014; Lindvall, 2014; Morlino and Quaranta, 2016). In particular, we focus on three key mechanisms. First, we scrutinise mass political preferences to see how both economic and territorial preferences evolved in a context of austerity. Second, we trace how political discontent interplayed in both cases with a crisis of representation, which involved a territorial dimension. And third, in this context, we explore the realignment of politics in both cases, which lead to a "denationalisation" of the British and Spanish party system.

Methodologically, we exploit the leverage of 'paired comparisons' (Tarrow, 2010). Our case selection strategy can be broadly framed as a "most-different" design. Catalonia and Scotland are different across key politico-economic dimensions, most notably in relation to the 'nationalism of the rich' literature (Dalle Mulle, 2017). Yet, we can still observe a surprising convergence in outcomes: a sharp rise in support to independence. The study of "same outcomes in different contexts" should deliver insights into common mechanisms. In addition, 'within-case analysis' is also a source of leverage in case study research (Goertz and Mahoney,

2012). We build on that lesson to develop narratives of the Catalan and Scottish independence pathways supported by both qualitative and quantitative evidence.

Academic research on Catalonia and Scotland has flourished in the past years (Béland and Lecours, 2019; Dalle Mulle and Serrano, 2019; della Porta et al., 2019). Our work makes two distinctive contributions to this literature. Firstly, we track the "surge" in pro-independence sentiment with a common methodology for the two cases, generating new data and novel findings. Crucially, we document the presence of 'threshold dynamics' (Pierson, 2003). Secondly, we go deeper into the causal complexity underpinning outcomes. A key finding is to uncover two alternative "pathways to independence". This insight offers a fresh perspective into the role of referenda (legal or not). In addition, our story may have comparative merits in relation to the pressing challenges facing 'plurinational democracies' (Keating, 2001), including the extreme event of 'territorial exit' (Caramani, 2004). Moreover, it offers a counterpoint regarding the role of public preferences in the politics of austerity (Bermeo and Bartels, 2014).

The article proceeds as follows. The next section profiles the surge in support to independence in Scotland and Catalonia. We then move into the political economy of territorial exit. The Catalan and Scottish independence narratives are developed in the following sections. The final discussion underlines core insights and implications.

7.2. The surge in independence support in Catalonia and Scotland

"Independence" as well as associated ideas like "secession", "separatism" and "nationalism" are essentially contested concepts. The study of political independence invites conceptual fuzziness, empirical confusion and normative biases. In the spirit of Balcells (2013) and Sanchez-Cuenca (2018), our intention is to bring analytical nuance and empirical rigor to the discussion. To that end, this section discusses alternative empirical strategies to measure public attitudes towards independence and decentralization, which we generally refer to as territorial preferences. We then profile the evolution of such preferences in Catalonia and Scotland over the past decades and pose some explanatory puzzles.

Different measurement strategies can be adopted to track support for independence over time. The main methodological choice is between "dichotomous" or "multi-option" questions. The dichotomous option (independence: yes or no?) has become the focal point in recent years. The rising popularity of this instrument has been reinforced by the pivotal role of referenda in the politics of independence. The idea of a polarized public opinion has also suited the media agenda. As a result, both public and private pollsters have been asking the "yes/no" question on a regular basis. But imposing a constrained binary choice is not trivial from a methodological perspective: support for independence can be overestimated simply because less radical options are not available.

The multi-option question brings about a different set of advantages and disadvantages. The key gain is the capacity to capture more nuanced responses. This is the precisely the case of the traditional "constitutional choice" question, where respondents are allowed to pick different forms of devolution/federalism. Intermediate options are vital for getting a better picture of

underlying constitutional preferences and even movements across them. However, non-binary survey instruments are not without problems. For example, pollsters frequently ask how Scotland should be governed, offering five options: (1) Independence outside the EU, (2) independence in the EU, (3) remain in the UK with a Parliament with taxation powers, (4) remain with Parliament without taxation powers or (5) remain without a parliament. A common practice is to collapse the original 5-option question into a 3-way scale, grouping independence, devolution, and unionism. This manipulation is more problematic than often assumed. Importantly, only one of the devolution options in the choice-set implies "more devolution", and one of the independence options entertains the non-trivial idea of leaving the EU.

In light of these trade-offs, our empirical strategy is to construct new devolution and independence scales by drawing from both dichotomous and multi-option questions. Specifically, we leverage available survey data using an algorithm to produce a time-series estimate from aggregate survey data derived from the widely used Item Response Theory (IRT) model (McGann, 2014). This empirical innovation generates significant benefits. Firstly, we can integrate polls on independence from different organizations, hence controlling for so-called house effects. Secondly, we can make better use of existing surveys even if the precise question-wording changes over the years. Finally, we can connect series with different timescales, as long as some overlapping exists. The methodological foundations behind the construction of these scales are widely discussed in the macro polity literature (McGann, 2014; Stimson, 1991, 2018).

Most crucially, we make an analytical innovation regarding the measurement of devolution preferences. The standard procedure is to take the different categories of the multiple-choice question separately. However, this practice may lead to a misleading representation of public attitudes, as respondents constantly switch from devolution to independence (and vice versa). In contrast, we construct a new devolution scale, accounting for both pro-independence and (some) pro-devolution responses. The goal is to estimate the proportion of people supporting "at least" more devolution (Devomax in Scotland; Federalism in Spain), creating a new indicator that better captures latent support for greater autonomy in our two cases.

Figures 7.1 and 7.2 show the evolution of attitudes towards devolution and independence in Scotland and Catalonia respectively. In line with expectations, our estimates show an increase in support for Catalan and Scottish independence. Our findings are broadly consistent with the idea of a sudden pro-independence "surge" around the period 2010-2015. They also seem to confirm the convergence of outcomes in both Catalonia and Scotland: attitudes towards independence looked relatively stable for many years, and then rapidly adjusted in a relatively short period of time. Following that sharp correction, the independence mood has remained relatively stable, seemingly reaching a new (higher) plateau. In short, the data point to a time-focused and swift "structural break" in the independence equilibrium as far as mass preferences are concerned.
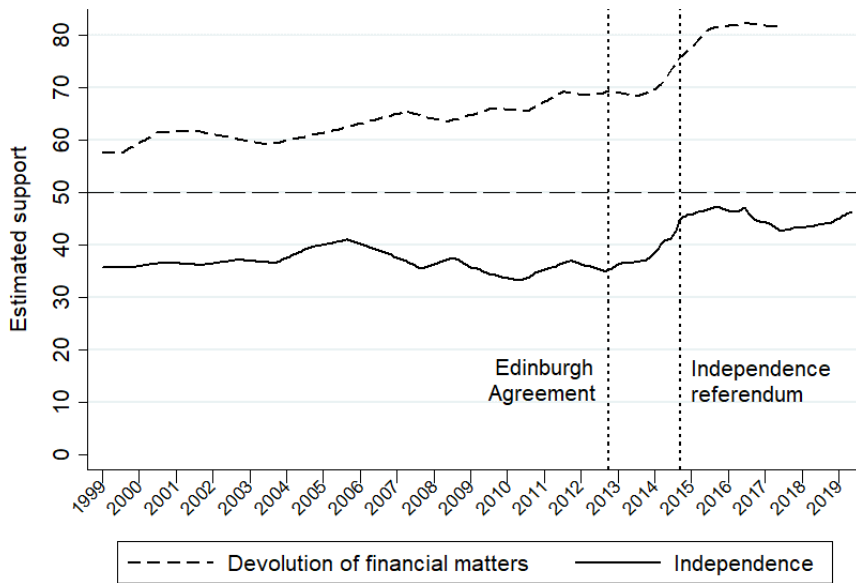
Figure 7.1 Evolution of attitudes towards devolution and independence in Scotland
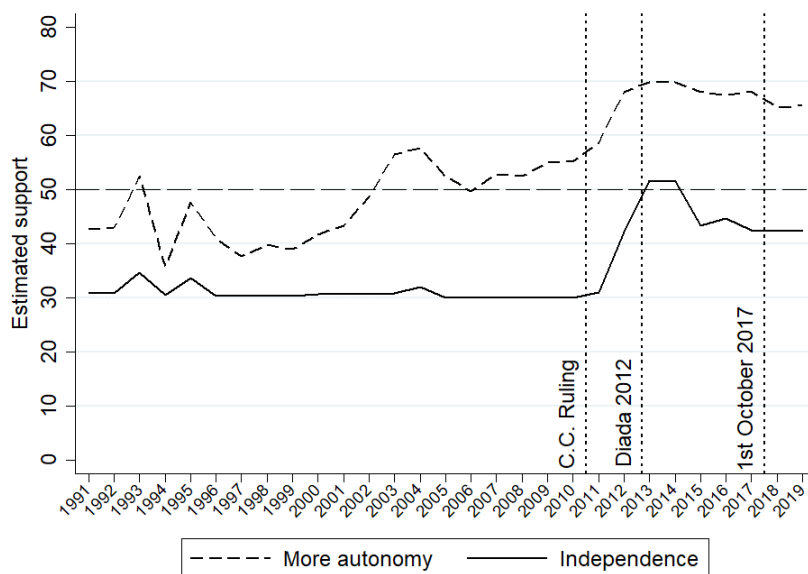
Figure 7.2 Evolution of attitudes towards autonomy and independence in Catalonia

Despite the common patterns, the timing of the surge looks different in both cases. In Scotland, the rise in pro-independence sentiment took place over the referendum campaign (2013-2014). In Catalonia, the tide of consent over independence appeared to shift before (2011-2012). This is an interesting pattern given the known variation in political opportunity structures. Competing narratives have been constructed about the implications of the 2014 Independence Referendum in Scotland and the uninterrupted contestation over the issue in Catalonia. Yet, on the economic side, the matter is how the divergent independence pathways connect with the differential impact of austerity across the European core (UK) and periphery (Spain). In short, the timing issue raises key questions regarding the political economy of independence.

117

The interaction between devolution and independence attitudes is most intriguing. A secular rise in territorial demands seems to precede and be a leading indicator of independence sentiment. Our evidence suggests that latent support for greater autonomy was eventually "activated" into pro-independence attitudes in the period 2010-2015. Two issues are worth noting about this. The first one is that the pro-autonomy sentiment is "intense", as large proportions of Catalan and Scottish voters desire more self-government. The second: the process leading to the activation of pro-independence movements has been in the making for a long time. Before the surge, independence was arguably not seen as a "viable" option by mainstream Catalan and Scottish voters. Yet, demands for greater autonomy had been building up slowly but steadily.

The dynamic relationship between demands for greater autonomy and support for independence can be interpreted in different ways. A conundrum concerns the issue of people facing a "constrained choice". Survey respondents (and voters in referendums) are not able to "negotiate" different choices – they can only express an opinion for the choices before them. When confronted with multiple options, they presumably choose the most preferred one. However, this does not simply depend on how much they like an option in absolute terms but on how viable each option seems to be. Thus, when support for independence goes up this does not necessarily mean that the electorate likes independence more than they did before. It may simply be that people perceive federalism as less credible and therefore switch to a second-best option, which can be either a more centralised organization or independence. Similarly, when support for independence declines, this does not necessarily mean that people like independence less. It may simply be that federalism is perceived as more viable, which leads to some voters switching from independence to federalism. Our accounts of both the Catalan and Scottish preferences might shed light on how these views on the viability of each option evolved in the last decade.

Our estimation of territorial preferences tackle upon crucial explanatory puzzles. The first puzzle is the profile of our dependent variable. The data structure strongly resembles so-called 'threshold models' (Pierson, 2003). Empirically accounting for such a process is bound to be elusive. The second and related puzzle concerns causal complexity. Our previous works on the Catalan and Scottish public moods have already identified complex dynamics (McGann et al., 2019; Romero-Vidal, 2019). While economic mood responds to policy and political events in predictable ways, territorial preferences are more difficult to account for. Territorial preferences are expected to be nuanced, particularly because the choice-set is not consistent across time and the potential territorial exit involves radical uncertainty. Lastly, territorial preferences may interact in subtle ways with other dimensions of the political debate. Issue evolution theory (Carmines and Stimson, 1989) predicts that new issues should over time become folded in the pre-existing left-right dimension through a realignment led by political parties positions Thus, the rise of independence movements interact and has the potential to transform extant party systems.

In light of these uncertainties, we adopt a pragmatic research strategy. In the next section, we build on the literatures on federalism and economic crises in order to identify a set of relevant heuristic tools. We then develop two case study narratives of the pathways towards

independence in Scotland and Catalonia respectively. By combining theory and narratives, we expect to uncover some of the causal complexity shaping outcomes, including the mechanisms underpinning threshold dynamics.

Political economy of territorial exit

What economic and political factors are expected to shape public support for independence? Drawing from Hirschman (1970) and Caramani (2004), we can refine our question as: under which conditions would a significant proportion of a sub-state electorate decide to entertain the extremely rare "exit option"? This section searches for potential explanations around two literatures. Firstly, we look at the established scholarship on federalism and particularly that on self-enforcing federations. Secondly, we engage the burgeoning literature on the political effects of the Great Recession. Our aim is to identify core insights, which can then be used to inform our narratives.

Theories of self-enforcing institutions contend that institutional stability should not be taken for granted. It should be rather accounted for. This is an invitation to move beyond legalistic approaches. In order to survive, institutions should be 'self-enforcing' in the sense of being supported by powerful interests (Weingast, 1997). In other words, institutional stability depends on whether those with the bargaining power to change the rules face incentives to 'keep the bargain' (North and Weingast, 1989). This political economy story is largely about the incentives faced by elites and non-elites, but it is also a story of shared values (Schofield, 2002). Ultimately, institutions should be underpinned by *both* (material) interests and (cognitive) beliefs. Following Riker (1964), this thinking has been applied to the study of federations.

The two classic Rikerian questions –what explains the formation of federations and what holds federations together- are still relevant (McKay, 2004).This research program may provide hints into the core pieces of our puzzle, helping us uncover mechanisms behind the rapid shift in pro-independence sentiment. Naturally, Riker's "scientific" approach to federations needs to be adapted to current political economy conditions. Most notably, the external environment faced by small, 'stateless nations' has shifted in the past decades (Colomer, 2006; Keating, 2001). In any case, the analytical lesson is to focus on the incentive structure and belief systems supporting the bargain between state and sub-state elites.

The survival (or breakdown) of federations depends on the politics of accommodation between national and regional elites (Filippov et al., 2004). A self-enforcing federal bargain requires the permanent accommodation of economic, political and cultural grievances. When this accommodation is not forthcoming, the incentives to defect (secede) are likely to rise. In modern democratic settings, "coercion" may not be enough to keep a federation together. Voluntary compliance –in other words, "consent"- is key. In the same vein, territorial politics is not just about accommodating elites. The federal contract needs to be perceived as "legitimate" by the wider society.

In the logic of self-enforcing federations, constitutional frameworks –and its capacity to adapt over time- are a central concern. In this regard, David McKay (2004: 108) contends that the structure and working of the party system play 'a special role in brokering conflicts between

core and periphery'. The role of parties in sustaining federations is complex, depending on 'a subtle interaction of institutional arrangements with the strength of regional loyalties and the policy scope of federal as opposed to state government' (183). According to McKay (2001), parties are crucial for 'legitimizing' federal bargains, not least in hard times. Party systems are also the focal point of Caramani's (2004) groundbreaking work. One of his key insights relates to the behaviour of social-democratic parties across territorial lines, which we consider in Scotland and Catalonia.

Our research is concerned with the upset of a federal constitutional consensus in the backdrop of politics in hard times. Thus, the study must inevitably address the political implications of the Great Recession. In this regard, it might be useful to revisit some core reference narratives in the crisis literature. In an influential contribution, Bermeo and Bartels (2014) made the key (and counterintuitive) observation that: '*in most countries, popular reactions to the Great Recession were surprisingly muted and moderate*' (3). They indeed contended that: '*dramatic political reactions to the Great Recession were associated less with the direct economic repercussions of the crisis than with government initiatives to cope with these repercussions*' (4). Strikingly, these scholars also emphasized the remarkable continuity in 'policy preferences and ideologies' in the face of crisis (8).

This narrative of continuity, predicated upon containment, moderation and ideological resilience has been severely tested in the second part of the austerity decade. If anything, our cases defy that wisdom. This does not mean, however, that the Bermeo/Bartels' framework cannot be used to generate useful hypotheses. These authors offer good leads into the potential factors explaining their "exceptions": 'immoderate responses to austerity'. The first factor is 'a trigger than enables ordinary people to link economic hardship directly to the actions of incumbent political elites' (Bermeo and Bartels, 2014: 29). The second is 'a political capacity for mobilization' and in particular the role of political parties as 'mobilizing agents'. This interaction between representation and mobilization may be relevant to our story, which brings us to a crucial point. This is not merely a question of whether voters punish or not incumbents in an economic downturn. We are in the territory of a Gramscian "organic crisis" with the potential to unsettle the constitutional equilibrium. Two issues are worth underlining here: *representation* and *time*. On representation, a key mechanism is the perceived legitimacy of democratic channels (Morlino and Quaranta, 2016). This includes the impact of economic discontent on the party landscape (Hobolt and Tilley, 2016). On time, the key point is that the political effects of economic crises involve complex dynamics (Lindvall, 2014). We should therefore be sensitive to the timing and sequence of events.

What are the most promising intersections between these two literatures? How does the ongoing discussion relate to our study? We shall firstly clarify that our dependent variable is not the breakdown (or not) of a federation. Constitutional change involves huge transaction costs, so whether it actually happens or not is a different question altogether. We are rather investigating a potential leading indicator of secession. Our concern is to explain why significant sections of the Catalan and Scottish electorates seem to be *more willing to secede* now than in the past. We expect that the key mechanisms at work would be broadly similar. We also expect these mechanisms to operate in both federations and quasi-federations.

One core insight is the following. In normal times, we are likely to observe a relatively stable articulation –a sort of "equilibrium"- between social preferences, party systems and federal bargains. But a deep crisis can dislocate the institutional settlement, leading to unforeseen events and opening up unimagined political pathways. In Gramsci's "interregnum", the politics of the "unthinkable" becomes the new normal. Once things unravel, a rapid structural break may be the outcome.

We shall recall here that some form of threshold model is represented in our data analysis. According to Pierson (2003), 'threshold dynamics' is likely to be prevalent 'in circumstances where actors face binary choices and where the choices they favour depend in part on their perception of what others are likely to do'. Pierson's argument may be relevant to the dilemmas facing political elites and citizens in real-world constitutional struggles. The conundrum is deciding whether (and when) to switch from voice to exit. Two mechanisms are expected to underpin the process: the framing of a binary choice and/or a rapid update in collective expectations.

Regarding the factors that may upset a given territorial equilibrium, federalist and crisis theories highlight two levels of analysis: citizen preferences and elite strategies Regarding the evolution of citizens' preferences, a crisis can trigger a 'belief cascade', rapidly eroding the constitutional consensus (Schofield, 2002). Alternatively, if discontent is swiftly accommodated, preferences can evolve more incrementally. The second level of analysis focuses on how elites (both at the centre and at the periphery) adapt their electoral and constitutional strategies. Political agency is expected to play a vital role in critical junctures. Politicians can shape outcomes by framing crisis narratives and by manipulating the dimensions of political choice (Riker, 1982).

In short, our aim is to reconcile a bottom-up sociological perspective and a top-down actor-centred approach. The main arena of interaction between elites and voters is political competition. Elaborating on Caramani (2004), the big question is how the politics of Catalan and Scottish independence have intersected with the "denationalization" of the Spanish and UK systems, that is, the breakdown of a main national party system into differentiated subnational ones. Put differently, we are dealing with the striking resurgence of the territorial dimension of political conflict. How did the crisis disrupt traditional channels of representation, making "territorial exit" more attractive? How have party elites and voters negotiated the subtle interaction between "voice channels" and "exit possibilities" over the austerity decade? In the next sections, we address these questions by developing independence narratives for Scotland and Catalonia respectively.

7.3. Scottish independence narrative

In April 2019, a YouGov poll showed that support for Scottish independence climbed to 49 percent. The report underlined that the two sides were 'virtually neck and neck on 49 percent for Yes and 51 percent for No' (YouGov, 2019). Hundreds of polls have been published in Scotland over the past years, showing marginal movements upwards or downwards. These snapshots of public opinion are headline-grabbing, but they can offer a misleading representation of underlying political sentiment. As Carmines and Stimson (1989) observed

three decades ago, we should move away from 'the political moment' and study macro-social processes over extended periods of time.

In this regard, the first observation is that attitudes towards political autonomy in Scotland have varied a great deal since the 1970s (Ipsos MORI, 2012). In our previous research, we found that support for independence moves systematically in Scotland, sometimes in ways not captured by individual polls (McGann et al., 2019). We also know that in a few occasions the tide of consent has defied expectations. The establishment of the Scottish Parliament in 1999 did not "kill nationalism stone dead", as wildly predicted by some. Nor has the result of the 2014 Independence Referendum halted the independence movement, also against the odds. The survival and even growth of support for independence calls for a careful investigation of its drivers, engaging both survey data and narrative reasoning.

To recall, the main explanatory puzzle is the sudden increase –the so-called "surge"- in support for independence observed between 2012 and 2014. We expect this substantive change in political attitudes –or constitutional preferences- to be associated with the politics of hard times in times of austerity. Certainly, a range of mechanisms –economic, political, and cultural- could have played out. This is why both historians and political scientists invoke the 'perfect storm' metaphor to describe the seismic changes observed in Scotland in aftermath of the 2008 financial crash (Devine 2016, 245; Johns and Mitchell 2016, 10). The challenge is to make sense of the causal complexity underpinning the relationship between austerity and independence.

The 2011 Scottish Parliament election is considered a key turning point in the independence narrative. Consolidating gains already made in 2007, the Scottish National Party (SNP) obtained around 45 percent of the vote, securing the first single-party majority at Holyrood. That stunning victory completed the transformation of the SNP into the "party of government" and inaugurated a decade of striking electoral supremacy. The dominant account of 'the extraordinary rise of the SNP' (Johns and Mitchell 2016) revolves around valence, and points specifically to positive evaluations of the party's perceived competence in office (Johns et al. 2009; Johns, Mitchell, and Carman 2013). Another widespread explanation is that the SNP has simply become the most robust defender of Scotland's interests (Rose and Shephard, 2016).

In line with Bermeo and Bartels (2014), this conventional wisdom downplays policy positions and ideology. Moreover, the key claim is that the early electoral successes of the SNP were not preceded by a shift in independence sentiment. Two leading academics were eloquent enough: 'the SNP's major gains were made in spite of, not because of, the party's flagship constitutional policy' (Johns and Mitchell 2016, 215). Echoing this line of thought, the historian T.M. Devine (2016: 209) remarked that even though the 2011 election was 'one of the most significant in modern Scottish history' (219), an explanation of the SNP victor 'must discount to a considerable extent the appeal of independence to their army of new voters' (221).

The valence story might have been oversold. The SNP success and concomitant surge in independence sentiment should be placed in the backdrop of the representation vacuum brought about by the Great Recession. This was anything but normal times. We are in the indeed in the realm of Riker's disequilibrium politics, the territory of the unthinkable. In Scotland, the

famous "morbid symptoms" of a Gramscian organic crisis translated into a fracture in the constitutional consensus. The relevant question is why "territorial exit" suddenly became a viable political strategy and appealing reference narrative in the critical juncture of the austerity decade.

7.3.1. Mass preferences

One of the issues here is that the (largely) cross-sectional analyses of the 2007 and 2011 elections do not fully capture the influence of macro polity trends. One of the core arguments is that deep-seated demands for greater autonomy and the rise of anti-austerity sentiment actually played out in the independence story. We also contend that the drive towards independence has been part of a wider process involving issue evolution, the transformation of established representation channels and party-system realignment. We discuss below the potential impact of social preferences in the drive towards independence. We then move into issues of representation and realignment.

Theories of self-enforcing federalism underscore the role of shared beliefs. Did the austerity crisis undermine the core beliefs underpinning the UK territorial pact? The profile of independence sentiment definitely looks like a "belief cascade" *a la* Schofield. And Devine (2016: 250) suggested that 'the independence movement seems to have been driven *both* by identity politics and radical ideologies'. Yet, we know that the relationship between identity and constitutional preferences is ambiguous, particularly in the presence of 'civic nationalism' (Serrano, 2013). Our recent work documenting broadly 'parallel publics' in Scotland and the rest of Great Britain also invites caution (McGann et al., 2019). All that said, we believe that mass preferences should be part of a nuanced independence story.

Drawing from our systematic study of Scottish mass preferences, and as shown in Figure 7.3, territorial preferences, we can infer that pro-independence leaders were in an ideal position to build on two simultaneous trends in public sentiment. The first is that support for greater autonomy was continuously increasing since the establishment of the devolved parliament in 1999. In the period 2010-2012, the consensus around full financial devolution (all tax and spending powers) was fluctuating between 60 and 70 percent. This suggests that an increasing share of the electorate was unsatisfied with the current level of devolution, and therefore was ready to be mobilised by political entrepreneurs. The second trend is that the Scottish public started drifting leftwards after 2010. This shift in preferences was the "thermostatic" (Wlezien, 1995) response of the Scottish electorate to the combined effect of economic austerity and Tory rule.
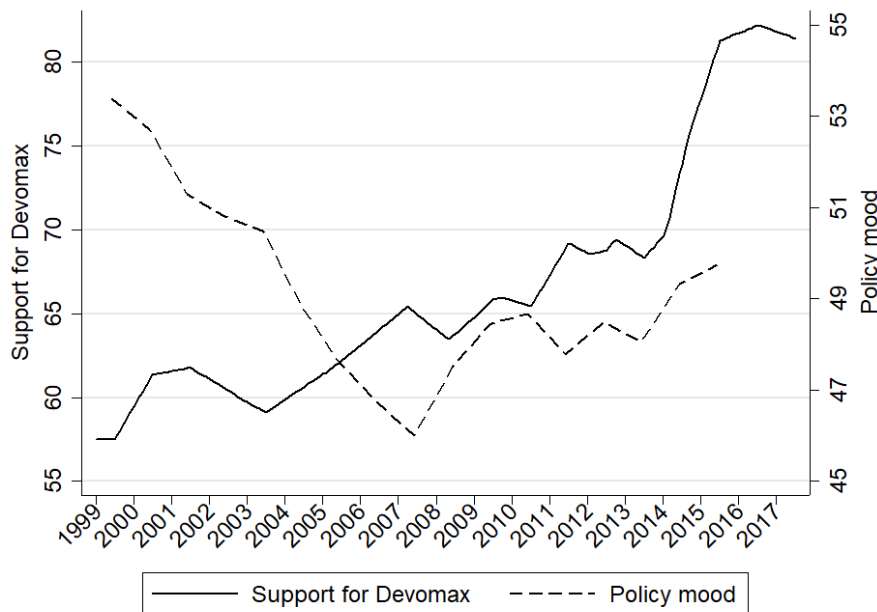
Figure 7.3 Evolution of left-right preferences and territorial preferences in Scotland.

As far as public preferences were concerned, the SNP faced a unique opportunity to translate rooted autonomy demands and latent anti-austerity sentiment into a grand independence narrative with a focus on radical social change. Its progressive framing, articulated in the Independence White Paper (*Scotland's Future*) published in November 2013, shaped the vision of the Yes campaign. The social construction of "progressive independence" had a natural counterpoint: the austerity agenda strongly advocated by the Conservative-Liberal coalition in London. In this setting, the SNP faced strong incentives to narrate economic grievances along territorial lines and strategically played the "blame game". The core persuasive line of the Scottish independence discourse was to blame London for the harsh effects of austerity, while taking credit for the compensatory policies implemented at home.

The intersection between mass preferences and independence could have been even more nuanced. The nationalist leaders were not only in a position to "accommodate" shifts in public preferences. More subtly, they were well placed to engage in "preference shaping" as well. Once in power, the SNP had agency to mobilise resources to build consensus, along the lines theorised by Beland and Lecours (2005). There is evidence that SNP policies actively sought to construct nationhood (Devine, 2016; Elliott, 2018). In the context of austerity, the targeting of regional social policy was key to draw a line between "progressive" Scotland and "conservative" England. We cannot assess how successful the SNP was, but the preference-shaping angle may be an important piece of the independence puzzle, adding a new perspective into the ultimate implications of the 2011 election.

This brings us to the elusive issue of timing. Our analysis locates the independence surge around the referendum campaign. In contrast to Liñeira et al. (2017) and Devine (2016), we find a continuous pro-independence drift between the Edinburgh Agreement (October 2012) and the Referendum (September 2014). This finding suggests that the bargain struck by David Cameron and Alex Salmond to hold a binary referendum might have triggered unintended

consequences. The common understanding is that the removal of the Devomax option -the devolving of all powers to Holyrood other than defence and foreign affairs- from the choice set was one of Cameron's tactical victories (Devine, 2016). According to Elliot (2018: 243), Devomax was 'the option Cameron feared and Salmond wanted, suspecting that full independence was still a minority cause'. Nevertheless, Cameron's gamble could have dramatically backfired, as he might have pushed Devomax supporters to vote for independence.

In line with Pierson's (2003) intuition, the framing of a "binary choice" might have triggered threshold dynamics. In the absence of a compromise option, some supporters of greater autonomy might have switched to the independence camp. Since the Scottish median voter was likely a Devomax supporter, there was a sizeable market to be mobilised. In parallel, the referendum call might have activated a second mechanism mentioned by Pierson: as the possibility of independence became "common knowledge", many voters might have updated their beliefs. Suddenly, an option that had not been seriously considered by voters (territorial exit) became a real political option.

7.3.2. Representation crisis

A legitimacy crisis has been the backdrop of the politics of independence. The independence narrative gained traction out of a crack in the traditional representation channels. To be sure, voters in Scotland had expressed more trust in the Scottish than in the UK government even before the crisis. Nevertheless, this fault line deepened over the austerity decade. The representation gap was substantial and consequential. Scottish Social Attitudes (SSA) surveys show that trust in the UK government to work on Scotland interests averaged 25 percent in the period 2010-2017, whereas trust in the Scottish authorities averaged 65 percent. This pattern was consistent across a range of voice-and-accountability measures. Around 2011-2013, 49 percent of voters believed the Scottish government was "listening", against 20 percent for the UK government. In this context, the Scottish voters were more likely to blame the UK government than the Scottish for their predicament during the worst years of the Great Recession.

The representation crisis was bound to affect the party system. The drive towards independence indeed coincided with a structural realignment in Scottish politics. One of the most striking events in the independence saga took place after rather than before the referendum. Many predicted that a narrow but still decisive defeat of the Yes-option would settle the issue for a generation. However, support for independence remained stubbornly high, fluctuating between 40 and 50 percent. And most remarkably, the SNP went on to achieve a stunning result in the 2015 UK General Election. Under the new leadership of Nicola Sturgeon, the nationalists won all but three seats in Scotland (56 out of 59). The other side of the SNP's staggering success was the shocking defeat of the Scottish Labour party, hitherto the dominant party in the land, which lost 40 of their 41 seats. As Figure 7.4 illustrates, following the 2014 referendum, the SNP has won a large majority of the Scottish seats in the General Elections.
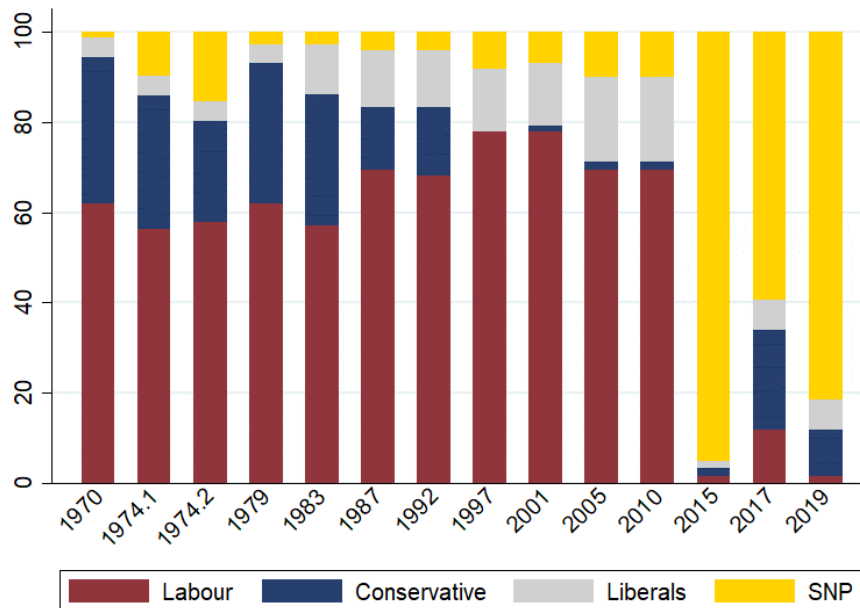
Figure 7.4 Distribution of Scottish Seats in UK General Elections

The politics of independence naturally shaped the otherwise improbable electoral tsunami of the 2015 UK General Election in Scotland. According to Elliot (2018), the historical roots of Scotland's independence pathway are twofold. On the political economy side, the decline of the British Empire and the process of de-industrialisation. On the party competition side, the secular decline of unionists parties, firstly the Conservatives, and more recently Labour. This brings us to the crucial point made by McKay (2001) and Caramani (2004): the key role played by political parties –and particularly social-democratic parties with cross-regional allegiances- in supporting federations.

In this regard, the troubles of the Scottish Labour party are critical for understanding the crack in the constitutional consensus. Labour found it extremely difficult to negotiate its multiple loyalties during the independence referendum, paying a dramatic electoral price in 2015. The reduction of Scottish politics to a binary territorial choice -independence or union- has clearly wedged Labour's electoral bases. The party has faced a rather similar conundrum over Brexit, not least in Scotland.

7.3.3. Political realignment

A remaining issue concerns the direction of causality. Has the rise in independence sentiment driven political realignment or the other way round? The process might have indeed involved self-reinforcing dynamics. Moreover, path-dependency models show that, in a critical juncture, even small, random events may have big, permanent effects. In this light, the claim that the SNP success in 2011 was not based on 'a national yearning for independence' (Devine, 2016) should be reassessed. The point is that the SNP found itself in the perfect place to exploit a legitimacy crisis. The independence narrative became a credible channel to express discontent over austerity and against established elites. Building on Caramani (2004), we can conclude that the rise of a mainstream secessionist movement was both cause and effect of the

"denationalisation" of UK politics over the austerity decade, resulting in a new Scottish party system dominated by the SNP

The ultimate implications of the transformation of the Scottish party system are not easy to predict. Accountability in this plurinational democracy remains problematic (McGann et al., 2019). A major challenge is the fact that Scotland has been voting differently from the rest of the UK, validating the SNP credentials as the dominant party in both the 2017 and 2019 elections. The existence of parallel publics between Scotland and the UK does not diminish the representation crisis. As McCrone (2002, 2017) and Keating (2010) argue, it is perfectly possible for Scotland to have similar policy preferences and still desire greater autonomy. This is particularly true if Westminster politics is seriously discredited. In the end, the independence question comes down to the following choice: whether Scottish citizens feel better represented by Edinburgh or London.

7.4. Catalan independence narrative

In Catalonia, like in Scotland, there is a fascination with the twists and turns of public opinion on independence. On May 10, 2019, for example, the CEO published a poll giving a marginal advantage to the No camp (48.6 percent against 47.2 percent). A virtual tie to by any rate. Given the salience of the "Catalan question" in Spain, the "battle of polls" on independence is permanently at the top of the media agenda. In order to put these polls in perspective, our work is more concerned with longitudinal changes in the tide of consent. In this regard, our newly generated scale shows a sharp, structural break in independence sentiment observed in the period 2011-2012. This pattern is a priori consistent with conventional wisdom (Liñeira and Medina, 2017).

There is an intriguing interaction between attitudes towards devolution and independence. Public demands for more federalism drifted upwards since the early 1990s, in a quite steady, persistent way, building a gap in constitutional expectations over two decades. Since Spain had shown a legacy of imperfectly accommodating territorial claims in her peripheries (Caramani, 2004), a political accident was in the making. In historical perspective, the idea of independence looked like a 'big, slow and invisible process' (Pierson, 2003). A political sentiment that was in the background, until it was suddenly activated. The time of reckoning eventually came in the critical juncture of the austerity decade.

Like in Scotland, the metaphor of the "perfect storm" has been invoked to account for the sudden shift in independence sentiment. The triggers of the Catalan surge are widely known. In May 2010, the socialist government led by Jose Luis Rodriguez-Zapatero made a dramatic policy U-turn and announced a harsh fiscal adjustment aimed at containing the spillovers of the Greek crisis. The austerity drive turned into 'bold retrenchment" following the PP victory in the 2011 General Elections. We shall recall that Spain was badly hit by the 2008 financial crash. The burst of the housing bubble brought about record levels of unemployment and widespread economic hardship. The Great Recession was actually a Great Depression across the European periphery.

The politics of extreme austerity stressed to the limits the federal-fiscal relationships between Spain and Catalonia. According to the existing fiscal framework, regional governments were expected to implement the bulk of the budget cuts and thus bear the political costs of austerity. In this context, regional elites faced strong incentives to adopt blame-avoidance strategies. In turn, these strategies spilled over to polarized territorial preferences in Catalonia and Spain. In 2012, a survey revealed that 56.7 percent of Catalan respondents thought the Spanish Government was very (or extremely) responsible for the economic crisis, whereas only 25.8 percent of them attributed the same level of responsibility to the Catalan government (ICPS, 2012).

To make matters worse, the austerity turn overlapped with a pivotal development in the judicialisation of the Catalan question. In June 2010, a ruling of the Spanish Constitutional Court provided a fatal flow to the political accommodation of Catalan and Spanish interests. The Court decision reversed many of the "concessions" made by Spain during the painful negotiation of a new Statue of Autonomy. This included, among others, one the core symbols of Catalan aspirations: the declaration of Catalonia as a "nation". The economic crisis rapidly escalated into an institutional crisis. In other words, a proper legitimacy crisis.

This double crisis –economic and institutional- was bound to challenge the constitutional consensus. In 2007, 57.4 percent of Spaniards and 45.3 percent of Catalans thought that the level of decentralization at the time was optimal. However, after the economic crash, dissatisfaction with the territorial organization polarized positions in opposite directions. In Spain, only 44.8 percent still chose the current level of decentralization in 2011, whereas a centralized state without autonomous regions became the second most supported option (23.3 percent). The cost of maintaining seventeen regional parliaments and governments became salient in the political agenda as budget cuts were demanded to reduce the public deficit. On the other hand, only 25.5 still preferred the existing level of decentralization in 2011 in Catalonia, and a state in which regions could secede became the first option, chosen by 28.4 of respondents.

What did all this mean for the viability of Spain as a self-enforcing federation? In normal times, regional elites attempt to accommodate distributional disputes and cultural grievances *within* the rules of the game. Territorial exit, which involves contestation *about* the rules, is a last-resort pathway. Moreover, the exit option may not even have the minimal level of political plausibility to be on the choice set. This was indeed the situation in Catalonia during the first three decades of the Spanish democratic transition. Independence was considered a foolish idea among Catalan political and business elites. That core belief shaped the electoral and political strategies of the dominant nationalist coalition, *Convergencia i Unio* (CiU), which aimed at maximising autonomy within Spain. Against all the odds, however, 'secession became mainstream' (Rico and Liñeira, 2014) and embraced by a growing part of the electorate. How did the overlapping institutional and economic crises led to a sudden shift in independence sentiment, unsettling the long-standing territorial equilibrium? Why did some Catalan leaders and many voters switch from "voice" to "exit" despite the huge risks involved?

The international attention focused on key moments of tension: the controversy surrounding the "referendum" on 1 October 2017 and its repression, the unilateral declaration of

independence by the Catalan Parliament, the subsequent intervention of the Catalan government, the detention or exile of pro-independence leaders, or the uncharacteristically violent protests against the Supreme Court sentences in the last months of 2019. Above all, this was a period of permanent contestation involving complex dynamics and multiple switching points. On the surface, the Catalan process looks different from the Scottish case. However, the undercurrents might have been rather similar.

The *Diada*, the Catalan *"National day"* of September 2012 is a focal point in most narratives (Castro et al., 2013). According to the consensus view, that massive public mobilisation fundamentally changed the dynamics of territorial conflict. The collective message could not have been strongest: around 2,5 million people –roughly one quarter of the Catalan population- participated in a demonstration under an explicit pro-independence banner: "Catalunya, Nou Estat d'Europa" [Catalonia, New State in Europe]. For the framers of the independence narrative, the 2012 demonstration, hailed as the largest in European history, is the origin myth of the current struggle. In turn, the event led to transformative realignments in Catalan (and indeed Spanish) politics.

The pivotal place of the 2012 *Diada* in the Catalan independence pathway leads to a key observation. The trail of evidence suggests that the impetus came from below: civil society. In the face of mounting social contestation, the ruling Catalan elite was compelled to change track, swiftly readjusting their constitutional strategies. As one historian put it, the 2012 *Diada* 'made it clear that his [Catalan government president Mas's] only chance of survival was to swim with the tide' (Elliott, 2018: 242). Back in 2012, the powerful Catalan National Assembly (ANC), the leading grassroots organisation, communicated to Catalan authorities that they were no longer interested in negotiating with the Spanish state a new fiscal pact (Forcadell, 2013).

A pertinent question is whether the crack in the constitutional consensus revealed by the historic demonstration of September 2012 was underpinned by observable shifts in the Catalan public mood. Drawing from Kingdon's (1984) classic work, we would expect that a significant number of people –in and outside government- were thinking along similar lines, opening a window of opportunity for rapid policy change. Our estimation of support for independence clearly picks up that sudden "explosion" of Catalan discontent. The evidence shows a clear punctuation in the territorial equilibrium. But how about other political attitudes?

7.4.1. Mass preferences

The sudden surge in support for independence was accompanied by distinctive movements in public preferences. Secession became mainstream in the back of mounting demands for greater autonomy. The Catalan 'national mood' -a summary of attitudes towards identity, autonomy and self-government- sharply increased from 2006 to 2012 (Chapter 6). Our data suggests that the traumatic bargain of a new *Estatut,* which culminated in the controversial 2010 constitutional ruling, triggered a big push in demands for further decentralization. As a result, territorial grievances were ready to be activated, like in Scotland. What is striking is how deep-seated was the autonomy sentiment in Catalonia. In the arch of twenty years (1992-2012), support for further decentralization increased from the low 50s to the upper 70s in a consistent, steady way.
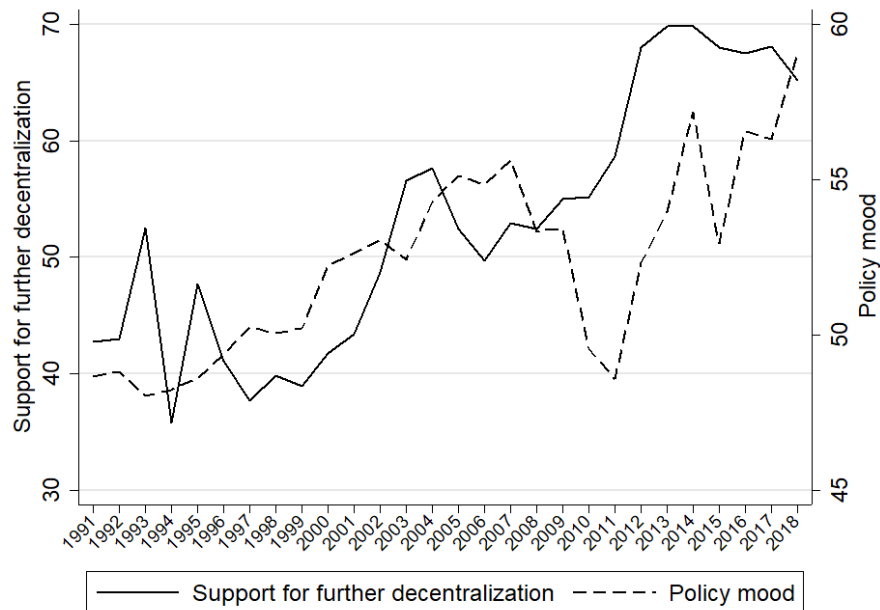
Figure 7.5 Evolution of left-right attitudes and support for further devolution in Catalonia

Concomitantly, the drive towards independence in Catalonia coincided with a substantive leftward correction in the economic policy mood, as shown in Figure 7.5. This sharp swing to the left (higher values in the policy mood) was associated with a thermostatic response to austerity and conservative rule at both state and sub-state levels (a PP government in Madrid from November 2011 and a CiU government in Barcelona since December 2010). The correction in the period 2011-2013 and the accumulated change over the crisis decade look even more drastic than in Scotland. Like in the case of territorial preferences, Catalan economic sentiment had been drifting to the left over a longer period. Taken together, the preferences series show a secular trend towards a more "national" and "progressive" Catalonia.

Social preferences are often discounted in accounts of the Catalan *Procés*. Many observers downplay ideology by stressing that support for independence has come from across the spectrum, from conservative elites to the anti-capitalist CUP. Others have gone further, dismissing secession aspirations as "nationalism of the rich" (Piketty, 2020). It is possibly true that the social bases of the independence movement are different in Catalonia and Scotland (e.g. more working class in the latter). Yet, those arguments are based on an incomplete, and ultimately misleading, understanding of how shifts in public sentiment shaped the politics of independence.

Our contention is that social preferences played a central role in shaping the independence pathway. For one thing, public sentiment is key to the most significant switching point in the independence saga: Artur Mas' official endorsement of the "exit strategy" in September 2012. What Enric Juliana (2018: 13 our translation) hailed 'a cunning transformation of the battleground' was a Rikerian heresthetic move. A conscious attempt to change the dimensionality of political conflict. Crucially, the choice made sense in the context of observable shifts in the tide of consent. On the one hand, Catalan elites perceived the widening gap in constitutional expectations. The entrenched narrative that "Spain has no cure" gained force after the 2012 *Diada*. On the other hand, the *Generalitat* was cornered in the austerity

game. The intensity of the *indignados* movement in Barcelona was also significant. Given this public mood, Mas faced strong incentives to "territorialise" the politics of austerity by shifting the blame to the Spanish state.

7.4.2. Political realignment

Territorial preferences have intersected with the critical issue of party-system realignment. Electoral competition in Catalonia might have been realigning around a pro-independence left-wing pole versus an anti-independence conservative right-wing (Rico, 2016). Our mood story is consistent with this narrative. One key confirming observation is the fact that *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* (ERC) was very well placed to capitalize on the convergent rise of nationalist and left-wing moods. On the other hand, the Catalan conservatives have notably failed to hold their coalition together. To survive in a radically transformed landscape, they had to engage in programmatic adaptation and even party rebranding (from CDC to PDeCAT, to JxC). Most crucially, they were forced to overplay the territorial hand to compensate for the ideological handicap.
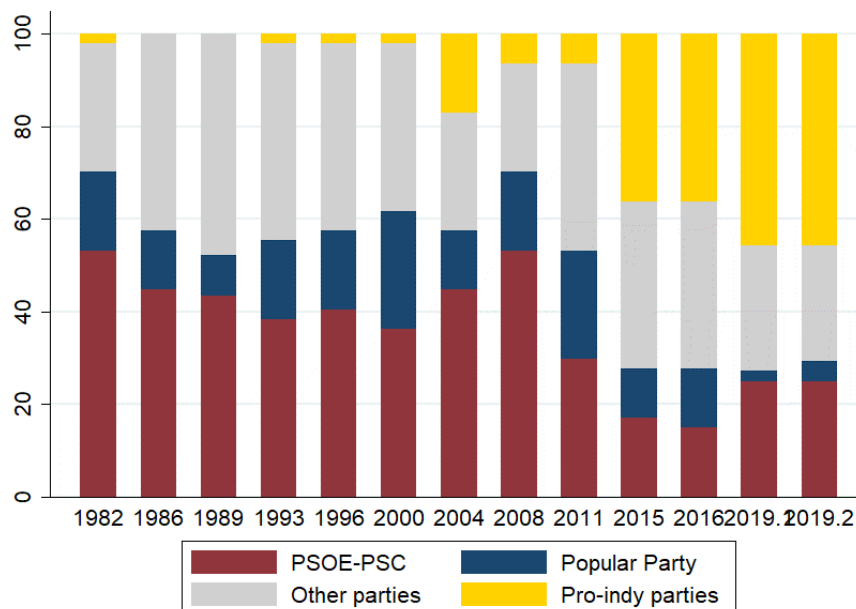
Figure 7.6 Distribution of Catalan Seats in Spanish General Elections

The transformation of the party landscape over the austerity decade has been profound. The contrast between the PSC-ERC-ICV left-wing coalition in the 2000s and the JxC-ERC-CUP pro-independence one in the 2010s speaks volumes about the changing dimensionality of Catalan politics. In Caramani's (2004) logic, this pattern epitomises the striking return of territorial politics. Far from witnessing a territorial homogenization of electoral behaviour, the main Spanish parties have experienced a constant decline in Catalonia, both in general and regional elections. As Figure 7.6 illustrates, the Catalan branches of PSOE and PP have lost their ability to represent Catalan interests in the Spanish congress. While the two main Spanish parties used to gain around 60 percent of Catalan seats until 2011, they represent less than 30 percent of them since then. Whereas the fragmentation of the party system in Spain might partially explain this decline, the fact that Catalonia and Spain vote so differently raises

existential issues regarding the legitimacy of traditional representation channels and the ultimate stability of existing federal arrangements.

Like in the UK, the "denationalization" of Spanish politics is both cause and effect of the drive towards independence. But in Catalonia this realignment has gone beyond the salience of the territorial cleavage over the functional one. The perennial Catalan question has penetrated not only political debates, but also the social fabric. Even long-standing collective narratives, most notably the tradition of tolerance and moderation, have been interrogated. The polarisation of opinion stretched the territorial dimension: previously unthinkable options such as the temporal suspension of a regional government and the unilateral declaration of independence have become part of the public discourse.

7.4.3. Representation crisis

As in Scotland, a representation vacuum underpinned the drive towards independence in Catalonia. If anything, the roots of the legitimacy crisis are much deeper in the Catalan case. A set of overlapping centrifugal forces contributed to a more radical rupture in the constitutional consensus. Firstly, the disruptive effects of austerity in the European periphery. Secondly, the intensity of the territorial grievance, most notably the legacy of the reform of the Catalan Statute of Autonomy. Thirdly, a rigid legal framework. Finally, and crucially, a political culture which discourages compromise. Political confrontation (the so-called *crispación*) was a hallmark of Spanish politics even before the economic crash (Maravall, 2008). In this context, the politics of accommodation between Catalan and Spanish elites became a daunting task.

The final puzzle remains the activation of threshold dynamics. In Scotland, the setting of the independence referendum reduced politics to a binary choice. The Catalan pathway might have been different. The most plausible explanation is that the 2010 ruling of the Spanish Constitutional Court triggered a "belief cascade" a la Schofield. After that critical event, many Catalan voters might have concluded that the Spanish state could not be trusted anymore. Back on 10 July 2010, *El Pais* run a story with the following headline: 'The ruling of the Constitutional Court triggered the biggest demonstration in Catalan history; the march drifts into a pro-independence demonstration'. The article went on to suggest that Catalan ruling elites (President Montilla in particular) would struggle to contain widespread discontent within the constitutional consensus. Following that massive demonstration, organised by the organization *Omnium Cultural* under the slogan "we are a nation, we decide", *independentisme* became a massive social movement. The mobilisation campaign was reinforced by the creation of the Catalan National Assembly (ANC) in the spring of 2011.

Remarkably, a binary choice eventually emerged in the Catalan case, even in the absence of a Scotland-like consensual referendum. In this sense, the blocking of the "the right to decide" by the Spanish state might have involved a big irony. In 2014, Artur Mas promoted an independence referendum, which was suspended by the Constitutional Court and held as a symbolic consultation. Given the impossibility to hold a legal referendum, the Catalan president called for regional elections, in which he aimed to lead a "Yes" coalition in what he defined as "plebiscitary" elections. Ever since 2012, regional, general and even European

elections in Catalonia have been transformed into a sort of "permanent independence referendum". Catalan (and to an extent Spanish) politics has been totally dominated by a single (binary) political question: union or independence?

7.5. A new independence equilibrium?

Just before the 2008 financial crash, John Curtice (2008) assessed the foundations of the UK union after ten years of Scottish devolution. His core conclusion was that explicit support to independence remained 'a minority passion'. However, this finding had an important caveat: 'as a result it appears that remaining within the Union but giving Holyrood greater powers is now the most popular constitutional option' (224). In this light, Curtice even speculated on a future referendum: 'on the basis of these figures it seems that a more powerful parliament within the framework of the Union would most likely emerge the winner in any future 'multi-option' referendum in which people in Scotland are invited to choose between independence, a more powerful version of devolution and the status quo (224).

The "minority passion" eventually became mainstream in the context of the austerity crisis, profoundly transforming the political landscape. Curtice's nuanced intuition on the referendum was prescient. Yet, it missed a point: the possibility of Scottish politics being reduced to a binary choice: independence or union. Pretty much the same happened in Catalonia. Back in November 2007, Artur Mas launched an ambitious agenda called "*la casa gran del catalanisme*", the big home of "catalanism" (García, 2018), aiming at attracting all voter demanding more autonomy. The aspiration was more regional powers and fiscal autonomy; the framing was both transversal and consensual. Independence was hardly part of the narrative. The crisis changed everything. Even the immediate past became a foreign country.

The focal point of our study is the sudden rise of pro-independence sentiment observed in Scotland and Catalonia over the past decade. One of our core contributions has been to properly profile the surge in independence support. Our data shows that the sharp structural break in the territorial equilibrium took place in a relatively short period of time. Having made that observation, our effort has concentrated on addressing the causal complexity underpinning increased support for independence in our two cases. Our case studies stress the interplay of three mechanisms: social preferences, representation issues, and party-system dynamics.

As far as social preferences are concerned, our analysis of the Catalan and Scottish public moods challenges existing explanations. Contrary to some claims, social preferences actually shaped both the dynamics and framing of independence. Two self-reinforcing forces were at play: a secular rise in demands for greater autonomy and a left-wing shift in the economic mood. The first process left a huge gap in constitutional expectations ready to be activated. The second set up a clash between state and sub-state elites regarding the political management of austerity.

Why did the politics of hard times translate into an existential territorial crisis in both Scotland and Catalonia? Our argument is that such a rapid erosion of the constitutional consensus should be understood in the context of rooted representation crisis. The toxic politics of austerity did the rest. In Edinburgh and Barcelona, ruling elites faced strong incentives to strategically frame

the blame game along territorial lines. The progressive denationalisastion of the British and Spanish party systems were both cause and effect of independence politics. Ever since the surge, the constitutional question became the supreme dimension of electoral competition and got firmly embedded in the public discourse.

Despite these common patterns, we have found evidence of diverging pathways. The independence surge was activated at different moments. In Scotland, the drive towards independence gathered paced during the referendum campaign (2012-2014). In Catalonia, independence support peaked up in the period 2010-2012. In both cases, we observe strong evidence of threshold dynamics. But, again, different mechanisms might have triggered the process. In the Scottish case, the referendum rule formally set a binary choice, leading to polarisation around the only available options (independence: yes or no). In the Catalan case, the trigger might have been the 2010 constitutional ruling, which fatally upset the territorial equilibrium.

The ongoing discussion casts doubt about some reference narratives regarding the sensitive issue of referendums. Take the idea that the Spanish state should have followed the UK example, negotiating a referendum to accommodate Catalan demands. In Scotland, the very setting of a (binary) poll ended up polarising opinions. On the other hand, the Catalan case shows that the social consensus can break down even without a legal referendum. The democratic dilemmas of "constrained social choice" deserve further academic attention. More subtly, we should take more seriously the methodological implications of constrained choice in the survey instruments used to infer constitutional preferences.

What are the ultimate implications of the observed change in constitutional preferences? We should underline that our aim is not to predict territorial exit *tout court*. Our concern is with the trajectory and drivers of independence support. Specifically, we have explained how the controversial idea of secession evolved from a minority to a mainstream sentiment. Whether this consensus goes further up or rather decline remains to be seen. A priori, the new 50/50 equilibrium looks "stable". In the UK, Brexit has not fundamentally changed the dynamics of Scottish independence (so far). In Spain, the dramatic events of October 2017 and its aftermath have not broken the virtual tie. Yet, we know that things can shift quickly and unpredictably in a critical juncture though. The territorial reverberations of the Covid-19 pandemic would be the next switching point in the independence narrative.

Our paired comparison has examined a puzzling event: the possibility of territorial exit in two consolidated European democracies. Our story provides insights into key debates. Firstly, it engages the conundrum of accountability in plurinational democracies, offering a counterpoint to Caramani's (2004) seminal work. Secondly, it examines the political consequences of austerity, with a focus on legitimacy and representation issues. This approach may have comparative merits for the study of territorial politics in hard times. Finally, it connects with current concerns about populism and political fragmentation. The politics of discontent in Catalonia and Scotland have been often misrepresented and our ultimate goal is to bring analytical clarity and empirical nuance into these heated debates.

Chapter 8

Conclusions

The aim of this dissertation has been to provide societal-level accounts of the evolution of redistributive (chapters 2-4) and sovereignty preferences (chapters 6-7) in the European context. To carry out the studies included in this dissertation, I have relied on large databases of public opinion surveys. I have subsequently estimated aggregate preferences and scrutinised their interplay with policy output and economics. In this section, I bring together the main findings of each individual article and their implications and discuss how they relate to one another.

At the theoretical level, I take principles from specific strands of literature and connect them to the macro polity line of inquiry. Specifically, I connect the literature of the macro polity (Bartle et al., 2018; Erikson et al., 2002; Stimson et al., 2012) with political economy models about the effect of inequality on public opinion (Bénabou, 2000; Meltzer and Richard, 1981) and, more precisely, the effects of the Great Recession (Bermeo and Bartels, 2014). Moreover, I rely on the comparative federalism literature (Béland and Lecours 2005) to study subnational public opinion and the emergence of pro-independence movements. At the empirical level, this dissertation tests a model of dynamic responsiveness in which public opinion and policy are in constant dialogue. I provide evidence of this bidirectional relation, and show that public preferences and policy are simultaneously influenced by economic factors.
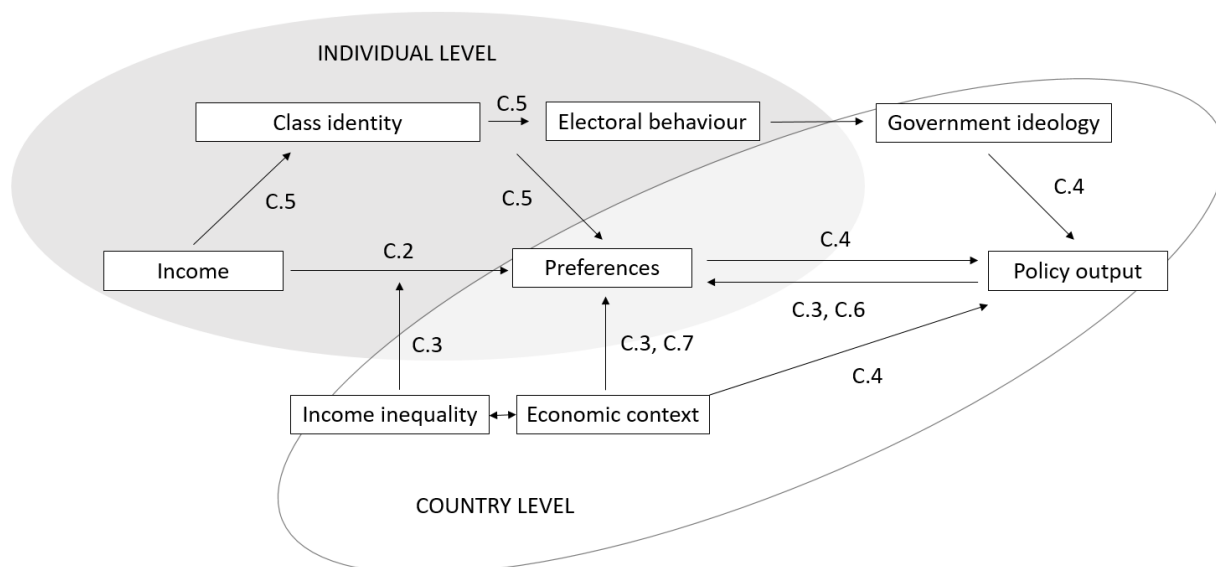

Figure 8.1 Summary Evidence of this dissertation

Note: After Welzel (2013: 394) the letter 'C' and its respective number indicate in which chapter the evidence for the effect depicted by an arrow is provided.

Figure 8.1 illustrates a synopsis of the key findings of the various chapters, distinguishing individual and country-level variables. Policy preferences are in-between the two dimensions, since I approach them at the individual level, at the *meso*-level (income groups) and at the aggregate level.

In the following sections, I discuss the main findings in detail and highlight how they contribute to the existing literature. Whereas in the introduction (Chapter 1) I emphasise the shared mechanisms of public and policy responsiveness across domains, in this chapter I first review the findings in each domain separately. The conclusions are structured into four sections. Section 8.1 examines the results on support for redistribution and its representation, based on chapters 2, 3 and 4. Section 8.1.4, which stems mainly from chapter 5, summarises the findings regarding the role of income and social class in contemporary politics. Section 8.2 is devoted to sovereignty preferences and subnational public opinion, which are covered in chapters 6 and 7. Finally, section 8.3 connects these three broad areas of results to put forward a common framework of dynamic responsiveness, highlighting the ways in which they complement each other.

8.1. Who supports redistribution and why does it matter

The measurements of support for redistribution presented in Chapter 2 show that there is no underlying trend neither across countries nor within countries towards higher demand for redistribution. That is not to say that European publics are diminishing their support for redistribution over time either. Rather, redistributive preferences move in a cyclical way, with relatively short-term fluctuations that can be at least partially explained by the ongoing changes in the political and economic environments (Chapter 3). National publics are not evolving homogenously; only one third of the variation of redistributive preferences is shared across countries (see Section 2.3). Therefore, much of the observed movement remains unique to each country, suggesting that within-country dynamics can better explain changes in support for redistribution.

As a result, the studies in chapters 2-4 focus on within-country dynamics by looking at economic indicators and social policy at the national level. In order to better understand the dynamics behind national-level public opinion, we estimate support for redistribution across income groups in each country. This estimation reveals the underlying structure of mass preferences by disaggregating it into different groups. In contrast to the heterogeneity in the evolution of preferences across countries, the analysis reveals a larger degree of homogeneity within them. In all countries, as expected, higher-income groups generally demand less redistribution than lower-income ones. As regards the preferences of middle-income groups, they lie between those of the two other groups most of the time. Interestingly, the level of support for redistribution across middle-income groups is closer and more strongly associated to that of the poor than they are to those of the rich (Section 2.4.1). Whereas this pattern holds across countries, in Great Britain, the preferences of the middle category are relatively closer to those of the rich, a similar structure to that of the US (Enns and Wlezien, 2011; Soroka and Wlezien, 2008). The contrasting results between continental Europe and Anglo-Saxon democracies fit the expectation that, in proportional systems, middle classes tend to ally with the poor, whereas in majoritarian two-party systems, they tend to ally with the rich (Iversen

and Soskice, 2006). In majoritarian two-party systems, the middle class has an incentive to ally with the rich to avoid being "exploited" by the poor, because it cannot be sure that the poor will not set policies in a centre-left leadership party. By contrast, in proportional systems the middle class has an incentive to ally with the poor to "exploit" the rich, because the middle-class party can be sure that a coalition with the left party will not deviate from pursuing their common interest in taxing and redistributing from the rich (Iversen and Soskice, 2006: 178).

As regards the evolution of differences in redistributive preferences between the rich and the poor, we do not find increasing polarisation between the two (Section 2.4.2). As a whole, the data show that the preference gap between the rich and the poor is not constant or symmetric, but alternates periods of polarisation with periods of convergence. To a large extent, income-group opinions do no shift differently over time but rather in parallel. Likewise, Gonthier (2017) finds a similar parallel movement of support for redistribution across educational groups. Over time, the persistent preference gap tends to a long-term equilibrium. Yet, when preferences diverge or converge, these changes seem to be driven by shifts amongst the rich. This group holds the most unstable redistributive preferences, as they seem to react more quickly and to a higher degree to both economic and political stimuli. By contrast, demand for redistribution is comparatively more stable across low-income groups.

In order to explain what specific factors influence the evolution of redistributive preferences, Chapter 3 explored the effects of social policy and economic context, focusing particularly on economic inequality. In addition, it examines whether inequality can account for the varying distance of the preference gap.

8.1.1. Public responsiveness

As previously mentioned, high-income citizens are particularly prone to update their demands for redistributive and social policies as a function of the economic context, probably because they are more politically informed (Enns and Kellstedt, 2008; Ura and Ellis, 2008). In line with previous research (Franko, 2016), the results here provide some evidence suggesting that the relatively rich increase their support for redistribution when economic indicators improve.

Unemployment is a key factor in the evolution of mass preferences. It seems to have short-term negative effects for support for redistribution, particularly for middle-income groups. In the long run, however, unemployment ends up increasing support for redistribution amongst the poor, probably because of their higher level of labour market vulnerability (Section 3.5). Taken together, these results suggest that higher-income group preferences move rather pro-cyclically and those of the poor move counter-cyclically (Durr 1993; Wlezien and Soroka 2019). They also highlight the importance of taking into account both the immediate and the long-term effects of economic variables.

In addition to variables such as unemployment, inflation or GDP, which account for the general state of the economy, scholars scrutinizing aggregate support for redistribution have emphasised the role of economic inequality (see Kelly 2009; Pontusson and Weisstanner 2018). Building on the influential study on the effects of inequality by Kelly and Enns (2010), we oppose two political economy models with contradicting expectations. While Meltzer and

Richard (1981) posit that inequality triggers support for redistribution, Bénabou (2000) suggests a negative effect. Our results generally support the idea of Meltzer and Richard (1981) that citizens demand more redistribution when inequality increases. However, in their model this effect is only expected for the middle-income group, which they associate to the median voter. Instead, our results show that inequality also activates support for redistribution amongst the top and bottom income quintiles (Section 3.5). Moreover, this effect is stronger for the relatively rich, leading to a convergence of redistributive preferences as inequality increases. These results are similar to those of Andersen and Curtis (2015), although they look at differences between occupational groups instead of income groups. Previous studies find this effect across income-groups using cross-sectional data (Finseraas, 2009), but our results provide new longitudinal insights about the long-term effects of inequality on redistributive demands in Europe.

The fact that the rich react more strongly to inequality challenges the role that self-interest is claimed to have in social and political attitudes (Sears and Funk, 1991), since they might anticipate more losses than gains from redistribution. At the same time, high-income individuals have more to lose from higher crime rates, which are a common consequence of inequality (Rueda and Stegmueller, 2016). More generally, the rich might support redistribution out of fear of social instability (Alesina and Perotti, 1996). However, there might be an alternative –or complementary– explanation for this, which transcends self-interested motives. Since income and education are partially correlated, we might expect that the rich hold more emancipative values than less advantaged individuals (Alexander and Welzel, 2017; Welzel, 2013). In turn, emancipative values enhance pro-social orientations and unselfishness. Increasing inequality might make high-income individuals more aware of economic inequalities and activate their demands for policies that grant equal opportunity.

As a result of the stronger effect of inequality on high-income preferences, the preference gap between the middle- and high-income groups is reduced when inequality rises. These results dispute the assumption that inequality leads to ideological polarisation (Garand 2010). However, the convergence of preferences on redistribution does not deny the possibility that economic inequality might trigger polarisation in other fields. In fact, the marginalisation of lower classes might be one of the factors contributing to the increasing polarisation over moral values (see Alexander and Welzel 2017).

While inequality increases support for redistribution, governmental action to reduce inequality generates the opposite response from the public (Section 3.5). As predicted by the thermostatic model (Wlezien, 1995, 2004), support for redistribution decreases as social spending increases. The negative effect of social spending on support for redistribution is larger amongst high-income citizens, who again seem to adjust their preferences to the societal context more rapidly and to a larger extent.

8.1.2. Policy responsiveness

The results in Chapter 2 show that support for redistribution is higher among low-income groups and that all income groups increase their demand for redistribution when inequality

increases. Do these changes in mass preferences have any effect on how governments cope with economic imbalances?

The association between public opinion as a whole and social policy is a positive one, suggesting that changes in the overall tendency of mass preferences is reflected in policy change. However, when we disaggregate national-level preferences into income groups, we uncover a representation bias detrimental to the representation of the poor. Changes in social policy directly reflect middle- and high-income group preferences, and seem to reflect those of the poor when we do not account for other groups in the same model. However, when we include the three income groups in the same model and let them compete with each other, low-income preferences do not show any association with policy change (Section 4.6). In line with Gilens (2015), I argue that these results reflect the coincidental nature of the representation of the poor: policy reflects their preferences only if they coincide with those of higher strata but not in the case of divergence. These results provide further evidence of a systematic underrepresentation of the poor in Europe, found in single-case studies (Elsässer et al., 2017; Rosset, 2013) and to a lesser extent cross-nationally (Lefkofridi and Giger, 2020; Peters and Ensink, 2015).

We have thus seen that governments respond to public preferences, although not all income groups seem able to exert the same influence on policymakers (Section 4.6). At the same time, parties in power have their own policy agenda (Müller et al., 1999). In particular, we expect that left-wing governments increase social spending and expand welfare generosity, whereas conservative governments would reduce both. Therefore, we need to account for party ideology when analysing public policy. In fact, the extent to which political parties make a systematic difference in terms of public policies is one of the classic questions of comparative public policy research (Wenzelburger and Zohlnhöfer, 2020). Some authors indicate that the effect of government partisanship on policy has declined over time (Busemeyer, 2007), and some evidence suggests that it actually has no consistent effect on social policies in Western European countries (Loftis and Mortensen, 2017). Our models in section 4.6 show that partisan effects are somewhat dependent to model specifications, but overall suggest that conservative governments tend to reduce welfare generosity. This is in line with the policy-seeking dimension of political parties. Nevertheless, public opinion is more strongly associated to policy change than government ideology, emphasising the importance of their vote-seeking strategies.

Our analyses in Chapter 4 also show that governments are constrained by the state of the economy. In order to better capture the political decisions of incumbents, we measure policy representation using welfare entitlements, which are less dependent on demand factors (Wenzelburger et al., 2013). Even when using this indicator, we find that welfare generosity decreases as unemployment rises. We see that increases in unemployment reduce support for redistribution across income groups in the short-run. Thus, it should not be surprising that the confluence of higher costs (more unemployed people) and less public demands leads to cuts in welfare generosity. In the long run, however, higher unemployment rates increase support for redistribution among the poor, but not among the rich. Since the preferences of the poor are more likely to be neglected by governments, policy change is expected to follow the trend of

high-income preferences in a context of divergent demands. Thus, the decrease of welfare generosity because of high unemployment is consistent with the unequal responsiveness patterns discussed in section 4.6.

All in all, the fact that governments behave in line with their own ideological orientation provides an alternative account of policy representation, as they signal a compromise with an electoral mandate (Chapter 5). It could be argued that electoral turnover can correct the imbalances we have found in terms of direct policy responsiveness. The electoral turnover mechanism would grant the equal influence of all citizens by allowing them to overturn incumbents in the next election. The new government would then implement the policies expected by their electorates. This idea must be approached with some caution because we also know that those with less resources tend to vote less (Gallego, 2007), and therefore, are also underrepresented in electoral terms. In addition, low levels of turnout seem to accentuate the over-representation of the rich and the under-representation of the poor (Peters and Ensink, 2015). Thus, the electoral mechanism is not necessarily able to compensate for the different levels of influence that income-groups exert on the policy-making process.

8.1.3. Contributions to the inequality-redistribution puzzle and limitations

Chapters 2, 3 and 4 contribute to the existing scholarship studying the interplay between support for redistribution and economic inequality by providing new insights from Europe, which remain scarce in comparison to those of Anglo-Saxon countries. In addition, while most scholarship looks exclusively at the middle-income category (Lupu and Pontusson, 2011) or at the differences between the rich vs. the poor (Kelly and Enns, 2010; Luttig, 2013), there is much less research examining the three income groups simultaneously (but see Schmidt-Catran, 2016).

In short, our results provide evidence for:

a) the differences between income-group redistributive preferences and their evolution over the last three decades,
b) their *thermostatic* responses to social spending and the increasing demands for redistribution in response to growing economic inequality, in both cases more strongly amongst the rich,
c) and a general opinion-policy link, which is mainly driven by governmental responsiveness to the top and middle categories.

In addition to these findings, the database used to draw them also constitutes an empirical contribution in itself. We provide a new and unique data set of country-year estimates of redistributive preferences across income groups in seven advanced democracies that is an open-access resource for scholars interested in the study of redistributive preferences and, more generally, the dynamics of public opinion across Europe.

The main limitation of this database and, by extension, the findings drawn from its analysis, is its restricted scope. Data scarcity is one of the common problems for comparative macro-opinion studies, and our database is not exempt from this problem. Although the combination of a large number of sources is meant to make up for this lack of cross-national yearly data, our measures are limited to seven countries. As discussed in section 1.8, the number of

countries for which sufficient data are openly accessible restricts the number of cases we can include. However, comparability is ensured by including Western European countries only.

On the other hand, ensuring comparability restricts the scope of our findings. We cannot directly generalise the effects of inequality observed in our sample to unobserved levels of inequality, and our interpretation of the results is therefore limited to the inequality levels experienced by European democracies in the last decades. For instance, our results might not hold in the Latin American context, where countries face higher levels of inequality than those included in our sample. Therefore, we could find different public opinion structures, dynamics, and representation patterns in that specific setting. One of the driving motivations for this study is that we should not take for granted that the dynamics observed in public opinion research in the US apply unrestrictedly to other contexts. Our findings show that European public opinions are structured and have dynamics that indeed differ from those of the US. Thus, our results, although comparative, should not be projected to other contexts automatically.

It is also important to note that the research design and estimation method limit our ability to account for other socioeconomic variables. In order to estimate group preferences, the population segments are defined by a single variable, in this case, income. In contrast to individual-level research, the approach put forward in this dissertation does not allow the simultaneous control of different sociodemographic variables such as education or occupation, that surely influence preference formation. This is not a problem limited to the studies presented here but a common practice in previous research. The focus on income largely stems from the importance that economic models attribute to it in relation to redistributive preferences.

On the other hand, some studies account for the evolution preferences across educational groups (Enns and Kellstedt, 2008; Erikson et al., 2002) or occupational categories (Fernández and Jaime-Castillo, 2018). Further research is needed to assess whether these groups (a) react to inequality and (b) influence social policy following the patterns that we find for income groups. The focus on income or education alone as the main variable to predict preferences might be the cause of inconclusive results. Kitschelt and Rehm (2019) find that the realignment of voters among the two main US parties can be better described by combining education and income levels. Thus, education differences within high- and low-income groups might be a useful to find a generic effect of economic conditions on redistributive preferences.

8.1.4. Income groups and class politics

To critically reflect on the role of income and, more generally, of social class in contemporary politics, Chapter 5 advances our understanding of the combined effect of objective and subjective class on electoral behaviour. I focus on the measurement of objective and subjective class and of the discordance between the two (the disparity between the perception of status one occupies and the actual class one belongs to, which is measured in terms of occupation, income or education).

Relying on a survey experiment, my analyses show that objective and subjective measures result in substantially different groups within the same sample. I find important dissimilarities

even among measurements of subjective class. Using a numerical scale to express status self-identification or categorical class scales results in substantially different distributions of responses. Moreover, different categorical scales also produce different classifications of similar respondents. For instance, including *working class* categories leads to an overestimation of people identifying with low-status categories. By contrast, using *lower class* instead of *working class* reduces the amount of people who identify with the lowest categories, which results in an overestimation of people identifying with the middle categories. Consequently, researchers interested in accounting for social class should pay attention to the use of specific labels whose meaning might be politically loaded (Kelley and Evans, 1995).

Questionnaire effects might differ across countries. Whereas *working class* seems to be a label with which a large share of the Catalan population seems to identify, this cannot be extrapolated to all countries or languages, in which it might have a different connotation that alters the share of people that would identify as such. Therefore, questionnaire biases might be dependent on the context-specific usage of social class labels. This is particularly relevant for international surveys like the World Values Survey, which use both lower and working class labels separately. The resulting distribution of responses might be affected by the linguistic and cultural connotations of each label in each context. One could speculate that the term *working class* is more prevalent in countries in which the labour movement was more powerful. Future research should study whether the historical strength of unions can predict the likelihood to identify as *working class*. Alternatively, the use of numerical scales might be a way overcome these limitations and therefore enhance cross-national comparability.

As regards the link between objective and subjective measures, I find that material conditions contribute to class identification, although to different degrees. Income seems to be the main driver of subjective class, while occupation and education have a smaller effect. These results speak of a monetarization of social class identity, which has become more linked to income and less to occupation over the past three decades (Alexander and Welzel, 2017: 11; Hout, 2008: 46). Despite this link between objective and subjective class indicators, the inconsistencies at the individual level are widespread. Most respondents identify with a status category that does not match their position in terms of income, occupational category or educational attainment.

Sosnaud et al. (2013: 85) argue that such discordance between subjective class identity and objective class position is patterned in sociologically meaningful ways. As a result, they expect that inflated or deflated class perceptions (higher or lower subjective class than objective position) will have an effect on electoral behaviour. My results indicate that this is not necessarily the case. Both the objective and subjective dimensions of class exert an influence on voting behaviour. Yet, I find that the concordance or discrepancy between the two dimensions does not provide additional information about voting behaviour. It is thus important for social scientists to control for both material conditions and class self-identification, but the extent to which the two are consistent or not is less relevant.

The fact that we can find strong effects of social class on voting behaviour in Catalonia is particularly relevant in the context of this dissertation. Given the high salience of the independence issue, we should expect weaker class voting patterns. However, social class plays

a role in voting behaviour in such an unlikely case. The fact that we can still explain vote in a single left-right dimension in such a context might be result from the ability of the left-right dimension to absorb new issues (Carmines and Stimson, 1989).

Overall, Chapter 5 shows that accounting for both class identification and objective status variables might provide more nuanced accounts of the role of social class in contemporary politics. Given their accumulative effects on vote, objective and subjective indicators should not be treated as interchangeably components of social class, but rather as different components of a multifaceted concept. At the same time, chapters 2-4 illustrate that a single variable like income can account for meaningful within-country heterogeneity. Using income alone as a main stratifying variable has been useful to uncover crucial patterns of public and policy responsiveness. In addition, my results indicate that income influences perceptions of one's status, which in turn is associated to vote. Taken together, my findings suggest that material conditions are still relevant to the study of European politics.

8.2. The study of subnational public opinion and the rise of support for independence

Chapters 6 and 7 have studied public opinion at the subnational level with a particular focus on sovereignty preferences, that is, support for decentralisation or independence. In the case of Catalonia, I also estimate the policy mood, a general measure for the central tendency of the public in the left-right scale, which includes both economic and cultural issues (Chapter 6).

My analysis of the dimensionality of Catalan politics suggests that the issue of independence, which emerged as a mainstream political option only in the last decade (Rico and Liñeira, 2014), seems to be increasingly aligned with the main left-right dimension. The two axis of political debate are converging on the demand side, which is in line with the evolution on the offer side, since party positions over independence seem to increasingly correlate with left-right ones (Rico, 2016). However, both left- and right-wing voters have pro- and anti-independence vote options. As a result, this convergence does not undermine the significance of class voting patterns described in Chapter 5.

In addition to the policy mood, chapters 6 and 7 have presented different series of sovereignty preferences, from a national mood, accounting for the variation in national identities and support for more decentralisation or independence, to estimates of net support for independence using different operationalisations. Altogether, these series provide us with valuable insights into the dynamics characterising subnational public opinion and, more specifically, the rise of support for independence in Catalonia and Scotland.

8.2.1. Public responsiveness

Just like redistributive preferences (Chapter 3), the subnational policy mood is simultaneously influenced by the political and economic context (Chapter 6). The public becomes more conservative under left-wing governments and moves to the left under conservative ones, as predicted by Wlezien's (1995, 2004) thermostatic model. The study of public opinion at the national level allows us to control the effect of national economic and political indicators; with subnational measures we can also account for regional effects. As regards public

responsiveness to policy, we can assess whether the public reacts to the national government, the regional government or to both. Comparative evidence suggests that in decentralised countries, the public is less able to respond thermostatically to the two levels of government (Soroka and Wlezien, 2010). However, I find that the Catalan policy mood reacts to both the regional and national governments thermostatically. This finding is in line with previous research on state-level responsiveness in the US (Pacheco, 2013), which shows that mass preferences react simultaneously to state and federal spending. In the Catalan case, public opinion moves right under progressive governments, either at the regional or national level, and conservative governments impulse the public to the left (Section 6.5.3).

As regards the responses of publics to the economic environment, the subnational policy mood seems to adapt to economic conditions, moving to the left when unemployment decreases, and to the right when it increases (Section 6.5.2). This pattern is consistent with the responses of redistributive preferences across Europe. All in all, the policy mood seems to react in an orderly manner to a complex set of stimuli that coincide in time. By contrast, the national mood, accounting for the central tendency in sovereignty preferences does not. Support for decentralisation and for independence do not entail automatic reactions to economic hardship. Thus, in the single-case study on Catalonia I find that the same models that successfully predict the subnational policy mood cannot explain the rise in support for independence. These results call for a detailed account of the sequence of events that led to the possibility of territorial exit in a consolidated European democracy.

8.2.2. Policy responsiveness and the surge of the pro-independence movement

To complement the study of the Catalan case, Chapter 7 provides an in-depth examination of the mechanisms behind the sudden rise of pro-independence sentiment observed in Catalonia and Scotland over the past decade. In order to address the causal complexity behind this phenomenon, we combine quantitative and qualitative evidence, and scrutinise not only social preferences but also elite strategies and the ongoing processes of party-system realignment.

Our estimation of support for independence reveals a sudden structural break in the territorial equilibrium. In the Catalan case, the Constitutional Court ruling of 2010 over the Catalan Statute of Autonomy might be the trigger of the independence process. An important part of the electorate interpreted it as evidence of the inability of the Spanish state to accommodate Catalan demands for decentralisation. By contrast, the drive towards independence in Scotland gained pace during the referendum campaign itself (2012-2014), after Westminster had agreed to hold it. The binary choice of the referendum polarised Scottish public opinion, and did not offer the most popular option 'devomax', which would grant more power to Scottish institutions yet remaining in the Union (Section 7.3).

In both cases, public opinion had been experiencing decisive transformations before support for independence rose. The thermostatic responses to austerity triggered a left-wing shift that tensed the relationship between state and sub-state elites. At the same time, the already existing and increasing demand for greater autonomy was not accommodated by the British or Spanish governments. Thus, austerity policies and unmet constitutional expectations overlapped, triggering a legitimacy crisis in which regional elites had incentives to frame the blame game

along territorial lines. The rapid erosion of the constitutional consensus could only be activated in the context of a representation crisis. In this case, the lack of policy responsiveness (including both social policies and devolution), laid the ground for unprecedented mobilisation in favour of secession. It is impossible to tell whether support for independence would have evolved in the same manner had the economic crisis of 2008 not existed, or the devolution demands been accommodated. However, our account of the events suggests that the economic crisis and the lack of policy responsiveness in both social policy and decentralisation laid the ground for the rise in support for independence.

In addition, the distinctiveness of the regional party system grew over time as a consequence of this process. Interestingly enough, such "denationalisation" of the Spanish and UK party systems accelerated the growth of pro-independence attitudes in turn, creating a self-reinforcing path of differentiation. In both Scotland and Catalonia, the independence issue has ever since become the main dimension of electoral competition and public discourse.

In sum, sovereignty preferences do not seem to behave like the general policy mood or the more specific redistributive preferences. They do not seem to have a systematic association with economic or policy indicators, but rather seem to be the result of complex and multifaceted phenomena. However, the fact that a representation crisis set the ground for the activation of these extraordinary movements provides evidence that the opinion-policy link is not only a matter of interest for scholars but also for citizens, who might expect to maximise policy responsiveness in an independent political unit.

8.3. Concluding remarks: rethinking dynamic responsiveness in Europe

By focusing on specific policy domains, this dissertation provides new insights into the idiosyncratic aspects of redistributive preferences and support for independence in Western European countries. Moreover, it provides evidence of general attributes of group opinions both across income groups and in subnational units. In both cases, I find that mass preferences are in constant flux and evolve to a large extent in an orderly manner. These results are in line with Erikson et al.'s (2002) account of macro-opinion dynamics.

The public moves in reaction to governmental action, as both the subnational policy mood and redistributive preferences across Europe follow similar patterns. As shown in Chapter 6, the policy mood moves in the opposite direction of governmental activity, in a typical thermostatic manner (Wlezien, 1995, 2004). Similarly, support for redistribution declines as social spending increases and grows when it is reduced (Chapter 3). The thermostatic model (Wlezien, 1995, 2004) provides an accurate description of the preference responses to policy in these dimensions (left-right mood or support for redistribution), but is less useful to explain support for independence, as explored in Chapter 6. Sovereignty preferences do not seem to react in a systematic manner to either policy output or economic factors. A possible explanation for these different levels of applicability of the thermostat model is the different nature of these policy domains. It might be useful to explain politics in ordinary times, and therefore the swings between left and right that are common in advanced democracies. However, the thermostatic model does not provide an explanation for threshold dynamics (Pierson, 2003), in which long-term equilibriums are only disrupted in exceptional times. In domains like devolution or

institutional reform, the demand for a change seems to result from the condensation of a myriad of issues. Therefore, extraordinary demands that question the constitutional foundations of the polity, such as pro-independence movements, cannot be explained by the same parsimonious models accounting for politics in *ordinary* times like the thermostatic model. Methodologically, these phenomena call for different approaches: while quantitative methods uncover shared trends in most domains (chapters 2-4), in others a qualitative account of the events might be more useful to understand the aggregate level dynamics that result in unusual outcomes such a constitutional crisis (Chapter 7).

In David Easton's (1965, 1975) model of political support, sovereignty preferences touch upon the most general level on which support and non-support depart: the political community. By contrast, economic preferences are about redistributive policies, which produce less divisive conflicts than conflicts about the structure of the polity. The nature of economic preferences and sovereignty preferences differs accordingly: while economic preferences are about material interests (which are negotiable), sovereignty preferences involve encultured identities (which are non-negotiable). In light of these differences in the nature of economic versus sovereignty conflicts, it is to be expected that different dynamics and logics influence their course over time. More than economic conflicts, sovereignty conflicts can be triggered by symbolic action—in particular actions of the federal government that openly aim to disqualify or delegitimize the claims of a rising secession movement.

The economic environment exerts an important influence on public opinion too. Unemployment is of particular interest, probably given its salience and immediate tangible effects for citizens (chapters 3 and 6). My findings show that the public mood becomes more conservative when unemployment rises. In Catalonia, the policy mood moves to the right in times of economic hardship. Similarly, when unemployment rises, support for redistributive preferences decreases across European democracies, particularly amongst middle-income groups. On the other hand, after this initial reaction, rising unemployment increases demand for redistribution in the long run, particularly amongst low-income citizens. The finding of differentiated short- and long-term effects of economic variables contributes to the literature devoted to the relationship between economics and macro opinion. We might expect that these differences exist across domains, and therefore the distinction between short- and long-term effects might be crucial to understand how public opinion evolves.

The study of the effects of income inequality and state efforts to compensate for it provides us with remarkable insights. We provide evidence that the public demands more redistribution when inequality increases (Chapter 3). However, while we see that the public wants to tame increasing inequality, this demand declines when social spending grows. Depending on the extent to which the government is able to adjust policy to public demands, this dynamic could lead to a self-correcting process: when inequality increases, support for redistribution does too. The government captures this change in public opinion and strengthens social policies. Next, the thermostatic reaction of the public stops sending the signal for further social policy generosity. At the same time, the strengthened social policy presumably corrects the inequalities that started the process.

However, even though policy change generally reflects the preferences of the poor, this only seems to be true insofar as these preferences align with those of middle- or high-income groups. In line with previous research on unequal representation, the poor seem to be worse represented in social policy (Bartels, 2017; Elsässer et al., 2017; Schakel et al., 2020). Thus, our findings in Chapter 4 point to a reflection of economic inequality in political inequality, which risks being a vicious circle: political imbalances might dampen the correction of growing economic inequality. This is particularly relevant because the relatively poor are the ones to demand redistribution the most (Chapter 2), and they cannot exert an autonomous influence on the policy-making process (Chapter 5). On the other hand, the reactions to both inequality and policy are faster and stronger amongst the rich (Chapter 3). Their political sophistication might be the explanation for their higher ability to adapt their preferences to a changing environment and for their greater influence on policy change.

The lack of policy responsiveness is not only a normative concern because it reproduces social inequalities. It might trigger a crisis of representation in which the questioning of the legitimacy of representatives deteriorates constitutional consensus (Chapter 7). Therefore, a lack in policy responsiveness may not only activate further demands on the same domain; it may also trigger a spill-over effect and lead to demands challenging the *status quo*. In every context, these challenger movements might take different forms: in the Catalan and Scottish case, for instance, it was channelled through the pre-existing movements or parties in favour of independence, which became mainstream and challenged the institutional order.

The current SARS-CoV-2 pandemic might have larger effects on the economy than the Great Recession of 2008. The tensions between regional and national/federal governments might result into blame games, particularly in countries with a regionally fragmented party system (Chapter 7). The results presented in this dissertation also suggest that, initially, the economic shock might have triggered a conservative shift across European publics. Nevertheless, as unemployment rises, support for redistribution is likely to increase, particularly amongst the poor (Chapter 3). At the same time, if the economic crisis to come increases income inequality, this may foster further support for redistribution at the aggregate level. Yet, governments are only responsive when they can afford to be (Ezrow et al., 2020). Thus, economic hardship might challenge policy responsiveness in the near future. The extent to which governments respond to public demands will be crucial to avoid a crisis of representation.

In addition to the current pandemic, future crises might aggravate the growth of within-country income inequalities. Despite widespread concerns about the consequences of economic inequality for democracy (Ansell and Samuels, 2014; Piketty, 2020), inequality does not seem to trigger polarisation over redistributive policies (Chapter 3). That is not to say, however, that economic inequality does not have political consequences. Income still plays a role in both shaping status perceptions, ideology and electoral behaviour. More generally, as explored in Chapter 5, material conditions influence class identities, which in turn shape electoral behaviour. What is more, the evidence put forward here suggests that income inequality translates into political inequality, since the relatively poor tend to have less influence in social policy than their middle- and higher income counterparts (Chapter 4).

On the whole, this dissertation accounts for the dynamics of public opinion in Europe both as input and output of the policy-making process. It provides evidence that the evolution of mass preferences can be generally explained by contextual factors such as governmental activity and the economic background. Moreover, it provides new evidence suggesting that this is the case both across countries and at the subnational level. These results contribute to the macro polity literature by adapting core mechanisms of the dynamic representation model and the thermostatic model to the European context, in a comparative setting, and in specific domains.

Further research should delve deeper into the internal heterogeneity within countries, both on the citizen and the policy sides. As regards individual-level differences, party identification might condition both one's beliefs about factual matters and political preferences. For example, people judge the economy as worse when an opposing party is in office in the US (Achen and Bartels, 2016: 276–284). While the European context makes such an approach more complex, further research should account for the role of political and social identities to study how they shape both preferences and beliefs about the state of the economy (or the level of inequality).

As regards differences in policies, there is some regional heterogeneity in decentralised countries. Since preferences adapt simultaneously to both national and regional policy, the latter should be taken into account when studying preference responsiveness to policy. While research accounting for both levels of spending has been carried out in the US (Pacheco, 2013), there is a dearth of cross-national comparative studies. In addition, the results of this dissertation suggest that different income groups not only hold different preferences, but also react differently to their environment over time. Therefore, one could simultaneously account for both national and regional policies and for the way in which different groups react to both. Similarly, regional levels of inequality could be taken into account. Doing so would require new efforts to build comparable regional series of public opinion across territories. This, however, might need to wait, as there are not enough longitudinal data available to carry out such studies yet. In the meantime, this dissertation has opened new avenues of inquiry to keep advancing in our understanding of the nature of public opinion.

References

Aalberg T (2003) *Achieving Justice: Comparative Public Opinion on Income Distribution*. Leiden: Brill.

Abou-Chadi T and Finnigan R (2019) Rights for Same-Sex Couples and Public Attitudes Toward Gays and Lesbians in Europe. *Comparative Political Studies* 52(6): 868–895. DOI: 10.1177/0010414018797947.

Achen C and Bartels LM (2016) *Democracy for Realists: Why Elections Do Not Produce Responsive Government*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Alesina A and La Ferrara E (2005) Preferences for redistribution in the land of opportunities. *Journal of Public Economics* 89(5–6). 897–931. DOI: 10.1016/J.JPUBECO.2004.05.009.

Alesina A and Perotti R (1996) Income distribution, political instability, and investment. *European Economic Review* 40(6): 1203–1228. DOI: 10.1016/0014-2921(95)00030-5.

Alexander AC and Welzel C (2017) *The Myth of Deconsolidation: Rising Liberalism and the Populist Reaction. Journal of Democracy* (28), 1-14.

Allan JP and Scruggs L (2004) Political Partisanship and Welfare State Reform in Advanced Industrial Societies. *American Journal of Political Science* 48(3): 496–512. DOI: 10.1111/j.0092-5853.2004.00083.x.

Althaus SL (1998) Information Effects in Collective Preferences. *American Political Science Review* 92(03): 545–558. DOI: 10.2307/2585480.

Andersen R and Curtis J (2012) The polarizing effect of economic inequality on class identification: Evidence from 44 countries. *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility* 30(1): 129–141. DOI: 10.1016/j.rssm.2012.01.002.

Andersen R and Curtis J (2015) Social Class, Economic Inequality, and the Convergence of Policy Preferences: Evidence from 24 Modern Democracies. *Canadian Review of Sociology/Revue canadienne de sociologie* 52(3): 266–288. DOI: 10.1111/cars.12077.

Ansell B and Samuels D (2014) *Inequality and Democratization*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Arnold C and Franklin MN (2012) Introduction: Issue Congruence and Political Responsiveness. *West European Politics* 35(6): 1217–1225. DOI: 10.1080/01402382.2012.713741.

Atkinson AB (2015) *Inequality: What Can Be Done?* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Baker A (2015) Public mood and presidential election outcomes in Mexico. In: Domínguez JI, Greene KF, Lawson CH, et al. (eds) *Mexico's Evolving Democracy: A Comparative Study of the 2012 Elections*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, pp. 107–127.

Bakker R, Jolly S and Polk J (2012) Complexity in the European party space: Exploring dimensionality with experts. *European Union Politics* 13(2): 219–245. DOI: 10.1177/1465116512436995.

Balcells L (2013) Opening the black box of secessionism. In: Castro L (ed.) *What's Up with Catalonia?* Ashfield, Mass: Catalonia Press.

Barrio A and Rodríguez-Teruel J (2017) Reducing the gap between leaders and voters? Elite polarization, outbidding competition, and the rise of secessionism in Catalonia. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 40(10): 1776–1794. DOI: 10.1080/01419870.2016.1213400.

Bartels LM (1996) Uninformed Votes: Information Effects in Presidential Elections. *American Journal of Political Science* 40(1): 194–230. DOI: 10.2307/2111700.

Bartels LM (2006) What's the Matter with What's the Matter with Kansas? *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 1(2): 201–226.

Bartels LM (2008) *Unequal Democracy: The Political Economy of a New Gilded Age*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Bartels LM (2017) Political Inequality in Affluent Democracies: The Social Welfare Deficit. *Working Paper 5-2017*.

Bartle J, Dellepiane-Avellaneda S and Stimson JA (2011) The Moving Centre: Preferences for Government Activity in Britain, 1950–2005. *British Journal of Political Science* 41(2): 259–285. DOI: 10.1017/S0007123410000463.

Bartle J, Dellepiane-Avellaneda SD and McGann A (2018) Policy accommodation versus electoral turnover: policy representation in Britain, 1945–2015. *Journal of Public Policy*: 1–31. DOI: 10.1017/S0143814X18000090.

Bartle J, Dellepiane-Avellaneda S and McGann A (2019) Policy accommodation versus electoral turnover: policy representation in Britain, 1945–2015. *Journal of Public Policy,* 39(3): 235–265.

Bartle J, Bosch A and Orriols L (2020) The policy mood in Spain: the thermostat in a warm climate, 1978–2017. *European Political Science Review*: 1–21. DOI: 10.1017/S175577392000003X.

Bassett WF, Burkett JP and Putterman L (1999) Income distribution, government transfers, and the problem of unequal influence. *European Journal of Political Economy* 15(2): 207–228. DOI: 10.1016/S0176-2680(99)00004-X.

Baumgartner FR and Jones BD (2010) *Agendas and Instability in American Politics, Second Edition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bay A-H, Finseraas H and Pedersen AW (2013) Welfare Dualism in Two Scandinavian Welfare States: Public Opinion and Party Politics. *West European Politics* 36(1): 199–220. DOI: 10.1080/01402382.2013.742757.

Beck N and Katz JN (1995) What to do (and not to do) with Time-Series Cross-Section Data. *The American Political Science Review* 89(3): 634–647. DOI: 10.2307/2082979.

Béland D and Lecours A (2005) The Politics of Territorial Solidarity: Nationalism and Social Policy Reform in Canada, the United Kingdom, and Belgium. *Comparative Political Studies* 38(6): 676–703. DOI: 10.1177/0010414005275600.

Béland D and Lecours A (2019) Nationalism and the politics of austerity: comparing Catalonia, Scotland, and Québec. *National Identities* 0(0): 1–17. DOI: 10.1080/14608944.2019.1660312.

Bellucci P and Pellegata A (2017) Citizens' policy mood, policies and election outcomes in Italy. *Contemporary Italian Politics* 9(1): 8–29. DOI: 10.1080/23248823.2017.1286862.

Bellucci P, Costa Lobo M and Lewis-Beck MS (2012) Economic crisis and elections: The European periphery. *Electoral Studies* 31(3): 469–471. DOI: 10.1016/j.electstud.2012.02.009.

Bénabou R (2000) Unequal Societies: Income Distribution and the Social Contract. *The American Economic Review* 90(1): 96–129. DOI: 10.1257/aer.90.1.96

Bendix R and Lipset SM (1966) *Class, Status, and Power: Social Stratification in Comparative Perspective*. New York: Free Press.

Benedictis-Kessner JD and Hankinson M (2019) Concentrated Burdens: How Self-Interest and Partisanship Shape Opinion on Opioid Treatment Policy. *American Political Science Review* 113(4): 1078–1084. DOI: 10.1017/S0003055419000443.

Benoit K and Laver M (2006) *Party Policy in Modern Democracies*. London: Routledge.

Berinsky AJ (1999) The Two Faces of Public Opinion. *American Journal of Political Science* 43(4): 1209–1230. DOI: 10.2307/2991824.

Bermeo NG and Bartels LM (eds) (2014) *Mass Politics in Tough Times: Opinions, Votes and Protest in the Great Recession*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.

Bevan S and Jennings W (2014) Representation, agendas and institutions. *European Journal of Political Research* 53(1): 37–56. DOI: 10.1111/1475-6765.12023.

Bosancianu CM (2017) A Growing Rift in Values? Income and Educational Inequality and Their Impact on Mass Attitude Polarization. *Social Science Quarterly* 98(5): 1587–1602. DOI: 10.1111/ssqu.12371.

Bourdieu P (1984) *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Bowler S (2016) Trustees, Delegates, and Responsiveness in Comparative Perspective: *Comparative Political Studies* 50(6):766-793. DOI: 10.1177/0010414015626447.

Bowles S and Gintis H (2000) Reciprocity, self-interest, and the welfare state. *Nordic Journal of Political Economy* 26(1): 33–53.

Boylan BM (2015) In pursuit of independence: the political economy of Catalonia's secessionist movement. *Nations and Nationalism* 21(4): 761–785. DOI: 10.1111/nana.12121.

Branham JA, Soroka SN and Wlezien C (2017) When Do the Rich Win? *Political Science Quarterly* 132(1): 43–62. DOI: 10.1002/polq.12577.

Breznau N and Hommerich C (2019a) No generalizable effect of income inequality on public support for governmental redistribution among rich democracies 1987–2010. *Social Science Research* 81: 170–191. DOI: 10.1016/j.ssresearch.2019.03.013.

Breznau N and Hommerich C (2019b) The limits of inequality: Public support for social policy across rich democracies. *International Journal of Social Welfare* 28(2): 138–151. DOI: 10.1111/ijsw.12341.

Brooks C and Manza J (2006) Social Policy Responsiveness in Developed Democracies. *American Sociological Review* 71(3): Los Angeles, CA: 474–494. DOI: 10.1177/000312240607100306.

Brooks C and Manza J (2008) *Why Welfare States Persist: The Importance of Public Opinion in Democracies*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Brooks C and Manza J (2013) A Broken Public? Americans' Responses to the Great Recession. *American Sociological Review* 78(5): Los Angeles, CA: 727–748. DOI: 10.1177/0003122413498255.

Brown-Iannuzzi JL, Lundberg KB, Kay AC, et al. (2015) Subjective Status Shapes Political Preferences. *Psychological Science* 26(1): 15–26. DOI: 10.1177/0956797614553947.

Brulle Robert J., Carmichael J and Jenkins JC (2012) Shifting public opinion on climate change: an empirical assessment of factors influencing concern over climate change in the U.S., 2002–2010. *Climatic Change* 114(2): 169–188. DOI: 10.1007/s10584-012-0403-y.

Budge I, Klingemann H-D, Volkens A, et al. (2001) *Mapping Policy Preferences: Estimates for Parties, Electors, and Governments, 1945-1998*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Busemeyer MR (2007) Determinants of public education spending in 21 OECD democracies, 1980–2001. *Journal of European Public Policy* 14(4): 582–610. DOI: 10.1080/13501760701314417.

Campbell A, Converse PE, Miller WE., Stokes D (1960) *The American Voter*. Oxford, England: John Wiley.

Caramani D (2004) *The Nationalization of Politics: The Formation of National Electorates and Party Systems in Western Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. DOI: 10.1017/CBO9780511616662.

Carlin RE, Love GJ and Martínez-Gallardo C (2015a) Cushioning the Fall: Scandals, Economic Conditions, and Executive Approval. *Political Behavior* 37(1): 109–130. DOI: 10.1007/s11109-014-9267-3.

Carlin RE, Love GJ and Martínez-Gallardo C (2015b) Security, Clarity of Responsibility, and Presidential Approval. *Comparative Political Studies* 48(4): 438–463. DOI: 10.1177/0010414014554693.

Carlin RE, Hartlyn J, Hellwig T, et al. (2018) Public support for Latin American presidents: The cyclical model in comparative perspective. *Research & Politics* 5(3): 1-8. DOI: 10.1177/2053168018787690.

Carmines EG and Stimson JA (1989) *Issue Evolution: Race and the Transformation of American Politics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Castro L, Junqueras O, Casals M, et al. (2013) *What's Up with Catalonia?* Ashfield, Mass: Catalonia Press.

Caughey D and Warshaw C (2018) Policy Preferences and Policy Change: Dynamic Responsiveness in the American States, 1936–2014. *American Political Science Review* 112(2): 249–266. DOI: 10.1017/S0003055417000533.

Caughey D, O'grady T and Warshaw C (2019) Policy Ideology in European Mass Publics, 1981–2016. *American Political Science Review* 113(3): 674–693. DOI: 10.1017/S0003055419000157.

Cavaillé C and Trump K-S (2015) The Two Facets of Social Policy Preferences. *The Journal of Politics* 77(1): 146–160. DOI: 10.1086/678312.

Claassen C (2020) In the Mood for Democracy? Democratic Support as Thermostatic Opinion. *American Political Science Review* 114(1): 36–53. DOI: 10.1017/S0003055419000558.

Clark TN and Lipset SM (1991) Are social classes dying? *International Sociology* 6(4): 397–410. DOI: 10.1177/026858091006004002.

Coggins E and Stimson JA (2019) On the Dynamics of Ideological Identification: The Puzzle of Liberal Identification Decline. *Political Science Research and Methods* 7(4): 737–755. DOI: 10.1017/psrm.2017.38.

Cohen J (1997) Procedure and substance in deliberative democracy. In: Elster J (ed.) Democratic Deliberation. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 67–91.

Colomer JM (2006) *Grandes imperios, pequeñas naciones*. Barcelona: Editorial Anagrama

Converse PE (1964) The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics. In: Apter DE (ed.) *Ideology and Discontent*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Converse PE (1974) Nonattitudes and American Public Opinion: Comment: The Status of Nonattitudes. *The American Political Science Review* 68(2): 650–660. DOI: 10.2307/1959510.

Converse PE (1987) Changing Conceptions of Public Opinion in the Political Process. *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 51: S12–S24.

Converse PE and Pierce R (1992) Partisanship and the party system. *Political Behavior* 14(3): 239–259. DOI: 10.1007/BF00991980.

Cuadras-Morató X and Rodon T (2019) The dog that didn't bark: on the effect of the Great Recession on the surge of secessionism. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 42(12): 2189–2208. DOI: 10.1080/01419870.2018.1547410.

Curtice J (2008) How Firm are the Foundations? Public Attitudes to the Union in 2007. In: Devine TM (ed.) *Scotland and the Union 1707-2007*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 210–228.

Cutler F (2008) Whodunnit? Voters and Responsibility in Canadian Federalism. *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 41(3): 627–654.

Dalle Mulle E (2017) *The Nationalism of the Rich: Discourses and Strategies of Separatist Parties in Catalonia, Flanders, Northern Italy and Scotland*. London: Routledge.

Dalle Mulle E and Serrano I (2019) Between a principled and a consequentialist logic: theory and practice of secession in Catalonia and Scotland. *Nations and Nationalism* 25(2): 630–651. DOI: 10.1111/nana.12412.

Dalton RJ (2019) *Citizen Politics: Public Opinion and Political Parties in Advanced Industrial Democracies*. Los Angeles, California: CQ Press.

De Boef S and Keele L (2008) Taking Time Seriously. *American Journal of Political Science* 52(1): 184–200. DOI: 10.1111/j.1540-5907.2007.00307.x.

De Vries CE and Hobolt SB (2012) When dimensions collide: The electoral success of issue entrepreneurs. *European Union Politics* 13(2): 246–268. DOI: 10.1177/1465116511434788.

Della Porta D, O'Connor F and Portos M (2019) The framing of secessionism in the neo-liberal crisis: the Scottish and Catalan cases. In: Closa C, Margiotta C, and Martinico G (eds) *Between Democracy and Law: The Amorality of Secession*. London: Routledge, pp.153-170.

Della Porta D and Portos M (2020) Social movements in times of inequalities: Struggling against austerity in Europe. *Structural Change and Economic Dynamics* 53: 116–126. DOI: 10.1016/j.strueco.2020.01.011.

Delli Carpini MX and Keeter Scott (1996) *What Americans Know about Politics and Why It Matters*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Devine TM (2016) *Independence or Union: Scotland's Past and Scotland's Present*. London: Allen Lane.

D'Hooge L (2019) Mind over matter: Causes and consequences of class discordance. Dissertation. (Tillburg University)

D'Hooge L, Achterberg P and Reeskens T (2018) Imagining class: A study into material social class position, subjective identification, and voting behavior across Europe. *Social Science Research* 70: 71–89. DOI: 10.1016/j.ssresearch.2017.11.003.

Downs A (1957) An Economic Theory of Political Action in a Democracy. *Journal of Political Economy* 65(2): 135–150.

Druckman JN and Jacobs LR (2006) Lumpers and Splitters: The Pubic Opinion Information that Politicians Collect and Use. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 70(4): 453–476.

Duch RM and Sagarzazu I (2014) Crisis perceptions and econmic voting among the rich and the poor: The United Kingdom and Germany. In: Bermeo N and Bartels LM (eds) *Mass Politics in Tough Times: Opinions, Votes and Protest in the Great Recession*. New York: Oxford University Press, p. 375.

Durr RH (1993) What Moves Policy Sentiment? *American Political Science Review* 87(1): 158–170. DOI: 10.2307/2938963.

Easton D (1965) *A Systems Analysis of Political Life*. New York: John Wiley.

Easton D (1975) A Re-Assessment of the Concept of Political Support. *British Journal of Political Science* 5(4): 435–457.

Elkjær MA (2020) What Drives Unequal Policy Responsiveness? Assessing the Role of Informational Asymmetries in Economic Policy-Making. *Comparative Political Studies*: 53(14):2213-2245. DOI: 10.1177/0010414020912282.

Elkjær MA and Klitgaard MB (forthcoming) Economic Inequality and Policy Responsiveness: A Quantitative Review of a New Research Agenda.

Elliott JH (2018) *Scots and Catalans: Union and Disunion*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Elsässer L, Hense S and Schäfer A (2017) „Dem Deutschen Volke"? Die ungleiche Responsivität des Bundestags. *Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft* 27(2): 161–180. DOI: 10.1007/s41358-017-0097-9.

Enns PK (2015) Relative Policy Support and Coincidental Representation. *Perspectives on Politics* 13(04): 1053–1064. DOI: 10.1017/S1537592715002315.

Enns Peter K. and Kellstedt PM (2008) Policy Mood and Political Sophistication: Why Everybody Moves Mood. *British Journal of Political Science* 38(3): 433–454. DOI: 10.1017/S0007123408000227.

Enns Peter K and Wlezien C (2011) Group Opinion and the Study of Representation. In: Enns PK and Wlezien C (eds) *Who Gets Represented?* New York: Sage, pp. 1–25.

Enns PK, Kelly NJ, Masaki T, et al. (2016) Don't jettison the general error correction model just yet: A practical guide to avoiding spurious regression with the GECM. *Research & Politics* 3(2): 1-13. DOI: 10.1177/2053168016643345.

Erikson R and Goldthorpe JH (1992) *The Constant Flux: A Study of Class Mobility in Industrial Societies*. New York: Clarendon Press.

Erikson RS and Tedin KL (2015) *American Public Opinion: Its Origins, Content and Impact*. New York: Routledge.

Erikson RS, McIver JP and Wright GC (1987) State Political Culture and Public Opinion. *American Political Science Review* 81(3): 797–813. DOI: 10.2307/1962677.

Erikson RS, Wright GC and McIver JP (1994) *Statehouse Democracy: Public Opinion and Policy in the American States*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Erikson R.S., MacKuen M and Stimson JA (2002) *The Macro Polity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Evans G (2017) Social Class and Voting. In: Arzheimer K, Evans J, and Lewis-Beck, MS (eds) *The SAGE Handbook of Electoral Behavior*. London: SAGE, pp. 177–198.

Evans MDR and Kelley J (2004) Subjective social location: Data from 21 nations. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 16(1): 3–38.

Evans MDR, Kelley J and Kolosi T (1992) Images of Class: Public Perceptions in Hungary and Australia. *American Sociological Review* 57(4): 461–482. DOI: 10.2307/2096095.

Ezrow L, Hellwig T and Fenzl M (2020) Responsiveness, If You Can Afford It: Policy Responsiveness in Good and Bad Economic Times. *The Journal of Politics* 82(3): 1166–1170. DOI: 10.1086/707524.

Fernández JJ and Jaime-Castillo AM (2013) Positive or Negative Policy Feedbacks? Explaining Popular Attitudes Towards Pragmatic Pension Policy Reforms. *European Sociological Review* 29(4): 803–815. DOI: 10.1093/esr/jcs059.

Fernández JJ and Jaime-Castillo AM (2018) The Institutional Foundation of Social Class Differences in Pro-redistribution Attitudes: A Cross-National Analysis, 1985–2010. *Social Forces* 96(3): 1009–1038. DOI: 10.1093/sf/sox068.

Filippov M, Ordeshook PC and Shvetsova O (2004) *Designing Federalism: A Theory of Self-Sustainable Federal Institutions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. DOI: 10.1017/CBO9780511610875.

Finseraas H (2009) Income Inequality and Demand for Redistribution: A Multilevel Analysis of European Public Opinion. *Scandinavian Political Studies* 32(1): 94–119. DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-9477.2008.00211.x.

Forcadell C (2013) Catalonia, a new state in Europe. In: Castro L (ed.) *What's Up with Catalonia?* Ashfield, Mass: Catalonia Press.

Franko WW (2016) Political Context, Government Redistribution, and the Public's Response to Growing Economic Inequality. *The Journal of Politics* 78(4): 957–973. DOI: 10.1086/686025.

Gallego A (2007) Unequal Political Participation in Europe. *International Journal of Sociology* 37(4): 10–25.

Gallie WB (1955) Essentially Contested Concepts. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, New Series* 56: 167–198.

Garand JC (2010) Income Inequality, Party Polarization, and Roll-Call Voting in the U.S. Senate. *The Journal of Politics* 72(4): 1109–1128. DOI: 10.1017/S0022381610000563.

García L (2018) *El naufragio: La deconstrucción del sueño independentista*. Barcelona: Ediciones Península.

Garrett G and Mitchell D (2001) Globalization, government spending and taxation in the OECD. *European Journal of Political Research* 39(2): 145–177. DOI: 10.1023/A:1011043120145.

Gaxie D and Godmer L (2007) Cultural Capital and Political Selection: Educational Backgrounds of Parliamentarians. In: Cotta, M and Best, H (eds) *Democratic Representation in Europe: Diversity, Change, and Convergence*. Oxford: Open University Press, pp. 106–35.

Geer JG (1996) *From Tea Leaves to Opinion Polls*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Giger N, Rosset J and Bernauer J (2012) The Poor Political Representation of the Poor in a Comparative Perspective. *Representation* 48(1): 47–61. DOI: 10.1080/00344893.2012.653238.

Gilens M (2005) Inequality and Democratic Responsiveness. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 69(5): 778–796. DOI: 10.1093/poq/nfi058.

Gilens M (2012) *Affluence and Influence*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Gilens M (2015) The Insufficiency of "Democracy by Coincidence": A Response to Peter K. Enns. *Perspectives on Politics* 13(4): 1065–1071. DOI: 10.1017/S1537592715002327.

Gilens M and Page BI (2014) Testing theories of American politics: Elites, interest groups, and average citizens. *Perspectives on Politics* 12(3): 564–581. DOI: 10.1017/S1537592714001595.

Gilens Martin (2009) *Why Americans Hate Welfare: Race, Media, and the Politics of Antipoverty Policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Gimpelson V and Treisman D (2018) Misperceiving inequality. *Economics & Politics* 30(1): 27–54. DOI: 10.1111/ecpo.12103.

Glasser TL and Salmon CT (1995) *Public Opinion and the Communication of Consent*. New York: Guilford Press.

Goertz G and Mahoney J (2012) *A Tale of Two Cultures: Qualitative and Quantitative Research in the Social Sciences*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Goldthorpe J and McKnight, A (2006) The economic basis of social class. In: Mobility and Inequality: Frontiers of Research in Sociology and Economics. Standford: Stanford University Press, pp. 109–136.

Gómez B, Alonso S and Cabeza L (2020) Regional Manifestos Project Dataset. Available at: www.regionalmanifestosproject.com.

Gonthier F (2017) Parallel publics? Support for income redistribution in times of economic crisis. *European Journal of Political Research* 56(1): 92–114. DOI: 10.1111/1475-6765.12168.

McGann AJ (2014) Estimating the Political Center from Aggregate Data: An Item Response Theory Alternative to the Stimson Dyad Ratios Algorithm. *Political Analysis, 22*(1), 115-129. DOI:10.1093/pan/mpt022

Grant T and Lebo MJ (2016) Error Correction Methods with Political Time Series. *Political Analysis* 24(1): 3–30. DOI: 10.1093/pan/mpv027.

Griffin JD and Newman B (2005) Are Voters Better Represented? *Journal of Politics* 67(4): 1206–1227. DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-2508.2005.00357.x.

Guillaud E (2013) Preferences for redistribution: an empirical analysis over 33 countries. *The Journal of Economic Inequality* 11(1): 57–78. DOI: 10.1007/s10888-011-9205-0.

Guinjoan M and Rodon T (2016) Catalonia at the crossroads Analysis of the increasing support for secession. In: Cuadras X (ed.) *Catalonia: A New Independent State in Europe?* New York: Routledge.

Habermas J (1991) *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.

Hakhverdian A (2010) Political Representation and its Mechanisms: A Dynamic Left–Right Approach for the United Kingdom, 1976–2006. *British Journal of Political Science* 40(4): 835–856. DOI: 10.1017/S000712341000013X.

Hakhverdian A (2012) The Causal Flow between Public Opinion and Policy : Government Responsiveness , Leadership , or Counter Movement ? *West European Politics* 35(6): 1386–1406. DOI: 10.1080/01402382.2012.713751.

Hibbs DA (1977) Political Parties and Macroeconomic Policy. *The American Political Science Review* 71(4): 1467–1487. DOI: 10.2307/1961490.

Hierro MJ (2012) *Changes in national identification: a study of the Catalan case*. Dissertation (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid).

Hierro MJ and Queralt D (2020) The Divide Over Independence: Explaining Preferences for Secession in an Advanced Open Economy. *American Journal of Political Science* 65; 422-442. DOI: 10.1111/ajps.12549.

Hirschman AO (1970) *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Hix S (1999) *The Political System of the European Union*. London: Palgrave

Hobolt SB and Klemmensen R (2008) Government Responsiveness and Political Competition in Comparative Perspective: *Comparative Political Studies* 41(3): 309–337. DOI: 10.1177/0010414006297169.

Hobolt SB and Tilley J (2016) Fleeing the centre: the rise of challenger parties in the aftermath of the euro crisis. *West European Politics* 39(5): 971–991. DOI: 10.1080/01402382.2016.1181871.

Hoffmeyer-Zlotnik JH and Krebs D (2000) Effects of rank versus category in measuring subjective social inequality. *Developments in survey methodology* 15: 93–108.

Holger D and Manow P (2019) Parliaments and governments database (ParlGov): Information on parties, elections and cabinets in modern democracies. Development version. Available at: http://www.parlgov.org.

Hooghe L, Marks GN, Schakel AH, et al. (2010) *The Rise of Regional Authority: A Comparative Study of 42 Democracies*. London: Routledge. DOI: 10.4324/9780203852170.

Hout, M. (2008). How Class Works: Objective and Subjective Aspects of Class Since the 1970s. In Lareau A. & Conley D. (Eds.), Social Class: How Does It Work? (pp. 25-64). Russell Sage Foundation

Howe P (1998) Rationality and Sovereignty Support in Quebec. *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue canadienne de science politique* 31(1): 31–59. DOI: 10.1017/S0008423900008672.

Huntington SP (1968) *Political Order in Changing Societies*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

ICPS (2012) Sondeig d'Opinió Catalunya 2012. Institut de Ciències Polítiques i Socials. Available at: https://www.icps.cat/.

Inglehart R (1977) *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles Among Western Publics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Inglehart R (1990) *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Ipsos MORI (2012) 35 years of Scottish attitudes towards independence. Available at: https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/35-years-scottish-attitudes-towards-independence (accessed 10 June 2020).

Iversen T and Soskice D (2001) An Asset Theory of Social Policy Preferences. *American Political Science Review* 95(4): 875–893. DOI: 10.2307/3117719.

Iversen T and Soskice D (2006) Electoral institutions and the politics of coalitions: Why some democracies redistribute more than others. *American political science review* 100(2): 165–181.

Jacoby WG (2000) Issue Framing and Public Opinion on Government Spending. *American Journal of Political Science* 44(4): 750–767. DOI: 10.2307/2669279.

Jansen G, Evans G and Graaf ND de (2013) Class voting and Left–Right party positions: A comparative study of 15 Western democracies, 1960–2005. *Social Science Research* 42(2): 376–400. DOI: 10.1016/j.ssresearch.2012.09.007.

Jennings W (2009) The Public Thermostat, Political Responsiveness and Error-Correction: Border Control and Asylum in Britain, 1994–2007. *British Journal of Political Science* 39(4): 847–870. DOI: 10.1017/S000712340900074X.

Jennings W and Wlezien C (2011) Distinguishing Between Most Important Problems and Issues? *Public Opinion Quarterly* 75(3): 545–555. DOI: 10.1093/poq/nfr025.

Johns R and Mitchell J (2016) *Takeover: Explaining the Extraordinary Rise of the SNP*. London: Biteback Publishing.

Johns R, Mitchell J, Denver D, et al. (2009) Valence Politics in Scotland: Towards an Explanation of the 2007 Election. *Political Studies* 57(1): 207–233. DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-9248.2008.00762.x.

Johns R, Mitchell J and Carman CJ (2013) Constitution or Competence? The SNP's Re-election in 2011. *Political Studies* 61(S1): 158–178. DOI: 10.1111/1467-9248.12016.

Juliana E (2018) Prólogo: "se les fue de las manos". In: *El naufragio: La deconstrucción del sueño independentista*. Barcelona: Ediciones Península, pp. 11–15.

Kallis A (2018) Populism, Sovereigntism, and the Unlikely Re-Emergence of the Territorial Nation-State. *Fudan Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences* 11(3): 285–302. DOI: 10.1007/s40647-018-0233-z.

Kapstein EB and Converse N (2008) *The Fate of Young Democracies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. DOI: 10.1017/CBO9780511817809.

Keating M (2001) *Plurinational Democracy: Stateless Nations in a Post-Sovereignty Era*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Keating M (2010) The Strange Death of Unionist Scotland. *Government and Opposition* 45(3): 365–385. DOI: 10.1111/j.1477-7053.2010.01317.x.

Kelley J and Evans MDR (1995) Class and Class Conflict in Six Western Nations. *American Sociological Review* 60(2): 157–178. DOI: 10.2307/2096382.

Kellstedt PM (2000) Media Framing and the Dynamics of Racial Policy Preferences. *American Journal of Political Science* 44(2).: 245–260. DOI: 10.2307/2669308.

Kellstedt PM, Peterson DAM and Ramirez MD (2010) The Macro Politics of a Gender Gap. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 74(3): 477–498. DOI: 10.1093/poq/nfq003.

Kelly NJ (2009) *The Politics of Income Inequality in the United States*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CBO9780511576225

Kelly NJ and Enns PK (2010) Inequality and the Dynamics of Public Opinion: The Self-Reinforcing Link Between Economic Inequality and Mass Preferences. *American Journal of Political Science* 54(4). London: Blackwell Publishing Inc: 855–870. DOI: 10.1111/j.1540-5907.2010.00472.x.

Kenworthy L and McCall L (2008) Inequality, public opinion and redistribution. *Socio-Economic Review* 6(1): 35–68. DOI: 10.1093/ser/mwm006.

Kenworthy L and Pontusson J (2005) Rising Inequality and the Politics of Redistribution in Affluent Countries. *Perspectives on Politics* 3(03): 449–471. DOI: 10.1017/S1537592705050292.

Kevins A, Horn A, Jensen C, et al. (2018) Yardsticks of inequality: Preferences for redistribution in advanced democracies. *Journal of European Social Policy* 28(4):402-418. DOI: 10.1177/0958928717753579.

Key Jr. VO (1961) *Public Opinion and American Democracy*. New York,Alfred A. Knopf.

Kingdon JW (1984) *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*. Boston: Little, Brown.

Kitschelt HP and Rehm P (2019) Secular Partisan Realignment in the United States: The Socioeconomic Reconfiguration of White Partisan Support since the New Deal Era. *Politics & Society* 47(3): 425–479. DOI: 10.1177/0032329219861215.

Kluegel JR, Csepeli G, Kolosi T, et al. (1995) *Social Justice and Political Change, Public Opinion in Capitalist and Post-Communist States*. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Koch J and Thomsen DM (2017) Gender Equality Mood across States and over Time. *State Politics & Policy Quarterly* 17(4):351-360. DOI: 10.1177/1532440017712792.

Kraus MW, Piff PK, Mendoza-Denton R, et al. (2012) Social class, solipsism, and contextualism: How the rich are different from the poor. *Psychological Review* 119(3): 546–572. DOI: 10.1037/a0028756.

Kraus MW, Tan JJX and Tannenbaum MB (2013) The Social Ladder: A Rank-Based Perspective on Social Class. *Psychological Inquiry* 24(2): 81–96. DOI: 10.1080/1047840X.2013.778803.

Kriesi H, Grande E, Lachat R, et al. (2006) Globalization and the transformation of the national political space: Six European countries compared. *European Journal of Political Research* 45(6): 921–956. DOI: 10.1111/j.1475-6765.2006.00644.x.

Kuhn A (2012) Inequality Perceptions, Distributional Norms, and Redistributive Preferences in East and West Germany. *German Economic Review* 14: 483-499. DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-0475.2012.00577.x.

Langsæther PE (2019) Class voting and the differential role of political values: evidence from 12 West-European countries. *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties* 29(1): 125–142. DOI: 10.1080/17457289.2018.1464015.

Laswell HD (1936) *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How*. New York: Whittlesey House.

Lau RR and Redlawsk DP (2001) Advantages and Disadvantages of Cognitive Heuristics in Political Decision Making. *American Journal of Political Science* 45(4): 951–971. DOI: 10.2307/2669334.

Lax JR and Phillips JH (2009) Gay Rights in the States: Public Opinion and Policy Responsiveness. *American Political Science Review* 103(3). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 367–386. DOI: 10.1017/S0003055409990050.

Lebo MJ and Kraft PW (2017) The general error correction model in practice. *Research & Politics* 4(2): 1-13 2053168017713059. DOI: 10.1177/2053168017713059.

Lefkofridi Z and Giger N (2020) Democracy or Oligarchy? Unequal Representation of Income Groups in European Institutions. *Politics and Governance* 8(1): 19–27. DOI: 10.17645/pag.v8i1.2526.

Leighley JE and Nagler J (2007) Unions, Voter Turnout, and Class Bias in the U.S. Electorate, 1964–2004. *The Journal of Politics* 69(2): 430–441. DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-2508.2007.00541.x.

Lewis-Beck MS, Nadeau R and Elias A (2008) Economics, Party, and the Vote: Causality Issues and Panel Data. *American Journal of Political Science* 52(1): 84–95. DOI: 10.1111/j.1540-5907.2007.00300.x.

Lindvall J (2014) The electoral consequences of two great crises. *European Journal of Political Research* 53(4): 747–765. DOI: 10.1111/1475-6765.12055.

Liñeira R (2016) Second-Order Elections: Everyone, Everywhere? Regional and National Considerations in Regional Voting. *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 46(4): 510–538. DOI: 10.1093/publius/pjw015.

Liñeira R and Medina L (2017) La opinión pública catalana ante la independencia. Preferencias, motivaciones y expectativas. In: Marcet J and Medina L (eds) *La política del proceso: actores y elecciones (2010-2016): el sistema político catalán en tiempos de crisis y cambio*. Barcelona: Institut de Ciències Polítiques i Socials.

Liñeira R, Henderson A and Delaney L (n.d.) Voters' Response to the Campaign: Evidence from the Survey. In: Keating M (ed.) Debating Scotland: Issues of Independence and Union in the 2014 Referendum. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 165–190.

Lippmann W (1922) *Public Opinion*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co.

Lipset SM and Rokkan S (1967) *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives*. New York: Free Press.

Loftis MW and Mortensen PB (2017) A new approach to the study of partisan effects on social policy. *Journal of European Public Policy* 24(6): 890–911. DOI: 10.1080/13501763.2017.1298656.

Loignon AC and Woehr DJ (2018) Social Class in the Organizational Sciences: A Conceptual Integration and Meta-Analytic Review. *Journal of Management* 44(1): 61–88. DOI: 10.1177/0149206317728106.

Lübker M (2007) Inequality and the demand for redistribution: are the assumptions of the new growth theory valid?1. *Socio-Economic Review* 5(1): 117–148. DOI: 10.1093/ser/mwl002.

Lupia A (1994) Shortcuts Versus Encyclopedias: Information and Voting Behavior in California Insurance Reform Elections. *American Political Science Review* 88(1): 63–76. DOI: 10.2307/2944882.

Lupu N and Pontusson J (2011) The Structure of Inequality and the Politics of Redistribution. *American Political Science Review* 105(02): 316–336. DOI: 10.1017/S0003055411000128.

Luttig M (2013) The Structure of Inequality and Americans' Attitudes toward Redistribution. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 77(3): 811–821. DOI: 10.1093/poq/nft025.

Mair P (2000) The limited impact of Europe on national party systems. *West European Politics* 23(4): 27–51. DOI: 10.1080/01402380008425399.

Manin B (1995) *Principes Du Gouvernement Représentatif*. Paris: Calmann-Levy.

Mansbridge J (2003) Rethinking Representation. *American Political Science Review* 97(4): 515–528. DOI: 10.1017/S0003055403000856.

Manza J and Brooks C (1999) *Social Cleavages and Political Change: Voter Alignments and U.S. Party Coalitions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Maravall JM (2008) *La confrontación política*. Madrid: Taurus.

Margalit Y (2013) Explaining Social Policy Preferences: Evidence from the Great Recession. *American Political Science Review* 107(01): 80–103. DOI: 10.1017/S0003055412000603.

Matovski A (2018) It's the Stability, Stupid! How the Quest to Restore Order After the Soviet Collapse Shaped Russian Popular Opinion. *Comparative Politics* 50(3): 347–390. DOI: 10.5129/001041518822704926.

McCrone D (2002) *Understanding Scotland: The Sociology of a Nation*. London: Routledge.

McCrone D (2017) *The New Sociology of Scotland*. London: Sage.

McGann A, Dellepiane-Avellaneda S and Bartle J (2019) Parallel lines? Policy mood in a plurinational democracy. *Electoral Studies* 58: 48–57. DOI: 10.1016/j.electstud.2019.02.005.

McGann A (2014) Estimating the Political Center from Aggregate Data : An Item Response Theory Alternative to the Stimson Dyad Ratios Algorithm. *Political Analysis* (22): 115–129. DOI: 10.1093/pan/mpt022.

McKay D (2001) *Designing Europe: Comparative Lessons from the Federal Experience*. Oxford University Press.

McKay D (2004) William Riker on federalism: sometimes wrong but more right than anyone else? *Regional & Federal Studies* 14(2): 167–186. DOI: 10.1080/1359756042000247438.

McKendrick JH, Mooney G, Dickie J, et al. (2014) *Poverty in Scotland 2014: The Independence Referendum and Beyond*. London: Child Poverty Action Group.

Medina L and Caínzos M (2018) Clase e ideología en España: patrones de diferenciación y de cambio. *Revista de Estudios Políticos* 0(181): 97–133. DOI: 10.18042/cepc/rep.181.04.

Meltzer AH and Richard SF (1981) A Rational Theory of the Size of Government. *Journal of Political Economy* 89(5): 914–927. DOI: 10.1086/261013.

Mendelsohn M (2003) Rational Choice and Socio-Psychological Explanation for Opinion on Quebec Sovereignty. *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue canadienne de science politique* 36(3): 511–537. DOI: 10.1017/S0008423903778743.

Miller W, Pierce R, Thomassen J, et al. (1999) *Policy Representation in Western Democracies*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

Miller WE and Stokes DE (1963) Constituency Influence in Congress. *American Political Science Review* 57(01): 45–56. DOI: 10.2307/1952717.

Moene KO and Wallerstein M (2003) Earnings Inequality and Welfare Spending: A Disaggregated Analysis. *World Politics* 55(04): 485–516. DOI: 10.1353/wp.2003.0022.

Moffitt R, Ribar D and Wilhelm M (1998) The decline of welfare benefits in the U.S.: the role of wage inequality. *Journal of Public Economics* 68(3): 421–452. DOI: 10.1016/S0047-2727(98)00017-6.

Morgan J and Kelly NJ (2013) Market Inequality and Redistribution in Latin America and the Caribbean. *The Journal of Politics* 75(3): 672–685. DOI: 10.1017/s0022381613000509.

Morlino L and Quaranta M (2016) What is the impact of the economic crisis on democracy? Evidence from Europe. *International Political Science Review* 37(5): 618–633. DOI: 10.1177/0192512116639747.

Müller WC, Strøm K, Bates RH, et al. (1999) *Policy, Office, Or Votes?: How Political Parties in Western Europe Make Hard Decisions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Muñoz J and Tormos R (2015) Economic expectations and support for secession in Catalonia: between causality and rationalization. *European Political Science Review* 7(2): 315–341. DOI: 10.1017/S1755773914000174.

North DC and Weingast BR (1989) Constitutions and Commitment: The Evolution of Institutions Governing Public Choice in Seventeenth-Century England. *The Journal of Economic History* 49(4): 803–832. DOI: 10.1017/S0022050700009451.

Oesch D (2006) *Redrawing the Class Map: Stratification and Institutions in Britain, Germany, Sweden and Switzerland*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

O'Grady T (2019) How do Economic Circumstances Determine Preferences? Evidence from Long-run Panel Data. *British Journal of Political Science* 49(4): 1381–1406. DOI: 10.1017/S0007123417000242.

Ohmura H (2018) The Japanese Macro Polity: Mandate and Accountability Representation in Postwar Japan. *Japanese Political Science Review*: 27–60.

Orriols L (2013) *Social Class, Religiosity, and Vote Choice in Spain, 1979–2008*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Pacheco J (2013) The Thermostatic Model of Responsiveness in the American States. *State Politics & Policy Quarterly* 13(3): 306–332. DOI: 10.1177/1532440013487388.

Page BI and Jacobs LR (2009) *Class War? What Americans Really Think about Economic Inequality*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Page BI and Shapiro RY (1983) Effects of Public Opinion on Policy. *American Political Science Review* 77(1): 175–190. DOI: 10.2307/1956018.

Page BI. and Shapiro RY (1992) *The Rational Public: Fifty Years of Trends in Americans' Policy Preferences*. American politics and political economy series. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Persyn D and Westerlund J (2008) Error-Correction–Based Cointegration Tests for Panel Data. *The Stata Journal* 8(2): 232–241. DOI: 10.1177/1536867X0800800205.

Peters Y (2018) Democratic representation and political inequality: how social differences translate into differential representation. *French Politics* 16(3): 341–357. DOI: 10.1057/s41253-018-0066-9.

Peters Y and Ensink SJ (2015) Differential Responsiveness in Europe: The Effects of Preference Difference and Electoral Participation. *West European Politics* 38(3): 577–600. DOI: 10.1080/01402382.2014.973260.

Pierson P (1994) *Dismantling the Welfare State?: Reagan, Thatcher and the Politics of Retrenchment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. DOI: 10.1017/CBO9780511805288.

Pierson P (2001) *Post-Industrial Pressures on the Mature Welfare States*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Pierson P (2003) Big, Slow-Moving, And…Invisible: Macrosocial processes in the study of comparative politics. In: Rueschemeyer D and Mahoney J (eds) *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*.: Cambridge University Press, pp. 177–207. DOI: 10.1017/CBO9780511803963.006.

Piketty T (2014) *Capital in the Twenty First Century* (tran. A Goldhammer). Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Piketty T (2020) *Capital and Ideology*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press Cambridge.

Piketty T and Saez E (2003) Income Inequality in the United States, 1913-1998. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 118(1): 1–41. DOI: 10.1162/00335530360535135.

Piketty T and Saez E (2006) The Evolution of Top Incomes: A Historical and International Perspective. *American Economic Review* 96(2): 200–205. DOI: 10.1257/000282806777212116.

Pontusson J (2005) *Inequality and Prosperity: Social Europe vs. Liberal America*. Cornell Studies in Political Economy. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Pontusson J and Weisstanner D (2018) Macroeconomic conditions, inequality shocks and the politics of redistribution, 1990–2013. *Journal of European Public Policy* 25(1): 31–58. DOI: 10.1080/13501763.2017.1310280.

Powell Jr. GB (2000) *Elections as Instruments of Democracy: Majoritarian and Proportional Visions*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Rasmussen A, Carroll BJ and Lowery D (2014) Representatives of the public? Public opinion and interest group activity. *European Journal of Political Research* 53(2): 250–268. DOI: 10.1111/1475-6765.12036.

Rasmussen A, Reher S and Toshkov D (2019) The opinion-policy nexus in Europe and the role of political institutions. *European Journal of Political Research* 58(2): 412–434. DOI: 10.1111/1475-6765.12286.

Rehfeld A (2009) Representation Rethought: On Trustees, Delegates, and Gyroscopes in the Study of Political Representation and Democracy. *American Political Science Review* 103(2): 214–230. DOI: 10.1017/S0003055409090261.

Requejo F (2001) National pluralism and federalism. Four potential scenarios for Spanish plurinational democracy. *Perspectives on European Politics and Society* 2(2): 305–327. DOI: 10.1080/1570585018458764.

Resina JR (2003) Post–national Spain? Post–Spanish Spain? *Nations and Nationalism* 8(3): 377–396. DOI: 10.1111/1469-8219.00056.

Riba C (2000) Voto dual y abstención diferencial. *Revista española de investigaciones sociológicas* 31(100): 59–88.

Rico G (2016) ¿O catalanistas o fachas? La influencia del eje nacional sobre la percepción de los partidos catalanes en el eje izquierda-derecha. *Quaderns de l'ICPS* (12).

Rico G and Liñeira R (2014) Bringing Secessionism into the Mainstream: The 2012 Regional Election in Catalonia. *South European Society and Politics* 19(2): 257–280. DOI: 10.1080/13608746.2014.910324.

Riker WH (1964) *Federalism: Origin, Operation, Significance*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.

Riker WH (1982) *Liberalism Against Populism: A Confrontation Between the Theory of Democracy and the Theory of Social Choice*. San Francisco: Waveland Press.

Roberts KWS (1977) Voting over income tax schedules. *Journal of Public Economics* 8(3): 329–340. DOI: 10.1016/0047-2727(77)90005-6.

Rodon T and Guinjoan M (2018) When the context matters: Identity, secession and the spatial dimension in Catalonia. *Political Geography* 63: 75–87. DOI: 10.1016/j.polgeo.2018.01.004.

Romer T (1975) Individual welfare, majority voting, and the properties of a linear income tax. *Journal of Public Economics* 4(2): 163–185. DOI: 10.1016/0047-2727(75)90016-X.

Romero-Vidal X (2019) Two temperatures for one thermostat: The evolution of policy attitudes and support for independence in Catalonia (1991–2018). *Nations and Nationalism 26: 960– 978*. DOI: 10.1111/nana.12559.

Roosma F, Gelissen J and van Oorschot W (2013) The Multidimensionality of Welfare State Attitudes: A European Cross-National Study. *Social Indicators Research* 113(1): 235–255. DOI: 10.1007/s11205-012-0099-4.

Rose R (1984) *Do Parties Make a Difference?* New York: Springer.

Rose R and Davies PL (1994) *Inheritance in Public Policy: Change Without Choice in Britain*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Rose R and Shephard M (2016) The Long and the Short of the SNP Breakthrough. In: Cowley P and Kavanagh D (eds) *The British General Election of 2015*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, pp. 126–139. DOI: 10.1057/9781137366115_5.

Rosset J (2013) Are the Policy Preferences of Relatively Poor Citizens Under-represented in the Swiss Parliament? *The Journal of Legislative Studies* 19(4): 490–504. DOI: 10.1080/13572334.2013.812363.

Rosset J and Stecker C (2019) How well are citizens represented by their governments? Issue congruence and inequality in Europe. *European Political Science Review* 11(2): 145–160. DOI: 10.1017/S1755773919000043.

Rueda D and Stegmueller D (2016) The Externalities of Inequality: Fear of Crime and Preferences for Redistribution in Western Europe. *American Journal of Political Science* 60(2): 472–489. DOI: 10.1111/ajps.12212.

Sabl A (2015) The Two Cultures of Democratic Theory: Responsiveness, Democratic Quality, and the Empirical-Normative Divide. *Perspectives on Politics* 13(2): 345–365. DOI: 10.1017/S1537592715000079.

Sánchez-Cuenca I (2018) *La Confusión Nacional: La Democracia Española Ante La Crisis Catalana*. Catarata.

Schakel W, Burgoon B and Hakhverdian A (2020) Real but Unequal Representation in Welfare State Reform. *Politics & Society* 48(1): 131–163. DOI: 10.1177/0032329219897984.

Scharpf FW (2015) After the Crash: A Perspective on Multilevel European Democracy. *European Law Journal* 21: 384-405. DOI: 10.1111/eulj.12127.

Schmidt-Catran AW (2016) Economic inequality and public demand for redistribution: combining cross-sectional and longitudinal evidence. *Socio-Economic Review* 14(1): 119–140. DOI: 10.1093/ser/mwu030.

Schmitt C (2016) Panel data analysis and partisan variables: how periodization does influence partisan effects. *Journal of European Public Policy* 23(10): 1442–1459. DOI: 10.1080/13501763.2015.1091030.

Schneider SK and Jacoby WG (2005) Elite Discourse and American Public Opinion: The Case of Welfare Spending. *Political Research Quarterly* 58(3): 367-379. DOI: 10.2307/3595608.

Schofield N (2002) Evolution of the Constitution. *British Journal of Political Science* 32(1): 1–20. DOI: 10.1017/S0007123402000017.

Schram S (2015) *The Return of Ordinary Capitalism : Neoliberalism, Precarity, Occupy*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Schumpeter JA (1946) *Capitalism, socialism, and democracy*. London: Routledge.

Scruggs L, Jahn D and Kuitto K (2017) Comparative Welfare Entitlements Dataset 2. Version 2017-09. University of Connecticut & University of Greifswald.

Sears DO and Funk CL (1991) The Role of Self-Interest in Social and Political Attitudes. In: Zanna MP (ed.) *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*. Academic Press, pp. 1–91. DOI: 10.1016/S0065-2601(08)60327-5.

Serrano I (2013) Just a Matter of Identity? Support for Independence in Catalonia. *Regional & Federal Studies* 23(5): 523–545. DOI: 10.1080/13597566.2013.775945.

Shapiro RY and Young JT (1989) Public Opinion and the Welfare State: The United States in Comparative Perspective. *Political Science Quarterly* 104(1): 59-89. DOI: 10.2307/2150988.

Singer MM (2011) Who Says "It's the Economy"? Cross-National and Cross-Individual Variation in the Salience of Economic Performance. *Comparative Political Studies* 44(3): 284–312. DOI: 10.1177/0010414010384371.

Solt F (2016) The Standardized World Income Inequality Database*. *Social Science Quarterly* 97(5): 1267–1281. DOI: 10.1111/ssqu.12295.

Solt F (2019) *Measuring Income Inequality Across Countries and Over Time: The Standardized World Income Inequality Database*. February.

Soroka SN and Lim ET (2003) Issue Definition and the Opinion-Policy Link: Public Preferences and Health Care Spending in the US and UK. *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 5(4).: 576–593. DOI: 10.1111/1467-856X.00120.

Soroka SN and Wlezien C (2008) On the Limits to Inequality in Representation. *PS: Political Science & Politics* 41(02): 319–327. DOI: 10.1017/S1049096508080505.

Soroka SN and Wlezien C (2010) *Degrees Of Democracy : Politics, Public Opinion, And Policy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sosnaud B, Brady D and Frenk SM (2013) Class in Name Only: Subjective Class Identity, Objective Class Position, and Vote Choice in American Presidential Elections. *Social Problems* 60(1): 81–99. DOI: 10.1525/sp.2013.60.1.81.

Statham P and Geddes A (2006) Elites and the 'organised public': Who drives British immigration politics and in which direction? *West European Politics* 29(2): 248–269. DOI: 10.1080/01402380500512601.

Stevenson RT (2001) The Economy and Policy Mood: A Fundamental Dynamic of Democratic Politics? *American Journal of Political Science* 45(3): 620–633. DOI: 10.2307/2669242.

Stiglitz JE (2012) *The Price of Inequality*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

Stimson JA (1991) *Public Opinion in America: Moods, Cycles, and Swings*. Boulder: Westview Press.

Stimson JA (1999) Party Government and Responsiveness. In: Przeworski A, Stokes S, and Manin B (eds) *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Stimson JA (2004) *Tides of Consent. How Public Opinion Shapes American Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Stimson JA (2018) The Dyad Ratios Algorithm for Estimating Latent Public Opinion. *Bulletin of Sociological Methodology/Bulletin de Méthodologie Sociologique* 137–138(1): 201–218. DOI: 10.1177/0759106318761614.

Stimson JA, MacKuen MB. and Erikson RS (1995) Dynamic Representation. *The American Political Science Review* 89(3): 543–565.

Stimson JA, Thiebaut C and Tiberj V (2012) The evolution of policy attitudes in France. *European Union Politics* 13(2): 293–316. DOI: 10.1177/1465116512436703.

Svallfors S (1997) Worlds of Welfare and Attitudes to Redistribution: A Comparison of Eight Western Nations. *European Sociological Review* 13(3): 283–304. DOI: 10.1093/oxfordjournals.esr.a018219.

Svallfors S (2012) *Contested Welfare States: Welfare Attitudes in Europe and Beyond*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press.

Swank D (2002) Global Capital, Political Institutions, and Policy Change in Developed Welfare States. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Tarrow S (2010) The Strategy of Paired Comparison: Toward a Theory of Practice. *Comparative Political Studies* 43(2): 230–259. DOI: 10.1177/0010414009350044.

Tausanovitch C (2016) Income, Ideology, and Representation. *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 2(7): 33–50. DOI: 10.7758/RSF.2016.2.7.03.

Toshkov D (2011) Public opinion and policy output in the European Union: A lost relationship. *European Union Politics* 12(2): 169–191. DOI: 10.1177/1465116510395043.

Tsebelis G (2002) *Veto Players: How Political Institutions Work*. Princeton University Press.

Ura JD and Ellis CR (2008) Income, Preferences, and the Dynamics of Policy Responsiveness. *PS: Political Science and Politics* 41(4): 785–794.

Ura JD and Ellis CR (2012) Partisan Moods: Polarization and the Dynamics of Mass Party Preferences. *The Journal of Politics* 74(1): 277–291. DOI: 10.1017/S0022381611001587.

Van der Brug W and Van Spanje J (2009) Immigration, Europe and the 'new' cultural dimension. *European Journal of Political Research* 48(3): 309–334. DOI: 10.1111/j.1475-6765.2009.00841.x.

van der Waal J, Achterberg P and Houtman D (2007) Class Is Not Dead—It Has Been Buried Alive: Class Voting and Cultural Voting in Postwar Western Societies (1956–1990). *Politics & Society* 35(3): 403–426. DOI: 10.1177/0032329207304314.

Van Hauwaert SM and English P (2019) Responsiveness and the macro-origins of immigration opinions: Evidence from Belgium, France and the UK. *Comparative European Politics* 17(6): 832–859. DOI: 10.1057/s41295-018-0130-5.

Verba S, Schlozman K. and Brady H (1995) *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Weaver K (2010) Paths and Forks or Chutes and Ladders?: Negative Feedbacks and Policy Regime Change. *Journal of Public Policy* 30(2): 137–162. DOI: 10.1017/S0143814X10000061.

Weber M (1978) *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Weingast BR (1997) The Political Foundations of Democracy and the Rule of the Law. *American Political Science Review* 91(2): 245–263. DOI: 10.2307/2952354.

Weiss S (2012) *The German Macro Polity*. Doctoral dissertation (University of Essex).

Welzel C (2013) *Freedom Rising: Human Empowerment and the Quest for Emancipation*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Wenzelburger G and Zohlnhöfer R (2020) Bringing agency back into the study of partisan politics: A note on recent developments in the literature on party politics: *Party Politics*. DOI: 10.1177/1354068820919316.

Wenzelburger G, Zohlnhöfer R and Wolf F (2013) Implications of dataset choice in comparative welfare state research. *Journal of European Public Policy* 20(9): 1229–1250. DOI: 10.1080/13501763.2013.822908.

Williams LK, Seki K and Whitten GD (2016) You've Got Some Explaining To Do The Influence of Economic Conditions and Spatial Competition on Party Strategy. *Political Science Research and Methods* 4(1): 47–63. DOI: 10.1017/psrm.2015.13.

Wlezien C (1995) The Public as Thermostat: Dynamics of Preferences for Spending. *American Journal of Political Science* 39(4): 981–1000. DOI: 10.2307/2111666.

Wlezien C (2004) Patterns of Representation: Dynamics of Public Preferences and Policy. Journal of Politics 66(1): 1–24. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1468-2508.2004.00139.x.

Wlezien C and Enns PK (2011) *Who Gets Represented?* New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Wlezien C and Soroka S (2019) Trends in Public Support for Welfare Spending: How the Economy Matters. *British Journal of Political Science*: 1–18. DOI: 10.1017/S0007123419000103.

Wlezien C and Soroka SN (2011) Federalism and Public Responsiveness to Policy. *Publius* 41(1): 31–52. DOI: 10.2307/23015052.

Wlezien C and Soroka SN (2012) Political Institutions and the Opinion – Policy Link. *West European Politics* 35(6): 1407–1432. DOI: 10.1080/01402382.2012.713752.

YouGov (2019) Scottish independence: Yes vote climbs to 49% | YouGov.co.uk

Zaller J (1992) *Nature and Origins Mass Opinion | Comparative Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Zaller J and Feldman S (1992) A Simple Theory of the Survey Response: Answering Questions and Revealing Preferences. *American Journal of Political Science* (36): 579–616.